

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Non-profit organisation adaptive capacities framework in a  
turbulent environment: An organisational resilience construct  
perspective

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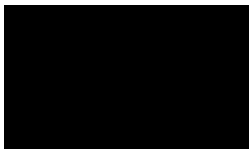
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June 2023

## Declaration

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## **Dedication**

With love and gratitude, this thesis is dedicated to my parents, my siblings, my sisters-in-law, my nieces and my nephews. I am indeed blessed to have you as my family!

## **List of abbreviations and acronyms**

AGM	Annual General Meeting
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COP	Conference of the Parties
CRM	Cause-related Marketing
CSI	Corporate Social Investment
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DSD	Department of Social Development
EBSCO	Elton Bryson Stephens Company
HR	Human Resources
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NFT	Non-fungible Token
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NLC	National Lotteries Commission
NPO	Non-profit Organisation
PBO	Public Benefit Organisation
RBV	Resource-based View
RDT	Resource Dependence Theory
ROR	Relative Overall Resilience
SA	South Africa
SARS	South African Revenue Service
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TEPSIE	Theoretical, Empirical and Policy Foundations for Social Innovation in Europe
VAT	Value-added Tax
VRIO	Value, Rarity, Imitability and Organisation
VUCA	Volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous
WWF	World Wildlife Fund/Worldwide Fund for Nature

## Abstract

The unprecedented escalation in the number of non-profit organisations (NPOs) in South Africa matches the global trend in the growth rate of NPOs. As societal needs increase, the NPO sector will continue to expand in response to these needs, creating further constraints in funding and resources. An understanding of how environmental NPOs can augment their organisational resilience to mitigate existential concerns is important. However, there is a dearth of academic studies on non-profit organisational resilience, considered a broad-ranging theory in the nascent phase. Given the aforementioned, this study aimed to ascertain the adaptive capacities of South African environmental NPOs faced with limited resources and increased competition in a turbulent environment from an organisational resilience construct perspective. Adaptive capacity is a vital dimension and leads to organisational resilience during turbulent events; it further enables the practical use of organisational resources to enhance institutional effectiveness. This qualitative study applied an interpretivist philosophy with an inductive research approach and a case study strategy. Eleven NPO leaders participated in semi-structured interviews and cross-case analysis was conducted to generate a robust view of the cases studied. An adaptive capacity framework to promote non-profit organisational resilience, applicable to individual NPOs, was developed. The findings indicated that NPO resilience can be achieved by developing the 18 interconnected adaptive capacities identified within the broad categories of Culture, Leadership and People, Tactical Administration and Tactical Planning and Restructuring. This framework included three newly discovered adaptive capacities, namely, Sustainable Development Goals Alignment, Academic Institution Alignment and Transformation Agenda. To augment organisational resilience, environmental NPOs could improve funding prospects by accentuating their work within the framework of the United Nations' sustainable development goals. Furthermore, a holistic view of promoting NPO resilience could reduce barriers connected to managers' beliefs that no benefit is to be gained from a resilience outlook. This study contributes to the academic literature on organisational resilience theory in the nascent phase and could assist policymakers in the understudied South African NPO sector.

**Keywords :** Adaptive capacities, non-profit organisations, non-profit resources, non-profit strategy, organisational resilience, turbulent environment

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# Chapter 1 – Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

Non-profit organisations (NPOs) play an immensely valuable and advantageous role in most countries and their capacity to emphatically mitigate a broad range of societal and economic difficulties is comprehensively recorded (Zulkhibri 2014). Furthermore, NPOs can be found to work across most, if not all, of the 17 United Nations' sustainable development goals (SDGs) (Fowler 2016).

South Africa continues to be confronted with the three-way developmental problem of unemployment, poverty and inequality. Additionally, the country's current economic advancement framework relies heavily on resources and is energy-intensive with escalating burdens on the natural ecosystem and the reality of environmental change (Montmasson-Clair 2012). Operating in this backdrop, NPOs in South Africa serve numerous stakeholders and the demand for the NPO sector has steadily increased over the last decade (Habib 2005). The NPO sector in South Africa underwrites the economy by supporting the societal revolution and aiding in reducing inequality; therefore, the efforts of NPOs are critical, particularly where government-led growth is frail (Reith 2010).

Particularly during times of crisis, such as the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) – acknowledged as a worldwide pandemic by the World Health Organisation, NPOs play a vital role in the well-being of the planet and its inhabitants (Nemțeanu and Dabija 2020). Internationally, NPOs have responded to the unprecedented needs arising from this pandemic (O'Connell 2020). COVID-19 has also highlighted the interconnectedness of the environment to climate change and human health and well-being (Samani et al. 2021). Yet while this sector is at the forefront of the fight, including food relief and awareness efforts, it is financially constrained and dependent on an ever-dwindling pool of funding as the world faces its worst recession in recent years (O'Connell 2020).

Considering the central role that NPOs play in society while working across several realms and encapsulating a broad range of stakeholders, it is important to understand how these entities can augment their resilience. Among several new trending management approaches, organisational resilience especially focuses on an entity's capacity to weather and adapt to both inner and exterior systemic shocks (Lundberg and Johansson 2015). A key characteristic of a resilient organisation is its adaptive capacity or capability to adapt (Lundberg and Johansson 2015). This research will delve into the adaptive capacities needed by NPOs to build organisational resilience to sustain themselves and to deliver on their organisational mission.

This introductory chapter will cover the background of the study and present a preliminary literature review of, among others, the global and South African NPO context and the COVID-19 impact. The notion of organisational resilience and the theories guiding the study will also be set out. The rationale, significance, problem statement and limitations of the study will follow. The chapter will conclude with the expected contributions of the study to knowledge extension and a brief overview of the remaining chapters of the study.

## **1.2 Background**

A large increase in voluntary and non-profit activity has occurred globally over the past three and half decades. Despite this significant upscaling of the NPO sector and ongoing development, formal data to track and describe this occurrence have been sporadic and incomplete (Salamon et al. 2012). Studies undertaken in 2012 to test the size and scale of NPOs have revealed that, worldwide, NPOs provide a much larger impact than previously estimated. According to Salamon et al. (2012), NPOs contribute approximately \$2.2 trillion in operational expenditure to the economy and employ an estimated 54 million full-time employees, including almost 350 million volunteers worldwide.

This growth of NPO activity has occurred in a turbulent environment characterised by technological disruptions, an increase in natural and man-made disasters, a rise in non-traditional competitors, regulatory disorders and geopolitical upheavals (Lv et al. 2019; Reith 2010; Scearce and Wang 2020). The for-profit and non-profit segments have also been impacted by an increase in scandals exacerbated by social media where citizens demand transparency and more accountability (Omura and Forster 2014; Visser 2020).

The number of turbulent events has accelerated and intensified, and the accounts of unexpected and extremely unpredictable disruptions feel ongoing (Senbeto and Hon 2020; Van Breda 2018; Witmer and Mellinger 2016). Among the several new trending management approaches, organisational resilience especially focuses on an entity's capacity to weather and adapt to both inner and exterior systemic shocks (Lundberg and Johansson 2015).

A key characteristic of a resilient organisation is its adaptive capacity or capability to adapt (Lundberg and Johansson 2015). "Adaptive capacity reflects the ability of the system to respond to changes in its external environment and to recover from damage to internal structures within the system that affect its ability to achieve its purpose" (Dalziell and McManus 2004, p. 6). Non-profit organisational resilience is the capacity of an NPO to respond efficiently to change and adapt positively to new and unanticipated conditions while remaining true to its mission. (Scearce and Wang 2020) Technology is unsettling old-style NPO funding mechanisms and radically altering societal engagement, while political tensions are limiting civil society activities in several

countries (Salamon et al. 2012). These shifts or changes create opportunities, present challenges and demand swift adaptation (Petrillo et al. 2018).

Fundamentally, an organisation that has heightened resilience has a greater tendency to withstand the difficulties of daily operations and effectively navigate inner and external shocks (McManus et al. 2008). A resilient organisation can rapidly detect and react to negative situations and create solutions to curtail negative outcomes (Vogus and Sutcliffe 2007). Furthermore, resilience allows an organisation to grasp opportunities in problematic situations and enables it to progress during adversity (McManus et al. 2007).

NPOs can be found to work across most, if not all, of the 17 United Nations' SDGs (Fowler 2016). Ending poverty and hunger, advocating for quality education and raising awareness for health and well-being are a few examples of the work that NPOs undertake. The United Nations endorses the enactment of the SDGs via multi-stakeholder undertakings and the ability of NPOs to participate in these multifaceted partner relations is expected to be a routine prerequisite for gaining access to resources (Fowler 2016). NPOs will be required to articulate a convincing value proposition concerning their mission when engaging in multi-partner relationships coherently (Maboya and McKay 2019). In the framework of the SDGs, NPOs in South Africa function in diverse ways and have connections to and work in partnership with local and international agencies, regimes and businesses (Haywood et al. 2019).

SDG implementation challenges occur when NPOs do not work with the government; the result is inadequate access to skills and governing authority that the NPO and government cluster would have brought to such partnerships (Haywood et al. 2019). The limited interaction between NPOs and businesses can be seen as a further threat to successful SDG implementation.

In response to societal needs, the number of NPOs in South Africa increased from 82 248 in 2011/12 to 155 367 in 2015/16, resulting in a calculated average increment of 80% within five years (South Africa 2016). This unprecedented escalation in the number of NPOs in South Africa matches the current global trend in the growth of NPOs (Barman 2002; Brooks and Adger 2005; Brown, L.T. 2019; Maboya and McKay 2019).

### **1.2.1 Global and South African non-profit organisation context**

The business sector aims to maximise profits for its stockholders and contemporary practices have promoted the interests of other stakeholders in the corporate world (Weerawardena, McDonald and Mort 2010). Corporate growth is largely due to technological development, training prospects, research and expansion activities affecting the quality of people and relational capital influences (Bontis et al. 2018). While both NPOs and for-profits must recruit, retain and grow

leaders, NPOs must do so with constrained budgets and limited resources (Yawson 2019). NPO executives are concerned with acquiring resources and maintaining transparency for complex relationships with their board, donors, communities and other stakeholders, such as volunteers, and the environment while ensuring the NPO achieves its mission (Worth 2020).

Governance is widely linked to the bottom-line performance of corporates. In contrast, the governance of NPOs is linked to their performance as well as the integrity of the NPOs with their stakeholders (Viader and Espina 2014). Worldwide, an NPO is generally considered to be a legal entity and is not primarily operated to make or dispense profits. Furthermore, NPOs are not a part of the government and assets cannot be dispersed except for their non-profit causes (Irish, Jin and Simon 2004; Zulkhibri 2014). NPOs do not normally have a bottom line, however, occasionally when a profit is realised, it is re-invested in the attainment of its objective (Weerawardena et al. 2010).

NPOs play an immensely valuable and advantageous part in most countries and their capacity to influence a broad range of societal and economic difficulties emphatically is comprehensively recorded (Zulkhibri 2014). Several NPOs operating in post-communist countries, such as Armenia and Romania, shadow the societies where they were formed (Argenti and Saghablyan 2017). NPO shortcomings shared with other key sectors in these countries include limited capacity, corruption and a lack of upholding society's best interests (Argenti and Saghablyan 2017). Every country, subject to its historical background, is unique, however, NPO developments, including a noticeable confluence in discourses, seem similar in a variety of countries (Casey 2016). A shared global trend exists where populations have an increased capacity for independent unification and action. Another global trend observed is that the public outlook includes the commercialisation of the NPO sector (Casey 2016). The ability to obtain funding is central to the survival of NPOs (Krige, Hawarden and Cohen 2019; MacIndoe and Sullivan 2014). NPOs are commonly less reliant on outside stakeholders when they can produce their own funding from commercial actions (Seo 2016). An NPO's reliance on a solitary resource contributor for essential resources such as funding threatens their survival (Seo 2016). In differentiating income streams, NPOs are forced to adopt an entrepreneurial approach and transform into social enterprises (Peng and Liang 2019).

Globally, governments are reducing their financial support for social and charitable work, resulting in an increased number of NPOs to fill the gap created by the reduction in government spending (Mueller et al. 2005). Alternative funding mechanisms were explored by several countries to compensate for the decline in government support of NPOs. The notion of a voluntary percentage-tax contribution from tax-paying citizens to support local NPOs was first introduced by Italy in 1985 (Gazzola et al. 2019). A similar mechanism was officially adopted by Hungary

in 1996, followed by the Slovak Republic, Lithuania and Poland between 1999 and 2003 (Radinger 2017). According to Radinger (2017), Portugal, Spain and Japan have previously launched comparable tax-designation structures.

The general agreement is that the surge in the prominence of NPOs has been constructive. However, NPOs have not been received or accepted continuously. In Africa, some governments have enacted laws to severely limit NPO operations (Casey 2016). Businesses and regimes often fear NPO prominence because they are construed as a potential threat to their dominion. According to the State of Civil Society Report 2020, certain governments, such as China, endorse state-centric service delivery and policies restricting the operational leeway provided to NPOs (Casey 2016; Zulkhibri 2014). In Bangladesh, the total number of NPO volunteers and employees rivals that of the government (Hassan 2015). A dark side to the good work of NPOs occurs when NPOs become heavily captured by political elitists as is the case in Bangladesh, Thailand and the Philippines (Lorch 2020). Generally the societal sector, therefore, also establishes a world of power, disparity and conflict among opposing interests (Lorch 2020).

South Africa is still deemed to be a socially divided state with significant economic disparities, despite the peaceful transition from its apartheid regime in 1994 (Holtzhausen 2014; Meiring, Kannemeyer and Potgieter 2018). The new regime inherited a country that already faced large-scale poverty, high levels of unemployment, inequalities and a deteriorating economy. Decades later, many of the same initial challenges persist; some have been exacerbated, with several more challenges piling on – infrastructure shortages, insufficient power supplies and rising youth unemployment levels (Meiring et al. 2018; Thompson and Wissink 2018). Some of South Africa's shortcomings are inadequate communication, a lack of trust, leadership deficiencies, the incoherent development of various sectors and stakeholders working towards a shared purpose (Holtzhausen 2014; Meiring et al. 2018; Thompson and Wissink 2018).

During South Africa's political progression, NPOs played a key role in supporting its development (Volmink and Van der Elst 2017). NPOs deliver vital services to the marginalised majority, advocate for fair and transparent governance and hold the government accountable. Over time and in response to the political environment, the role of NPOs – including their strategies, capacities and the resources underwriting their missions – has shifted (Maboya and McKay 2019; Volmink and Van der Elst 2017).

South Africa continues to be confronted with the three-way developmental problem of unemployment, poverty and inequality. Additionally, the country's current economic advancement framework relies heavily on resources and is energy-intensive, with escalating burdens on the natural ecosystem and the reality of environmental change (Montmasson-Clair

2012). Operating in this backdrop, NPOs in South Africa serve numerous stakeholders and the demand for the NPO sector has steadily increased over the last decade (Habib 2005). The NPO sector in South Africa underwrites the economy by supporting the societal revolution and aiding in reducing inequality, therefore, the efforts of NPOs are critical, particularly where government-led growth is frail (Reith 2010).

An important factor related to the presence and development of NPOs is the legal framework, which varies in complexity per country (Zulhibri 2014). The registration procedure for an entity to enrol as an NPO is governed by the Non-profit Organisation Act 71 of 1997 of South Africa (the NPO Act). According to the NPO Act, in South Africa, an NPO is defined “as a trust, company or other association of persons established for a public purpose and of which its income and property are not distributable to its members or office bearers except as reasonable compensation for services rendered” (South Africa 1997). In this thesis, the acronym NPO will be adopted to broadly refer to civil society organisations, non-government organisations and community-based organisations.

In South Africa an NPO can further apply for the status of a public benefit organisation (PBO) with the Department of Social Development (DSD). Among other prerequisites, the NPO’s principal objective should be to embark on at least one public benefit activity, directed in an NPO fashion and with a philanthropic intention. PBOs are prohibited from employing their funds implicitly to aid or be in opposition to political parties; however, NPOs are not limited to advocacy (Maboya and McKay 2019; Volmink and Van der Elst 2017). Social innovation also serves as the common denominator between the for-profit and NPO sectors. An NPO operating as a PBO receives comprehensive financial advantages, involving a partial income tax indemnity, an indemnity on gifts taxes and an indemnity on relocation duty on unmovable acreage (Kumaran, Samuel and Winston 2012).

The Value-added Tax (VAT) Act moreover includes conditions that may further benefit qualified PBOs (Rosenthal 2012). For instance, where an NPO’s undertakings lie within specifically identified categories, it is considered a welfare entity and that permits it to enrol into the VAT Act devoid of meeting the typical suitability requirement of a yearly revenue of R1 million. Registration with the South African Revenue Services allows it to recoup VAT compensations on its expenses concerning qualifying endeavours. Non-profit activities delivered by a welfare entity may be deemed as zero-rated activities from a VAT perspective (Rosenthal 2012).

According to Statistics SA (2017), the main income sources for NPOs from 2010 to 2014 were government aid, donations, funding from services provided and membership fees. NPOs that supported societal services or activities received the bulk of government funding at 44%, while

NPOs classified under philanthropy and voluntarism generated most of their funding from donations and service provision instead.

NPOs that relied solely on donor or government funding were pointedly affected by the worldwide 2008 fiscal recession (Akintola et al. 2016). Financial resources from donors and development assistance deteriorated abruptly in 2009 and continued to be low. NPOs were subsequently forced to restructure, limit services and reduce staff (Akintola et al. 2016). NPOs' reactions to the unforeseen fluctuations in the external economy impacted their sustainability and exacerbated a previously stretched funding landscape. Additionally, a shift towards the corporatisation of NPOs was noted (Harding 2014).

Recently, NPOs have been concerned with financial sustainability beyond mission sustainability and adopted a more corporate approach; however, not all NPOs were able to achieve success. Financial sustainability challenges have challenged NPO leaders and this meant that NPOs required organisational attributes such as trustworthiness, legitimacy, good governance and resource mobilisation (Harding 2014).

### **1.3. Organisational resilience and adaptive capacity**

Resilience is a term with far-reaching applications; engineering, socio-ecology and psychology use it to portray the capability of an individual, object or system to withstand or spring back from some form of trial (Scarce and Wang 2020). Resilience relates to several academic fields and the term has accordingly been used contextually in differing circumstances (Karman 2020). Resilience is a function of intricate structures and can be applied at various levels, from individuals to ecosystems, communities and institutions (Visser 2020). While the context and use of the word resilience might vary across several arenas, the notion of resilience relates to the competence and ability of a system to go back to a steady position following a disturbance (Bhamra, Dani and Burnard 2011). When this concept of resilience is applied to institutions, this notion does not radically transform but is related to organisational and individual reactions to disruptions (Bhamra et al. 2011).

The notion of resilience related to organisations was initially postulated by Hirsch and Levin in 1999 as an 'umbrella format' which is a comprehensive notion utilised lightly to incorporate and justify a group of varied trends (Hirsch and Levin 1999). Research into how organisations became resilient in high-hazard settings came about from studies conducted on high-reliability institutions in the 1990s (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld 1999; Klockner 2017). Organisations, such as nuclear power plants and airlines, were studied to determine how they operated in high-risk environments (Klockner 2017).

With increasing environmental intricacies and volatility, the organisational resilience concept is significant for both application and research purposes (Evenseth, Sydnes and Gausdal 2022). However, as organisational resilience theory is in the nascent phase, a key aspect that remains unresolved is how to achieve organisational resilience (Chen, Xie et al. 2021; Ma, Xiao et al. 2018).

A considerable number of researchers have reduced the practical complexity of organisational resilience by focusing on an entity's capacity to deal with disruptions (Linnenluecke 2017). Unexpected events occurring in a turbulent environment are frequently examined retrospectively and limited research has focused on daily procedures related to how organisational resilience can be sustained. Additionally, the research emphasis has mostly been on activities following the occurrence of an unforeseen event, which is reasonable from a research perspective. However, resilience to an unexpected event can be both positive and harmful. For example, an organisation with a toxic culture could persist and be deemed resilient; this is similar to an ecosystem that could build resilience to an invasion of an alien species, which would not necessarily be deemed positive. Therefore deepening our understanding of organisational resilience is critical to perceive when the augmentation of resilience is positive and when it would need to be minimised (Landrum et al. 2015).

Defining organisational resilience is challenging as researchers often derive definitions for the unique aspects of the study field, e.g., leadership, strategy or human resources (Blades 2017; Burnard and Bhamra 2011; Rahi 2019). Organisational resilience is often considered a fuzzy subject due to its broad application across several fields (Duchek 2020; Rahi 2019). However, for this study, the following definitions from recent studies were chosen as the most relevant.

Visser (2020) describes resilience as the upkeep of optimistic change under difficult circumstances where the organisation reinforces and becomes more inventive. This definition was chosen for its reference to innovation and will be discussed in the next chapter. Duchek (2020, p. 220) defines organisational resilience "as an organisation's ability to anticipate potential threats, to cope effectively with adverse events, and to adapt to changing conditions". This description importantly notes the expectation of threats which is a vital capability for institutional accomplishments (Coutu 2002). Organisational resilience is the institutional ability to handle disturbances and unforeseen events with calculated awareness and connected management of operations for both inner and outer shocks (Annarelli and Nonino 2016). This definition was important as it viewed organisational resilience as an organisational capability.

Contemporary researchers have evolved the concept of organisational resilience and noted that there is some tension between resilience as a process and resilience as an outcome (Van Breda

2018). Entities regularly operate with various disruptions and the capability to endure regular disturbances reactively and adjust proactively while developing innovative capabilities is advantageous (Saad et al. 2021). Some academics have referenced organisational resilience in a passive context whereby the organisation can pivot to its previous state without collapsing.

On the other hand, other researchers have viewed organisational resilience from an active perspective, whereby an intentional endeavour is undertaken for the organisation to improve its ability to respond to and manage environmental changes (Saad et al. 2021). Research into enhancing organisational resilience has generally focused on an escalating quantity of related analyses, including diversified focal study themes, perspectives and methodologies and recently scholars have added pathways for social and emotional perspectives (Chen, Liu et al. 2021).

The study of organisational resilience concentrates on the collaboration of numerous parts of a system responding jointly to outer stimulus, particularly unexpected occurrences (Lissack and Letiche 2002; Witmer and Mellinger 2016). From this perspective, the system can be viewed as the wider non-profit entity and its parts can be deemed to be made up of adaptive capacities, considering that “the adaptive capacity represents the set of resources accessible for adaptation, including the capacity to utilise these resources efficiently in the quest for adaptation and that resources may be natural, financial, institutional or human, and includes access to ecosystems, information, expertise, and social networks” (Brooks and Adger 2005, p. 168). It is natural to focus on this aspect of organisational resilience due to the recurring reference to resources made within each of the key organisational resilience concepts discussed in the previous section.

Central to adaptive capacity is an entity's capability to determine an appropriate balance, that is, entities must rapidly adapt their internal organisational rudiments to the aspects that result from a changing exterior environment. Adaptive capacity is considered an organisation's long-term proactivity in generating and employing newfound knowledge and aptly pivoting in a turbulent environment (Mahdad et al. 2020). NPOs experience increased competition for limited resources and with increased regulating limitations, NPOs are unable to continue to be financially operational and additionally experience further pressure to continue to be communally appropriate. Therefore, the development of NPOs' adaptive capacities is vital to enable them to withstand unexpected circumstances and rebound well (Kellner, Townsend and Wilkinson 2017; Renjini 2018; Witmer and Mellinger 2016).

#### **1.4 Organisational resilience key concepts**

Duchek (2020) found that there was no agreement within the literature about the meaning of organisational resilience and of which elements it was comprised. However, organisational resilience researchers have highlighted key factors and often framed organisational resilience

from the main concept perspectives of expectancy and planning (Dalziell and McManus 2004; Duchek 2020), adaptability and adaptive capacity (Brooks and Adger 2005; Moura and Tomei 2021; Walker et al. 2004), flexibility and redundancy (Andersson et al. 2019; Burnard, Bhamra and Tsinopoulos 2018; Karman 2020; Schriber, Bauer and King 2019) and recoverability (Annarelli and Nonino 2016; Salehi, Veitch and Musharraf 2020; Sawalha 2015).

Due to the fuzzy nature of the organisational resilience construct, there are often interconnected lenses through which the subject is viewed and the application of these concepts is dependent on the context in which they are framed (Duchek 2020). It was found that each of these concepts frequently refers to resources, which could be the efficient allocation, use or lack of resources, and instances of these are included in the following expansion of these concepts.

#### 1.4.1 Expectancy and planning

A proper resilient organisation should constantly scan, recognise and plan for probable risks and be well prepared to manage the outcomes and impact once these risks materialise (Sin, Musa and Ng 2017). The foundation of organisational resilience is the essential understanding and handling of risk – mostly non-routine or disturbance-related risk (Gibson and Tarrant 2010). Organisations often engage in a risk identification process but very few go beyond the identification process to develop an expected response to possible risks (Vogus and Sutcliffe 2007).

Tactical planning is worthwhile when expecting potential disturbances to recognise vulnerabilities both from an internal and external organisational perspective, however, entities regularly experience challenges with effective planning or anticipation due to resource constraints (Branicki, Sullivan-Taylor and Livschitz 2017). The central focus of the majority of organisational resilience studies has been on containing a crisis and the planning or anticipation factors include circumventing unexpected events as well as exertions to stop the progress of adverse events (Andersson et al. 2019; Winnemucca 2017).

Several entities addressed this organisational capability through diverse methods with some concentrating on organisational continuity while others accentuated disaster management (Sin et al. 2017). An organisational culture that promotes resilience and innovation recognises that an adverse event is unpredictable from a timing perspective, therefore, a risk-consciousness culture based on long-term survival should be proactively nurtured (Vakilzadeh and Haase 2020).

#### 1.4.2 Flexibility and redundancy

Flexibility denotes an entity's ability to react and adjust its actions to manage disturbances (Schriber et al. 2019). Strategic flexibility includes a set of competences related to the

reconfiguration of an entity's purpose and vision. Furthermore, an understanding of the environment is necessary when an entity faces turbulence that could have a significant impact requiring timely responses (Alexiou 2015). Entities without resource limitations, where resources are easily allocated to and across various departments, are advantaged when flexibility, encompassing the capacity to employ resources within the entity, is included in their strategy (Adomako and Ahsan 2022).

Redundancy tactics include options for day-to-day operations. Initially, some setbacks in resources and performance may be experienced before alternate arrangements become operational and performance is restored to adequate levels (Gibson and Tarrant 2010). Dependency on a reactionary stance to a crisis is not ideal; robust implementable resilience plans including redundancy of resources are optimal (Bryce et al. 2022). Emergency plans should however be tried and drilled to be valuable in a realistic emergency (Coutu 2002).

#### 1.4.3 Recoverability

Natural disasters, pandemics, terrorism and fiscal recessions can all pose a threat to an organisation's continuity of operations (Bhamra et al. 2011). Resilience is not merely about rebounding after a crisis but focuses on adaptive capacity and how to improve understanding and confront uncertainty in interior and exterior environments (Gibson and Tarrant 2010). Recoverability stems from the efficient reorganisation of resources and the gathering of organisational capacities including flexibility and adaptableness to its market (Shepherd and Williams 2023).

A key requirement within any resilient organisation is the capacity of the system to react to and recuperate from an occurrence (Coutu 2002). However, Dalziell and McManus (2004) question what an organisation should recover to and postulate that in a dynamic environment, an organisation is not an inert object and any organisation that stays precisely the same will ultimately wear away its ability to attain its mission. The capability of an organisation to recurrently adapt to and learn from its shifting environment is a crucial adaptive capacity necessary for its survival (Strichman, Bickel and Marshood 2008). It is also vital for organisations to not only concentrate on occurrences that can be foreseen but also on those occurrences that they have already been through. Organisations should prepare for the unknown by increasing resilience through overall flexibility and agility (Coutu 2002).

#### 1.4.4 Adaptability and adaptive capacity

The process of adaptation entails the ability to retain knowledge from prior practices to cope with present situations and to utilise those lessons learnt to cope with upcoming situations together

with shocks (Brooks and Adger 2005). Adaptation is the capability of key actors related to a system to bring about resilience (Walker et al. 2004). Adaptation involves building adaptive capacity and, in so doing, augmenting the ability of organisations to respond to changes while applying decisions related to adaptation (Brooks and Adger 2005).

A key characteristic of a resilient organisation is its adaptive capacity or capability to adapt (Lundberg and Johansson 2015). In an organisation, adaptation can advance organically when an adequate self-organising capacity is available or, mechanistically when the organisational response is focused and coordinated by conventional internal configurations such as communication avenues (Trijp, Boersma and Groenewegen 2018). A key element of adaptive capacity is the ability to learn and advance new understandings that are essential for organisations to continue dynamically and remain functional, or else, systems could become static, overlooking internal capital (Allen and Holling 2010). Trap et al. (2018) found that organisational resilience is enriched by a composite and varied network in which an entity exists and is stimulated by adaptive learning.

One of the few studies on NPO adaptive capacity was carried out by Sussman (2003) who identified four important features, namely, external focus, network connectedness, inquisitiveness and innovativeness. First, NPOs with an adaptive capacity are reactive to what occurs outside their NPO borders. They wilfully interact with their environment which subsequently provides information, encourages learning and promotes improved performance. Second, NPOs should be connected to a larger network of organisations to develop strategic alliances and external inter-reliant relationships to enable mission fulfilment. Third, inquisitive NPOs are excellent learners and value information management and organisational evaluation. Lastly, NPOs should consistently encourage innovation, being open to new ideas, diversity of beliefs and opinions and experimentation (Strichman et al. 2008; Sussman 2003). Several inferences to organisational resilience tenets can be drawn. Importantly, the adaptive capacity and the performance of the NPO and its mission achievement are emphasised and are similar to the findings of Trap et al. (2018) in terms of adaptive learning.

An NPO's competitive behaviour could result in differentiation, consequently improving donor funding and mission deliverables (Curley et al. 2021). NPOs have gradually begun to acknowledge competition in their sector, however, it is often viewed as inappropriate by NPO leaders (Sharp 2018). Nonetheless, as competitive demands increase for limited resources in the NPO environment, NPOs could likely not completely avoid competition. In a competitive environment, NPOs need to manage their resources efficiently. NPOs may exploit certain distinctive resources not available to the business world such as monetary and in-kind donations,

grant funding from regimes and corporates, their tax-exempt standing, a voluntary labour force and a distinctively positive image (Topaloglu, McDonald and Hunt 2018).

Focusing on the adaptive capacities of NPOs is deemed important in a resource-constrained non-profit sector. This study adopted an active perspective on organisational resilience, as highlighted by Saad et al. (2021), in which NPOs' adaptive capacities were identified and their efficient use and allocation enabled NPOs to adapt to environmental turbulence, rather than a passive view where the NPO simply returned to its previous state.

Studies on ecosystems have found that adaptive capacity can enhance the stability of an ecosystem's resilience against natural and non-natural perturbations (Galland et al. 2020). Recent studies have also linked the learnings from the adaptive capacities of ecosystems in nature to an entity's adaptive capacity to achieve organisational resilience (Orias 2023). As this study will be limited to environmental NPOs, it is also natural to focus on the learnings from the adaptive capacities of ecosystems.

### **1.5 Rationale and significance of the study**

The unprecedented escalation in the number of NPOs in South Africa matches the current global trend in the growth of NPOs (Maboya and McKay 2019). This increase in the number of NPOs means that donors are now faced with many more charitable causes from which to choose, resulting in increased competition between NPOs for the limited pool of donor funding (Burkart, Wakolbinger and Toyasaki 2018).

During the global economic recession of 2008, most South African NPOs were negatively impacted by funding constraints. Some NPOs deviated from their missions, others reduced their operations to survive, while several more stopped operating altogether (Akintola et al. 2016; Maboya and McKay 2019). Whether shrinking operations, deviating from their mission or closing down, several NPOs were forced to abandon their beneficiaries and end their contribution to society and the environment (Maboya and McKay 2019).

As societal needs increase, the NPO sector will continue to expand in response to this demand. This expansion will further constrain the limited pool of funding, making it more challenging for NPOs to achieve their organisational missions (Haywood et al. 2019). Non-profit entities have a significant role in restoring the balance between humans and the natural environment. This role is perceived to be critical for the ongoing existence of the human race (Baglioni, De Pieri and Tallarico 2017).

According to a study conducted in 2013, trust in the business world and governments, in general, has eroded; subsequently, trust in NPOs increased and generally, people trusted that NPOs would act with more integrity (Osburg and Schmidpeter 2013). Considering the important nature of the work that NPOs undertake concerning the achievement of the SDGs, underwriting the well-being of the planet and its inhabitants, NPOs need to develop adaptive capacities to respond to and pre-empt the challenges of increased competition and limited funding.

While the NPO sector underwrites a significant economic contribution to the overall South African economy, inadequate and sporadic studies have been undertaken on the NPO sector (Maboya and McKay 2019; Patel 2009; Salamon et al. 2012; Swilling and Russell 2002). An advanced search conducted on EBSCO – Business Source Complete for the last three decades for the keywords ‘NGO or non-governmental organisation or non-profit or non-governmental organisation’ and ‘adaptive capacity and organisational resilience’ uncovered a total of seven publications. The gap in academic research conducted on the adaptive capacities and organisational resilience of NPOs is evident from the small number of articles published. Furthermore, according to Duchek (2020), several studies have focused on organisational resilience from the engineering, socio-ecology and psychology perspectives, however, there are limited studies from a management perspective. In particular, a gap is also apparent in the understanding of different entities' experiences and readings of adverse occurrences and differing response channels to varying configurations of organisational resilience (Shepherd and Williams 2023).

In the context of a volatile environment that is uncertain and multifaceted, NPOs need to be able to respond to shocks and remain viable to deliver on their missions. By building adaptive capacities, NPOs can, in turn, augment their organisational resilience.

This study intends to contribute to the gap in academic research on the adaptive capacities and organisational resilience construct from the perspective of environmental NPOs and contribute new knowledge on the adaptive capacities of South African NPOs in the context of limited resources and increased competition. from an organisational resilience perspective. The adaptive capacity framework developed will also help NPOs build organisational resilience on an individual and organisational basis as although the findings from this study will not be generalisable, they will be transferable.

The findings from the thematic analysis of the data collated from the semi-structured interviews will be useful in supporting policymakers at a national and local level. The contemporary view of the challenges and opportunities faced by NPO leaders for improvement in the currently lacking overall governance of the NPO sector in South Africa will also be invaluable. This research will

further assist leaders and managers of NPOs to deepen their understanding of the adaptive capacities of NPOs and the efficient use of limited resources, while helping them to understand how to navigate their NPOs through increased competition and other environmental turbulence, thus reducing managerial barriers on a case-by-case basis.

This research will also be of value to key NPO stakeholders such as donors and volunteers in expanding their context of the contributions and resources provided to environmental NPOs from an organisational resilience construct perspective. Further opportunities and research gaps, identified empirically as well as through the thematic analysis relevant to NPOs in general, will be emphasised in this study for further academic studies.

## **1.6 Problem statement**

Traditional business and risk management approaches were developed for more stable situations where forecasts based on data and likelihood were dependable (Blades 2017). However, as social and political environments become complex and uncertain, these traditional organisational management approaches are progressively less suited to contemporary decision-making (Blades 2017). A dominant concern in strategic management literature is the sustainability of an organisation's competitive advantage in unstable environments (Aggarwal, Posen and Workiewicz 2015). Dynamic competencies have been postulated as an instrument through which organisations can adapt to survive in turbulent environments (Aggarwal et al. 2015; Helfat and Peteraf 2015).

During unstable and uncertain periods, organisations are recurrently met with unpredicted events and calamities. Without business continuity and suitable reaction and recovery plans, more than 40 per cent of organisations cease to exist within a short period after a major calamity occurs (Aven 2016; Duchek 2020; Goble, Fields and Cocchiara 2002). The International Civil Society (2013) noted that when NPOs are faced with calamities or threats, they can choose to build organisational resilience and adapt or incur damage by the disruptions to the status quo (Mutongwizo 2018).

NPO actors are demonstrating their value as mediators, trendsetters and innovators, along with service provision and activism, while the private sector is playing a progressively noticeable and active role in confronting social challenges (Nicholas and Farrell 2013). Natural disasters, pandemics, terrorism and fiscal recessions can all pose threats to an organisation's continuity of operations (Bhamra et al. 2011). The problem is that NPOs themselves stand at the forefront of responding to the very pandemics, fiscal recessions and environmental shifts that also threaten their existence (Scarce and Wang 2020; Witmer and Mellinger 2016). Considering the central role of South African NPOs and the impact of increased competition and limited funding, NPOs

need to build organisational resilience and develop their adaptive capacity to sustain themselves and deliver on their organisational missions.

Despite the critical role that environmental NPOs occupy within the NPO sector, initiatives related to the environment received only 3% of South African corporate social investment (CSI) spent in 2022, while the education and social and community development sectors remained the most supported sectors at 44% and 17%, respectively (Triologue 2022). In addition to the increasing competition for funding from NPOs in all other sectors, other difficulties include funding losses for conservation generated from activities such as ecotourism, government funding that is transferred to social relief efforts (e.g., grants for unemployed citizens), funder urgencies that have shifted to pandemic relief efforts and decreased funding from corporates and high-wealth individuals (Sandbrook et al. 2019).

If the problem of the existential concerns of these NPOs is not addressed, businesses and regimes that often fear NPO prominence because they are construed as a potential threat to their dominion will be left unchecked and enable further environmental degradation (Casey 2016; Zulkhibri 2014). The reduction in government spending in support of social and charitable work has created a dire need and gap which NPOs fill (Akintola et al. 2016). Should environmental NPOs cease and fail to address their existential concerns and not be in a position to fulfil their missions, stakeholders such as poor rural communities dependent on the environment for survival will be neglected and adversely affected (Sandbrook et al. 2020).

NPOs occupy a central position in delivering on the SDGs and other global environmental and social commitments to which South Africa has prescribed and such time-sensitive targets may incur setbacks or not be achieved at all (Naidoo and Fisher 2020). Considering some of South Africa's shortcomings, such as inadequate communication, a lack of trust and leadership deficiencies, opportunities for mediation and innovation supporting the development of various sectors and stakeholders working towards a shared purpose may be lost due to NPO existential concerns (Holtzhausen 2014; Meiring et al. 2018; Thompson and Wissink 2018).

For NPOs, over and above decreased resources, there are also augmented governing restrictions and increased competition to continue to be financially operational and added pressure to remain socially relevant (Kimberlin, Schwartz and Austin 2011; Witmer and Mellinger 2016). Therefore, NPOs need to develop their adaptive capacity to enable them to cope well with unforeseen situations and bounce back from calamities (Witmer and Mellinger 2016).

Although vital, financial sustainability is but one characteristic of an organisation's general capabilities and NPOs must also develop a wide-ranging array of structural, human and technical capacities (Bowman 2011; Sontag-Padilla, Staplefoote and Morganti 2012). NPOs compete with

each other for funding from donors viewed as customers, endowments, reputation and brand build, board members, bequests, political prowess, staff and volunteers. NPOs also compete for coalitions with for-profit organisations and local and national governments (Barman 2002; Sharp 2018; Tuckman 1998).

Empirical studies undertaken in the last two decades, for example, by Kilbey (2010) and Maboya and McKay (2019), have focused on the fundraising landscape in South Africa and the financial sustainability of South African NPOs, respectively. Other studies by Habib (2005), Patel (2009) and Skhosana (2020) have focused on social and political factors as well as social worker retention challenges in South Africa. Studies by Bornstein (2006) and Mueller-Hirth (2012) focused on the monitoring and evaluation of NPOs in SA, while studies by Gilson et al. (2017) and Van Breda (2018) focused on the resilience of district health systems and social work, respectively. Only one study by Friedman (2005) on the organisational resilience of corporates in South Africa was noted.

In general, academic studies undertaken on South African NPOs by Maboya and McKay (2019), Patel (2009), Salamon et al. (2012) and Swilling and Russell (2002) have all found that academic studies on the NPO sector in South Africa are patchy. Each has recommended that further studies are required in this sector to develop a comprehensive literature base. With growing environmental difficulties and unpredictability, the organisational resilience construct is important to application and investigation objectives. However, the organisational resilience construct remains at the emerging stage and a vital aspect that persists without clarity is exactly how organisational resilience may be attained (Chen, Xie et al. 2021).

This study, therefore, addresses this gap in the literature by determining how NPOs within the environmental sector in South Africa can develop adaptive capacities to enhance their organisational resilience to survive in a turbulent environment. According to Rahi (2019), adaptive capacity influences organisational resilience; therefore, adaptivity may be viewed as a measure of an entity's resilience. Importantly, an adaptive capacity framework was developed to reduce the existential concerns of environmental NPOs by augmenting organisational resilience on a case-by-case basis. Overall, this study contributes to the gap in the literature related to organisational resilience from a management perspective.

## **1.7 Research aim**

This study aims to ascertain the adaptive capacities of South African NPOs, in a turbulent environment from an organisational resilience construct perspective.

## **1.8 Research objectives**

1. To explore the adaptive capacities of South African environmental NPOs considering a turbulent environment from an organisational resilience construct perspective.
2. To ascertain the pitfalls to developing the adaptive capacities of South African environmental NPOs considering increased competition and limited resources.
3. To establish how environmental NPOs in South Africa can build organisational resilience in a turbulent environment.
4. To develop an adaptive capacity framework based on South African environmental NPOs to promote non-profit organisational resilience.

## **1.9 Research questions**

1. What are the adaptive capacities of South African environmental NPOs considering a turbulent environment from an organisational resilience construct viewpoint?
2. What are the pitfalls to developing the adaptive capacities of South African environmental NPOs considering increased competition and limited resources?
3. How can South African environmental NPOs build organisational resilience in a turbulent environment?
4. What adaptive capacity framework can be developed to promote the organisational resilience of South African environmental NPOs?

## **1.10 Philosophy of research**

The intrinsic distinctions in how reality is understood (ontology) and knowledge is perceived and assessed (epistemology) are all significant to the finding, innovation or formation of knowledge (axiology). The junction of these maxims shapes the comprehension of what structures of knowledge are deemed legitimate by researchers (Lynch et al. 2021).

The choice of the research methodology was directed by the research onion model developed by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009). This qualitative study applied an interpretivist philosophy with an inductive research approach, a case study strategy and multiple data collection techniques over a period of time. The interpretivism epistemological perspective was implemented to obtain an intense sense of social experiences by examining the participants' understandings of and mindsets in building non-profit organisational resilience.

According to the findings by Annarelli and Nonino (2016), studies conducted on organisational resilience comprise conceptual and empirical studies as well as detailed reviews of the literature on the subject. To date, only a few studies have implemented quantitative methods due to the

broad nature of the subject (Oeij et al. 2017). In addition, the general disposition and the methods most frequently used in the study of organisational resilience are the case study and construct development methods, (Ma, Xiao et al. 2018). Furthermore, a challenge in conducting research into the NPO sector and a commonly known bias is that research participants are inclined to make their NPOs look healthier if they relate to a survey as a manner of evaluation (Van Zyl, Claeys and Flambard 2018). Therefore, to reduce this type of bias, a case study was preferable.

The inductive approach applied to this study set out to examine organisational resilience and the adaptive capacity of environmental NPOs in the context of increased competition and limited resources and from a turbulent environment perspective. Models adopted from the commercial world are commonly used to forecast the demise of NPOs, however, the strategies used to continue providing their programmatic social objectives are regularly descriptive and contextually determined, suggesting that the numbers are only one part of the dilemma (Finkler, Smith and Calabrese 2018; Searing, Wiley and Young 2021). Therefore, qualitative research related to organisational resilience is required and may be considerably more effort intensive. Furthermore, the pursuit of organisational resilience approaches is unavoidably prescriptive, which is not necessarily the point of reference from an NPO management literature perspective. The study of organisational resilience necessitates a systemic tactic that is multifaceted and qualitatively positioned (Searing et al. 2021). Therefore, from a broad non-profit strategic management perspective including a holistic view of the entity, an inductive approach for this study was deemed appropriate.

Ontologically, in terms of organisational resilience, numerous definitions and elements of the construct exist and are reliant on the context of studies conducted (Duchek 2020; Rahi 2019). Therefore, this study aimed to comprehend the phenomena of organisational resilience from the viewpoints of the NPO leaders participating in the study, thus, recognising that there is more than a single reality and necessitating the comprehension of numerous perspectives on the topic.

From an epistemology perspective, this study explores how NPOs can implement strategies and ascertain adaptive capacities to augment organisational resilience, whereby knowledge is deemed to stem from the subjective insights of the NPO leaders participating in the study. Furthermore, the author played an active role, participating in generating knowledge by interpreting their experiences to generate numerous meanings (Scotland 2012).

Lastly from an axiological perspective, in this study, the author vigorously engaged in the research practice by interviewing the participants and performing an analysis of the data collated from the semi-structured interviews. Empirical findings were interpreted by the author who drew on theories and relevant literature to develop an insight into the study topic.

### **1.11 Delimitations**

This study utilised a geographic delimitation of the empirical outcomes and focused solely on 11 environmental NPOs in South Africa. Consequently, the empirical outcomes may be limited to other contexts and countries from a generalisability perspective. Therefore, the findings of this study are largely applicable to the particular context of environmental NPOs operating in South Africa on a case-by-case basis.

This study's empirical data were gained through semi-structured interviews conducted only with the leaders of the environmental NPOs – Director, CEO, Executive Director or Founder and Managing Director – from April 2022 to July 2022. This delimitation was grounded on the key role that NPO leaders have in strategic decision-making. Therefore, the insights of the leaders of the environmental NPOs provided valuable information for the understanding of the adaptive capacities and organisational resilience of their NPOs; however, their views may have varied at different times.

### **1.12 Expected contribution to knowledge**

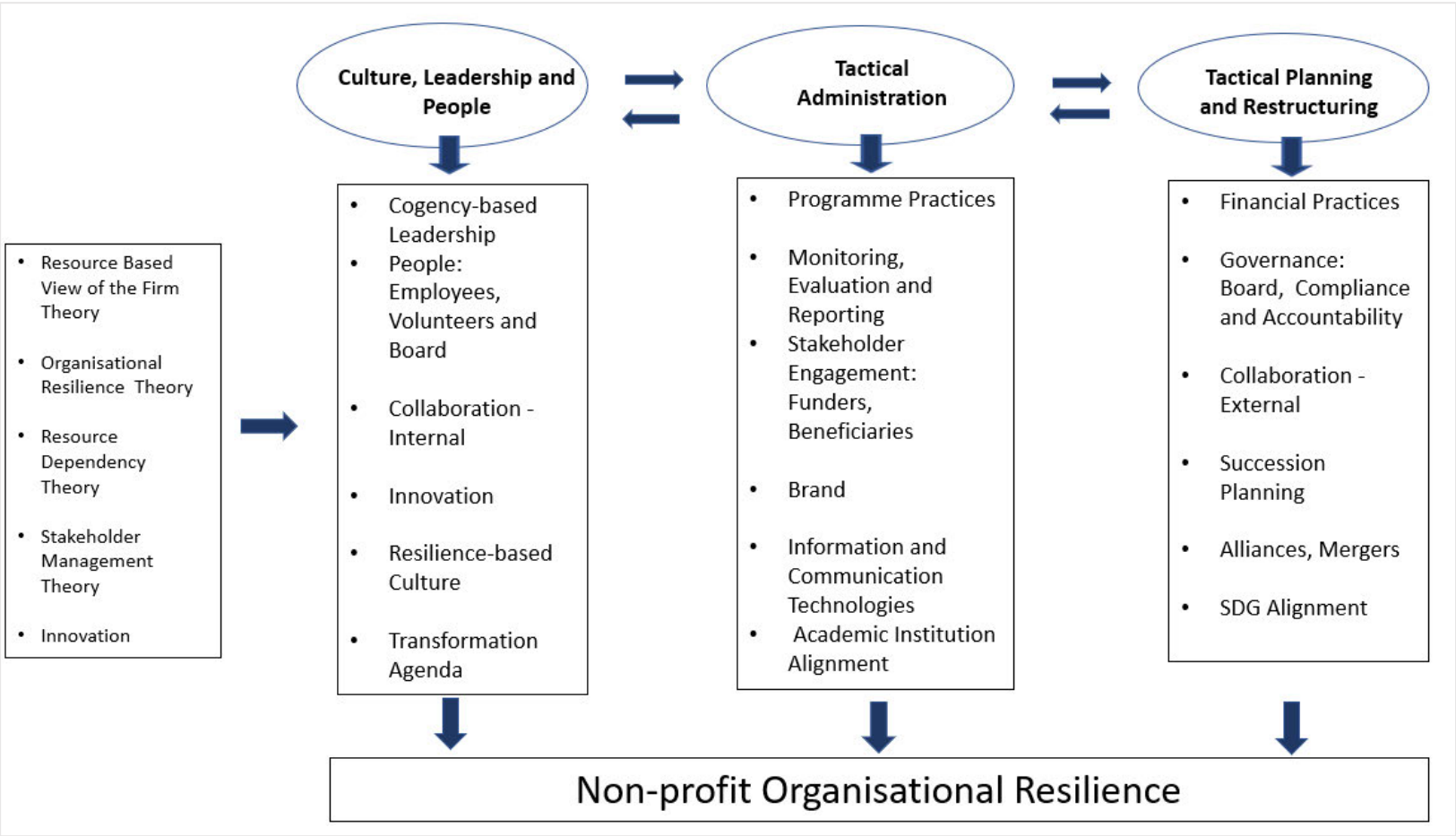
While the NPO sector underwrites a significant economic contribution to the overall South African economy, inadequate and sporadic studies have been undertaken on the NPO sector (Maboya and McKay 2019; Patel 2009; Salamon et al. 2012; Swilling and Russell 2002). This study will fill the gap related to the limited academic studies addressing the organisational resilience and adaptive capacities of NPOs. This study will contribute new knowledge on the adaptive capacities of South African NPOs in the context of limited funding and increased competition from an organisational resilience perspective and may contribute to expanding policy holders' viewpoints.

Focusing on the adaptive capacities of NPOs is deemed important in a resource-constrained non-profit sector. This study adopted an active perspective on organisational resilience, as highlighted by Saad et al. (2021), in which NPOs' adaptive capacities were identified and their efficient use and allocation enabled NPOs to adapt to environmental turbulence, rather than a passive view where the NPO simply returned to its previous state.

To answer the research questions, the literature review focuses on the resources accessible to NPOs and the NPOs' abilities to utilise these resources effectively. The eleven adaptive capacities initially identified from the literature reviewed were grouped and are discussed under three headings. Following the data analysis, a further seven adaptive capacities were found to exist and the total of eighteen adaptive capacities are presented within the three broad categories in figure 1.1 below. This NPO adaptive capacities framework will also assist NPOs in building

organisational resilience on an individual organisational basis as the findings from this study will not be generalisable but rather transferable and relevant to unique case situations. This study will also contribute to the academic literature on organisational resilience theory which is still in the nascent phase (Ma, Xiao et al. 2018).

Figure 1-1 NPO adaptive capacity framework



Source: Author’s own work

### **1.13 Brief chapter overviews**

The thesis includes six chapters in total. Chapter 1 expounds on the backdrop on which the research is grounded and sets out the study objectives, including the problem statement, limitations of the research etc. The groundwork for the research is also established with more background on the NPO segment in South Africa, including an overview and linkages to the for-profit sector and the laws that govern the South African NPO segment and the funding landscape.

A comprehensive literature review is undertaken in Chapter 2, exploring the significant concepts or theoretical frameworks that influenced this research, including the organisational resilience management framework, the resilience triangle model, the resource-based view (RBV) of the firm theory, social innovation and stakeholder management theory. Chapter 2 is positioned to establish a literature reference point to satisfy the research objectives set within Chapter 1 and is important to complete to have a deep understanding of the subject matter before proceeding to the data collection point and the engagement in the semi-structured interviews.

The methodology utilised within this research is described in Chapter 3. The research design and data analysis approach are explained. This chapter includes a detailed critique of all procedures followed to complete the research. Particulars of the research discoveries and data analysis are presented in Chapter 4. Deliberations and sub-conclusions, resulting from the implementation of the research methodology from Chapter 3, including the statistical analysis outcomes, are discussed here.

A summary of the research results and inferences is presented in Chapter 5. Findings from the literature review and outcomes of the analysis of the data collated from the interviews enabled the organisational resilience framework to be developed and presented in this chapter. Future research suggestions related to this research field are also set out in this chapter. To preserve focus, the thread used throughout the research is the research objectives based on the theoretical frameworks and organisational resilience models explored.

## **Chapter 2 - Literature review and proposal of an adaptive capacity framework**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Chapter 2 includes a discussion on the turbulent and competitive environments in which NPOs operate. In addition to the organisational resilience construct discussed in Chapter 1, a discussion of four additional theories relevant to the study follows. The literature review is guided by the research questions and objectives listed in Chapter 1 and the adaptive capacities related to organisational resilience in the NPO sector are also explored. “The adaptive capacity represents the set of resources accessible for adaptation, including the capacity to utilise these resources efficiently in the quest for adaptation. Resources may be natural, financial, institutional or human, and include access to ecosystems, information, expertise, and social networks” (Brooks and Adger 2005, p. 168). In this chapter an adaptive capacity framework to augment non-profit organizational resilience will be proposed based on a review of organisational resilience frameworks developed by academic scholars. The adaptive capacities identified from the literature review will then be discussed within the broad adaptive capacity categories namely: People, Planning and Practises.

### **2.2 Turbulent and competitive environment**

Turbulence and uncertainty, present in varying degrees, are considered to be ongoing qualities of the environment and are a central tenet of organisational resilience research (Morais-Storz et al. 2018). A turbulent environment can be defined as a random change in the progressiveness and intricacy of an entity setting (Boyne and Meier 2009). The level of environmental turbulence may be high for several reasons – increased competition, new technology and high unpredictability (Al Ani and Al Kathiri 2019; Kipley et al. 2018). The greater the degree of volatility that exists in the environment, the greater the negative consequences on the organisation (Al Ani and Al Kathiri 2019). The impact of COVID-19 can be construed as a high degree of unpredictability in the environment. Together with increased competition and funding constraints, the degree of environmental turbulence for this study may be deemed as high.

The impact of COVID-19 has further compounded already constrained government budgets for conservation efforts, visible in the decline of tourism to conservation-protected areas that are reliant on this income stream (Lindsey et al. 2020). Food shortages faced by developing countries have noted an increase in the hunting of wildlife to subsidise income losses (Van der Merwe et al. 2021).

Economic disturbances resulting from the pandemic have decreased the financial and human resources of conservation and environmentally focused entities. Difficulties include funding losses for conservation generated from activities such as ecotourism and government funding that are transferred to social relief efforts (e.g., grants for unemployed citizens); funder urgencies have shifted to pandemic relief efforts and decreased funding from corporates and high-wealth individuals (Sandbrook et al. 2019). Together these adverse effects could outweigh the brief gains for biodiversity resulting from the pandemic (Sandbrook, Gómez-Baggethun and Adams 2020). The conservation of ecosystems, a culture that respects life in water and on land, as mentioned in the SDGs can avoid future pandemics but this cannot be achieved without institutions such as environmental NPOs that operate across business and government sectors in service of communities and the environment (Nemţeanu and Dabija 2020; Ng 2020; O'Connell 2020)

Brown (A.M. 2019) found that NPOs often traverse environmental turbulence in two ways, i.e., by exploring strategic mechanisms to cope with outer change or by exploring the capacities needed and how these capacities could be established, preserved or weakened through varying practices (Brown, Andersson and Jo 2016). However, from a practical and theoretical perspective, NPO capacity and strategy may be considered intersecting areas (Brown, A.M. 2019).

It has become more challenging for NPOs to pursue their missions in recent years due to declining regime support, an increase in the number of new NPOs and several businesses that now also serve markets traditionally considered NPO territory (Dobrai and Farkas 2016; Mohammed 2017). When for-profit entities compete against each other, trust among patrons increases (Huck, Lünser and Tyran 2012). However, it is unclear whether trust among funders and communities increases when NPOs compete against each other. Such competition could decrease trust between NPOs and negatively impact inter-organisational collaboration. On the other hand, an NPO's competitive behaviour could result in differentiation, consequently improving donor funding and mission deliverables (Curley et al. 2021).

NPOs have gradually begun to acknowledge competition in their sector, however, it is often viewed as inappropriate by NPO leaders (Sharp 2018). Nonetheless, as competitive demands increase for limited resources in the NPO environment, NPOs could likely not completely avoid competition. NPOs depend on stakeholders for resources related to survival. A turbulent environment is regularly referred to when there is a high degree of financial and resource-based uncertainties (Brown, A.M. 2019).

Traditionally, social media, volunteers and staff, fundraising capacities and legitimacy were identified as key factors that resulted in the overall effectiveness of an NPO; however, it is important to identify other sources of competitive advantage (Walk, Curley and Levine Daniel

2022). In a competitive environment, NPOs need to manage their resources efficiently. NPOs may exploit certain distinctive resources not available to the business world such as monetary and in-kind donations, grant funding from the government and corporates, their tax-exempt status, a voluntary labour force and a distinctively positive image (Topaloglu et al. 2018).

NPOs also experience competition for fundamental resources such as competent employees and volunteers, networked board members and funding (Clear, Paull and Holloway 2018; Ab Samad and Ahmad 2022; Topaloglu et al. 2018). Walk et al. (2022) find that all NPOs do not operate equally well in a competitive atmosphere and achieving a competitive lead could enhance outcomes if they develop essential strategies such as resource development. Furthermore, Paarlberg and Hwang (2017) find that increased competition often results in increased access to new resources not previously present within the sector. Therefore, increased competition could have positive effects and is dependent on an NPO's adaptability (Paarlberg and Hwang 2017; Curley et al. 2021).

### **2.3 Resource dependency theory**

The resource dependence theory (RDT) has been influential in strategic management studies since its inception by Pfeffer and Salancik in 1978 (Hillman, Withers and Collins 2009). The RDT views a business as an open set-up which is dependent on exigencies in the outside environment (Hillman et al. 2009; Pfeffer and Salancik 2003). The effect of outside influences on organisational behaviour is fundamental in the RDT and managers can effectively diminish environmental unpredictability and dependence by controlling critical resources (Hillman et al. 2009).

According to the RDT, businesses are inhibited by a web of interdependencies with other businesses. Unpredictable actions from other inter-reliant businesses result in uncertain survival and ongoing success possibilities (Hillman et al. 2009). Consequently, businesses act to manage outside interdependencies and inexorably generate new designs of vulnerability and inter-reliance. Subsequently, these designs of dependence then generate inter-business and intra-business power, impacting organisational behaviour (Hillman et al. 2009; Pfeffer and Salancik 2003). The RDT also explains how organisational structures arise and in what manner a multi-divisional organisation is formed. The RDT further theorises how mergers and acquisitions of businesses occur (Nienhüser 2008).

Organisational theories should broadly cover many characteristics of organisational behaviour and not be restricted to explicit resources or designated strategies. The RDT is an exemplary wide-ranging theory with substantial illustrative power (Nienhüser 2008). Subsequently, the RDT has become widely accepted academically. A pitfall of this is that the theory has not been as

meticulously explored and verified as it could have been (Davis and Cobb 2010). A criticism of the RDT is that there is a vagueness related to its threshold conditions (Casciaro and Piskorski 2005). Another pitfall found in the RDT is that empirical work mostly centres on the reliance of one resource on another instead of on mutual interdependencies (Hillman et al. 2009). The dynamic and rigorous characteristics of interdependencies and the strategies businesses deploy to manage these interdependencies can be further developed to refine the RDT theory (Hillman et al. 2009).

The RDT proposes an outwardly focused viewpoint including three reasons why businesses obtain other businesses (Haleblian et al. 2009): first, by assimilating an important opponent to diminish competition; second, by managing interdependency with supplier resources or product buyers by assimilating them; and finally, to diversify productions, subsequently diminishing reliance on businesses with which it interacts (Haleblian et al. 2009; Hillman et al. 2009). These may also be classified as vertical integration that occurs among purchasers and donors, horizontal expansion occurring between opponents and diversification to add varied activities or products (Malatesta and Smith 2014).

#### **2.4 Resource-based view of the firm**

According to the RBV of the firm, a business has a cohesive set of physical and intangible resources controlled by the business which enables it to comprehend and execute strategies intended to advance its competence and effectiveness (Barney 1991; Hunt and Morgan 1996). If a business wields tactical resources which are “valuable, rare, difficult or costly to imitate, and used by the organisation (VRIO) the firm can gain above standard outcomes and ongoing competitive advantage” (Kaufman 2016, p. 381). In the RBV, the palpability of business resources is subject to measurement (Shafeey and Trott 2014). From an RBV perspective, corporates have inner strengths and deficiencies. Organisational strengths are classified within the VRIO factors and deemed as competitive gains over competitors. When these VRIO strengths become regular and sustainable, these strengths become the core capabilities of an organisation (Raffo, Clark and Arik 2016; Wernerfelt 1984). The RBV highlights the framework delineating how for-profit entities generate continued competitive gains from resources and competences (Tate and Bals 2018).

Karman (2020) postulates that organisations that own strategic resources, according to the RBV, have key competitive advantages over other institutions as resources are considered strategic because they add value and are rare, challenging to imitate and unique. Capabilities develop over time as an organisation acts and they strengthen its strategic resources (Barney 1991). Dynamic capabilities allow organisations to have an exclusive capability of producing new capabilities.

This means that an organisation which has dynamic capabilities is accomplished at constantly apprising its collection of competencies to keep up with variations in the environment. Resilience and the coping capacity of an organisation can be viewed as dynamic capabilities (Karman 2020). Earlier experiential research highlighted the requirement for organisations to develop diverse resources to expand their capability to anticipate. These diverse resources include, but are not restricted to, relational or human capital and financial and technological resources (Karman 2020).

A critique of the RBV theory is that it emphasises competitive advantages but does not sufficiently address competitive parity. External market developments and price equalisation continually wear away possible increased revenues towards a break-even point or parity (Kaufman 2016). Another pitfall of the RBV is that the notion of value is defined broadly. Consequently, a firm's core attributes can increase its value created but leave its profit decreased. This occurs when the value created is due to customers' utility gains instead of producers' monetary gains (Kaufman 2016).

The RBV emphasises specific and separate resources and their intrinsic features (Kraaijenbrink, Spender and Groen 2010). However, Newbert (2007) finds that amalgamations of resources probably better explain firm performance than individual resources (Kraaijenbrink et al. 2010; Newbert 2007). Interestingly, this is a similar challenge to the organisational resilience theory noted by Burnard and Bhamra (2019). According to Kraaijenbrink et al. (2010), the RBV insufficiently acknowledges the importance of combining resources. It also does not recognise the human connection in evaluating and generating value, therefore, it does not adequately set out the crux of competitive advantage.

The recent growth in for-profit entities addressing previous non-profit challenges via hybrid models has resulted in competition on a level playing field. Consequently, NPOs are forced to adapt to augmented competition and the unending demand for additional accountability, thereby necessitating a more business-like approach (Salamon 2010).

NPO leaders often need to work with limited resources and, according to McManus et al. (2007), resources are vital to the resilience of an organisation and provide a strategic advantage to organisations when they are used to their full potential. Karman (2020) and Burnard and Bhamra (2011) also note the significance of a resource-based management style in the identification of risks where resources are arranged to respond effectively during a crisis but can also provide the best possible return to normalcy after a crisis.

One of the key enablers of the transformation and adaptability of NPOs is the availability of and ability to access and use resources (Mutongwizo 2018). Financial resources were found to be a key determinant for NPOs concerning long-term survival and have been the subject of several

studies where financial sustainability was the key focus (Duquette 2017; Maboya and McKay 2019; Nageswarakurukkal, Gonçalves and Moshtari 2019).

NPOs differ immensely in terms of size, competences, impact and purpose; nonetheless, at its core, each NPO has a distinct purpose to benefit its constituencies (Akintola et al. 2016; Skhosana 2020; Swilling and Russell 2002). Limited research on NPOs related to an RBV approach has been conducted since the economic recession of 2008 (Raffo et al. 2016). Language and ensuing practices adopted from the for-profit sector can purposely and unconsciously promote marketplace beliefs and prioritise individuality, neoliberalism and utilitarianism in the NPO sector (Appel 2019). Furthermore, Appel (2019) cautions that this borrowing from the for-profit sector could weaken the tenets of the NPO sector and civil society in general, therefore, any borrowing should be framed uniquely to this sector.

## **2.5 Stakeholder management**

The theory of stakeholder management was made popular through the work of Edward Freeman published in 1984 (Freeman 2010). Stakeholders can influence an entity and its managers' ability to achieve their objectives and should therefore be managed well to provide a competitive edge or core competency for the entity (Preble 2005). Identifying stakeholders is critical as they classically provide valued resources to an entity, without which the entity would cease (Verbeke and Tung 2013). Adaptation to shifting pressures from authoritative stakeholders is necessary for an entity to survive (Verbeke and Tung 2013).

Although stakeholder theory is extensively accepted, a basic facet that remains unstipulated is the term 'stakeholder' which is a contested notion. As such, contestability is extremely challenging for theory advancement and practical testing (Miles 2017). Another critique of stakeholder theory is that the margins of stakeholder identification are not delineated and could pose a problem for managers implementing a stakeholder management strategy (Marcoux 2003; Miles 2017).

According to Marcoux (2003), stakeholder theory is morally insufficient from a fiduciary shareholder and manager perspective and only stockholders have a valid moral claim to managers' fiduciary duties. Marcoux (2003) also concludes that stakeholders who do not have a shareholding in an entity, do not have a valid moral claim over managers' fiduciary responsibilities. NPOs do not have shareholders or stockholders (Balsler and McClusky 2005). As such, the moral insufficiency of the stakeholder theory found by Marcoux (2003) is not relevant.

NPOs generally operate in multifaceted environments with multiple stakeholders such as donors, government officials, volunteers, communities, participants etc. For internal stakeholders, such as senior management and employees, the board may be construed as an additional stakeholder

(Balser and McClusky 2005). The natural environment is considered a key but silent stakeholder in the non-profit segment and business world (Jastrzębska 2016). NPOs usually require resources and validity from their stakeholders creating a source of uncertainty for NPOs as these are practically not predictable or controllable, necessitating improved management of these stakeholders (Balser and McClusky 2005). Embedding social media into NPO strategy is an opportunity to achieve improved effectiveness for stakeholder management. This is mostly beneficial for smaller to average-sized NPOs where resources are limited and the NPO cannot invest in advertising or stakeholder management (Schipper and Latham 2019).

Serving all stakeholders results in positive returns for both stockholders and stakeholders and stakeholders are a key component of increasing an entity's value (Rajablu, Marthandan and Yusoff 2015). A study undertaken by Uribe, Ortiz-Marcos and Uruburu (2018) found that the sustainability construct regards stakeholders as an important characteristic; lately, stakeholder theory has been the central theoretical provision that enables the understanding of these relations from numerous viewpoints, becoming progressively significant. Ramachandran (2019) explains that no entity can exist in a vacuum and that recently corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become synonymous with stakeholder management. Mindfulness about the effect of corporate decisions on society and the environment is evident in stakeholders, to the extent that stakeholders can reward or penalise corporations (Uribe et al. 2018).

To ensure effective resilience management an entity is required to have a concise comprehension of the problems that underwrite its resilience, from a daily operational perspective to a potential disaster scenario (McManus et al. 2008). In the resilience management framework developed by McManus et al. (2008), this is referred to as constructing situation alertness and comprises the present and predictable future operational environment, the resources to which the institute has access and the suppositions and restrictions of internal and external stakeholders.

The findings from Ramachandran (2019), Rajablu et al. (2015) and Uribe et al. (2018) on stakeholder management all relate to common themes such as organisational sustainability or organisational resilience and this can be correlated to the NPO sector as well. It is important to note that the NPO sector, similarly, is a key stakeholder in businesses and often plays an advocacy role for the general well-being of the environment and society (Novy et al. 2019).

Similar to corporates, NPO stakeholders often provide valuable resources, without which the NPO may perish (Verbeke and Tung 2013). This, therefore, requires the efficient management of key NPO stakeholders. According to Rahi (2019), an adaptive capacity which leads to organisational resilience is a vital dimension to maintaining organisational missions when faced with unsettling events.

## 2.6 Innovation

The first theoretical underpinnings of innovation were conceptualised by the seminal influence of Joseph Schumpeter in 1912 (Reinhardt 2023). Drazin and Van de Ven (1985) perceive innovation as the expansion and execution of new concepts by individuals who participate in transactions with other individuals within an organisational setting. Furthermore, individuals and their entities are more inclined to protect current practices than progress with novel practices and, until a point of urgency is reached, entities are reluctant to act (Drazin and Van de Ven 1985).

Studied largely from the corporate viewpoint, the researchers accentuated that innovation is a dynamic, systems-driven progression, stemming from the interaction of individuals and entities, encompassing knowledge streams and market exchanges in a setting of intrinsic uncertainties. Furthermore, broad elements – the social and cultural background, the organisational context, facilities and the practices that create and disseminate scientific intelligence – have shaped the overall behaviour of the firms from an innovation perspective (Greenacre, Gross and Speirs 2012; Nelson and Winter 1977).

Contemporary research on innovation has begun to merge with research on sustainability revolutions, mission orientation and eco-innovation systems (Reinhardt 2023; Greenacre et al. 2012). The significance of the social dimension in innovation has come to be a broadly accepted notion and studies on innovation have expanded to acknowledge the actual course of the invention as a societal act (Altuna et al. 2015; Hellström 2004). Within an institution, resilience involves well-connected actors that champion and apply ongoing learning and adaptative processes. Outside of the organisation, resilience requires a tactic of administrative oversight where institutions can enable bottom-up inventiveness with support from executives (Barasa, Mbau and Gilson 2018; Lopes et al. 2017; Westley 2013). Organisational resilience characterises a basis for innovation through pre-emptive learning actions, facilitating, establishing and transmitting knowledge within an entity (Do et al. 2022).

Earth has planetary limitations, therefore, there is a need for innovative resolutions that account for difficulties and then develop solutions that enable systems to adapt, learn and sometimes transform without failing (Westley 2013). The study of organisational resilience concentrates on the collaboration of numerous parts of a system responding jointly to outer stimuli, particularly unexpected occurrences (Lissack and Letiche 2002; Witmer and Mellinger 2016). Building resilience in multifaceted systems requires the strengthening of the culture of innovation. Where cultures value diversity, the greater the prospects of original and deep-seated combinations employing bricolage (Westley 2013). These cultures should boost communication that propagates

experimentation and support instead of blame. Such cultures promulgate innovation that builds organisational resilience (Lopes et al. 2017; Westley 2013).

NPO employees often engage on the front lines with low-income earners and local communities where they can create pathways for social innovation. In addition to the employees within the sector, the large number of volunteers who hail from diverse economic sectors are also able to listen to the unmet needs of society in general (TEPSIE 2014). This unique interface that the NPO sector holds enables possible innovators to be mindful of the untouched assets and capabilities within local communities that can be exploited to design solutions, engage communities and generate expert knowledge (Altuna et al. 2015; TEPSIE 2014).

Studies have revealed that an organisation's capability to innovate during periods of adversity is crucial for organisational resilience (Vakilzadeh and Haase 2020). During a crisis, innovation by employees could become an appropriate strategy to use to overcome adversity (Senbeto and Hon 2020). Turbulent environments often breed opportunities for innovation and frequently occur when there is a liberation of resources via cultural shift, political change or fiscal crises (Westley 2013).

## **2.7 Adaptive capacity conceptual framework of non-profit organisations**

The central focus of the majority of organisational resilience studies has been on containing a crisis. The planning or anticipation factors include circumventing unexpected events as well as exertions to stop the progress of adverse events (Andersson et al. 2019; Linnenluecke 2017). A factor common to the majority of frameworks and models is that they have not been tested empirically and this is related to the nascent state of organisational resilience studies (Ma, Xiao et al. 2018). The review of these frameworks is therefore limited to the academics' conceptualisations.

In line with the organisational resilience conceptualisation hypothesised by Duchek (2020), resilience is separated into three phases: anticipation, managing and adaptation. Entities first detect and identify possible pressures and formulate plans for difficulties during the anticipation phase. While managing during an unforeseen occurrence, entities initially have to acknowledge or admit the state of affairs and begin building and applying resolutions (Duchek 2020). After the occurrence, reflection is required to learn from the experience (Vakilzadeh and Haase 2020). In the anticipation stage, leaders should behave suitably to strengthen their organisations' capacities to anticipate managers' need to support this concept in advance. In the adaptation stage, after dealing with adversity, learning and organisational change management are critical in the backdrop of organisational resilience (Burnard and Bhamra 2011; Karman 2020). This organisational resilience conceptualisation conceived by Duchek (2020) unites material and

societal resources in building control and responsibility while recognising the significance of intellectual and developmental action (Pryce 2021).

Duchek (2020) included four key propositions, the first being an entity's knowledge base that is a precursor to an entity's resilience, shaping the basis for the expectancy, adaptation and management of significant developments. If an entity can learn from crises and adapt, it widens its knowledge base fostering its expectancy capacities as learning occurs not only from the aftershock of unanticipated events.

In the beyond-equilibrium approach, "organisations operate in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) world" in contrast to the single-equilibrium approach (Hollingworth 2016 p. 7). This approach requires organisations to adapt and change to remain pertinent. Unexpected success can be considered an organisational shock similar to an abrupt loss of crucial staff or shocks and are neither positive nor negative but instead influenced by context (Blades 2017; Snowden and Boone 2007).

Following a comprehensive systematic review of organisational resilience constructs developed by other academics, Hillman and Guenther (2021) propose that the outcome of an entity's response to turbulent events is growth and learning. Furthermore, in their integrative model, an entity's conduct, resources and capabilities facilitate and establish organisational resilience (Hillmann and Guenther 2021). This is in line with the findings by Powley (2013) who highlights that organisational resilience should be dissociated from growth. Growth is viewed by Powley (2013) as being built into an entity, healing following adversity, whereas organisational resilience is only about the resolution to adversity.

According to Hillmann and Guenther (2021), organisational resilience is the capability of an entity to carry on with functions and recuperate rapidly from harsh conditions and this occurs by activating and gaining access to the resources required. An important trait noted by Hillmann and Guenther's study is that the absence of resilience is consequently only assessable after an event. They also question if there are conceivably any other characteristics that indicate the absence of organisational resilience; however, this was beyond the scope of their study.

Pryce (2021) recognised that the human rudiments of an entity, e.g., leadership, staff inspiration governance etc., are as indispensable as material resources which are key to enacting organisational resilience. Adaptive capacity is a crucial aspect of organisational resilience, underwriting the need for contemplation and learning to stimulate new behaviour patterns (Pryce 2021; Rahi 2019). A heightened means of conceptualising organisational resilience, thereby 'organisational culture', as a central driver of organisational resilience was proffered by Pryce (2021). The four tiers and facets of organisational culture ("artefacts, customs/traditions,

behaviours, and values”) are plotted against four phases of organisational resilience (“anticipation, absorption, adaptation, and transformation”) (Pryce 2021, p.22).

Additionally, Pryce (2021) postulates that organisational culture involves all four stages of organisational resilience and is the primary undercurrent that directs each facet of an entity, from vision and tactics to operating behaviours. Furthermore, the interplay between organisational resilience and culture can promote an environment that integrates the entity holistically in the pursuit of dealing with the unexpected. Similarities in terms of contemplation and learning aspects are present between the frameworks of Hillman and Guenther (2021) and Pryce (2021).

Following a detailed systematic review of academic literature on the subject, Rahi (2019) postulates that there are two key dimensions of organisational resilience, namely, adaptive capacity and awareness. First, according to Rahi (2019), awareness is the capacity of an entity to evaluate and construe ongoing and future adjustments to its environment to prepare for and withstand possible unsettling events. Second, adaptive capacity, on the other hand, is the organisation’s capability to alter its structure for recovery when faced with unsettling events; however, awareness is crucial to guarantee effective adaptation (Rahi 2019).

The organisational resilience model proposed by Vogus and Sutcliffe (2012) describes three roles required to enhance organisational resilience. These are the tactical efforts by the topmost officers, the information transmission role of intermediate administrators and the vigilant work undertaken on the ground by front-line employees. Multifaceted system organisational resilience theory requires management styles to become adaptive which is also key for enhancing unified action (Klockner 2017). Similar to Rahi’s (2019) findings, this framework focuses on the human element of organisational resilience.

Gibson and Tarrant (2010) developed the resilience triangle model in which they state that resilience is drawn from a multifaceted interplay of institutional elements or proficiencies that underwrite resilience when they adjust to a substantial change. Furthermore, this model depicts three types of competences: process competences, resources and infrastructure competences and leadership, people and knowledge competences – all equally crucial to organisational resilience. This framework distinguishes material resources from human resources but, similar to Pryce (2021), accepts that each element is indispensable in relation to the other to augment organisational resilience.

An organisational resilience framework developed by Andersson et al. (2019) includes four abilities or traits that are observed in different stages. Awareness of risk is the foremost vital phase to circumvent unexpected occurrences. The second trait, partiality towards the cooperation phase, includes numerous actors and necessitates resource deployment to evade an unexpected event.

The third trait of their framework is the agility stage which is essential to create solutions rapidly during turbulent events. Lastly, the improvisation phase is required as turbulent events can create situational experiences that are uncharted. This framework is similar to Duchek's (2020) framework in terms of the phased approach to organisational resilience.

An organisational resilience management and assessment framework developed by McManus et al. (2008) describes resilience as a subject of an entity's mindfulness of its condition, administration of key susceptibilities and adaptive capacities in a multifaceted, dynamic and interrelated ecosystem. The resilience management process comprises five elements: developing an awareness of resilience issues; choosing essential organisational mechanisms, such as the identification of key stakeholders; assessments of vulnerabilities, including the organisational mechanisms chosen; documentation and prioritisation of key susceptibilities; and augmenting adaptive capacity (McManus et al. 2008). This model was built by McManus et al. from the input of several unrelated organisations in New Zealand. Included in their case study research was an assortment of organisational forms and sizes. However, McManus et al. (2008) note that the 15 organisational resilience gauges identified in their framework were restricted to the ten organisations studied. "McManus's (2008) Relative Overall Resilience (ROR) model suggested that organisational resilience is comprised of three factors: situation awareness, management of keystone vulnerabilities, and adaptive capacity" (Lee et al. 2013, p. 33).

Lee et al. (2013) later tested the framework developed by McManus et al. (2008) and refined the framework to only two elements: planning and adaptive capacity. The new model developed by (Lee et al. 2013) used McManus's ROR as the benchmark and resulted in 13 consolidated indicators for the two elements. Within the adaptive capacity element, eight indicators were identified: "Minimization of silos, internal resources, staff engagement and involvement, information and knowledge, leadership, innovation and creativity, decision-making and situation monitoring and reporting. A further five indicators were identified for the planning element namely: planning strategies, participation in exercises, proactive posture, external resources, and recovery priorities" (Lee et al. 2013, p. 34).

Each of these 13 indicators was also defined by Lee et al. (2013) and their model was derived to provide entities with a potential organisational resilience tool that could indicate the positive attributes and weaknesses unique to their organisational resilience situations. Based on McManus's model, Stephenson (2010) also developed a thirteen-index model from the two components of preparation and adaptive capacity and included several of the initial factors of organisational resilience in the model. According to Stephenson (2010), there were insufficient NPOs that participated in the study and, therefore, the model could not be broadly applied to all

sectors. A short-form version referred to as the Benchmark Resilience Tool was also developed based on the index factors proposed initially by McManus and Stephenson (Whitman et al. 2013).

Central features of the organisational resilience construct seem to be connected to distinctive periods in time; certain features occur and must be employed before an occurrence, while others warrant a constructive response when the occurrence is taking place. Lastly, other retrospective actions are related to adjustment and learning as a consequence of the occurrence (Neri, Niccolini and Francesco 2023). A considerable number of researchers have reduced the practical complexity of organisational resilience by focusing on an entity's capacity to deal with disruptions (Linnenluecke 2017).

As mentioned, it was found that the research emphasis has mostly been on activities following the occurrence of an unforeseen event, which is reasonable from a research perspective. Furthermore, unexpected events occurring in a turbulent environment are frequently examined retrospectively and limited research has focused on daily procedures related to how organisational resilience can be sustained. Therefore, in contrast to the majority of frameworks reviewed, this study embraces the notion that organisational resilience enables an entity to gather knowledge and improve, thus, becoming more competitive and capable.

However, as opposed to the views of several studies previously mentioned whereby organisational resilience features occur at a specific point in time, for example, before, during and following an occurrence, this study embraces a holistic approach. This study views the organisation similarly to Hillman and Guenther (2021): organisational resilience may be achieved with the capability of maintaining functions and rapid recovery from turbulence by organising and utilising resources appropriately. Furthermore, this study adopts a holistic approach by which an entity's actions, resources, capacities and daily practices facilitate and influence organisational resilience.

In a turbulent environment where NPOs are experiencing increased competition and an ongoing lack of resources, a holistic approach to organisational resilience is deemed an important starting point to address its existential challenges and concerns, due to the dearth of NPO resilience studies. Moreover, knowing and understanding a set of resources that an NPO may access to address these challenges and concerns from a holistic perspective is imperative and may enable an NPO to stand out and become more attractive to its stakeholders, underwriting the NPO's ability to achieve its mission.

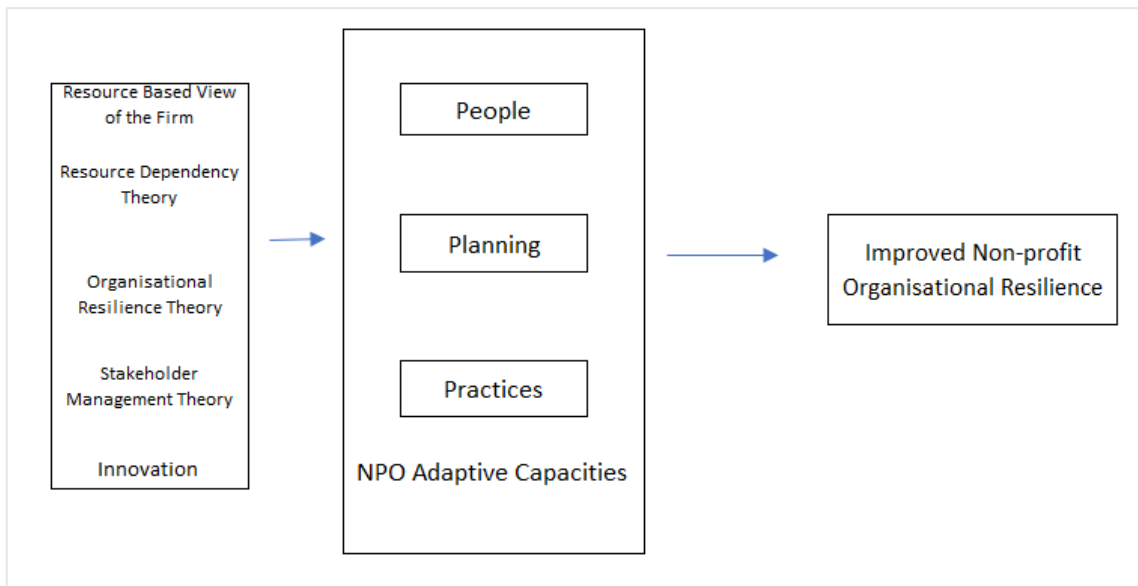
The common link among the RDT, RBV, stakeholder management and organisational resilience theories is the focus on resources. Furthermore, these theories entail a broad spectrum of strategic management aspects that can be applied to different organisations in varying degrees in a

turbulent environment. This will underwrite the study's aim of ascertaining the adaptive capacities of NPOs and developing an adaptive capacities framework, considering limited resources and increased competition in a turbulent environment from an organisational resilience perspective. Drawing on the findings from the frameworks reviewed, this study will use a combination of the resilience triangle model developed by Gibson and Tarrant (2010), the organisational resilience framework, initially developed by McManus et al. (2008), and the more holistic frameworks developed by Ducheck (2020), Rahi (2019) and Hillman and Guenther (2021) to develop an NPO focused adaptive capacity framework.

Researchers have built an academic foundation on the development of organisational resilience indicators and a recurring limitation of the models and frameworks reviewed is the need for further empirical testing (Rahi 2019). Much of the research focused on entities in specific countries and a cross-cultural view of the models might refine the findings for a broader application (Andersson et al. 2019; Lee et al. 2013; Linnenluecke 2017; Stephenson 2010; Yang and Cheng 2020). Some of the frameworks and models reviewed encompassed a variety of entity types and some included NPOs in their studies. However, there was no generic framework or model that could broadly fit any entity due to the unique scenarios in each study and also due to the consistent limitation of organisational resilience research that is in the nascent phase (Ma, Xiao et al. 2018).

Figure 2.1 demonstrates an NPO resilience theoretical framework and the initial positioning of the NPO adaptive capacities, grouped into three main categories, which could augment the NPO's resilience.

Figure 2-2 Non-profit organisational resilience theoretical framework



Source: Author’s own work

Generally, recent studies into organisational resilience have found that the guiding aspects of organisational resilience are mostly revealed from three perspectives, namely, the human element, an organisational perspective and an environmental outlook (Chen, Liu et al. 2021).

Based on these three broad perspectives and similar to Rahi’s (2019) findings, the framework presented in Figure 2.1 includes the human element of organisational resilience and aspects such as leadership and volunteers are discussed in the People category. McManus et al. (2008) and Lee et al. (2013) focus on planning as a key aspect of their organisational resilience models (Prayag et al. 2018). Hence, in the planning category, aspects such as succession planning, external collaboration and financial planning would be included and aligned with the environmental aspect as found by Chen, Liu et al. (2021). Multifaceted system organisational resilience theory requires management styles to become adaptive which is also key for enhancing unified action (Klockner 2017). Therefore, capacities such as project management and monitoring and evaluation would feature in the Practices grouping and align with the organisational perspective alluded to previously.

These three broad adaptive capacities categories – People, Planning and Practices – include the elements of the general ongoing daily practices of an NPO that could be applied to environmental NPOs on a case-by-case basis. A high-level summary of the eleven adaptive capacities identified from the literature review is presented in Tables 2-1 and 2-2 below, within the context of the three broad categories.

Table 2-1 Adaptive capacities: People and Planning summary identified from the literature review

Category	Description	Key Elements
People	Human resources: employees and volunteers	NPOs rely on volunteers to work both at the director level, e.g., trustees, and at the operative level, e.g., administering daily tasks. Managing unpaid workers at different levels has its own challenges, a complex yet central relationship exists between NPO staff and the volunteers who work across different levels. As key stakeholders, employees and volunteers play a key role in scanning the environment and recognising significant occurrences. They contribute to strategic planning while underwriting the organisation's resilience with swift reactions to a crisis and boosting a sense of efficacy and trust (Guttentag 2009; Malinen and Harju 2017; Sneath 2021).
	Culture and leadership	Several aspects affect a leader's capacity to shape an organisation's culture and leaders must utilise wide-ranging styles to achieve objectives via effectual communication and utilising their power of influence. Progressive entities can diversify the organisational culture with the inclusion of under-represented genders and previously disadvantaged groups. Several leadership approaches can be utilised by NPO leaders at differing times, as staff, funders and other stakeholders demand and expect more from NPO leaders. The general theme across the leadership attributes explored is the ability to empower and motivate staff for improved decision-making, thereby, promoting accountability between the different levels of the NPO as well as uniting staff under a common purpose (Cilliers and Greyvenstein 2012; De Waal et al. 2019; Gardner 2016; Pittinsky 2010).
	Innovation	NPOs are regularly encouraged to make investments in innovation as an organisational tenet. However, it is not clear how to achieve this and it remains an ongoing challenge. Building resilience in multifaceted systems requires strengthening the culture of innovation and this is possible when diversity is valued, bricolage is employed and communication that propagates experimentation and support instead of blame is promoted. This could manifest in enhanced decision-making and solving of dilemmas. Engaging employees at all levels could influence the NPO culture to become more amenable to innovative habits, and an environment that encourages individual creativity and emotional well-being can improve an entity's innovative abilities (Bernstein et al. 2016; Do Adro and Leitão 2020; Jaskyte 2015; Shin and Choi 2019).
Planning	Succession planning	The succession of NPO leaders is a vital dimension of the planning aspect of an entity and is deemed an adaptive capacity that would assist NPOs with tactical planning. The successful handover of leadership within the NPO may avoid resource shortfalls, identity calamities and power struggles. The role of the board is also a key factor in ensuring positive continuity at the NPO and NPO leaders need to collaborate with their boards to plan effectively for an unexpected leadership change, which is more likely in turbulent environments, and where the NPO experiences ongoing financial challenges. Several barriers to succession planning within NPOs exist, however its benefits are significant and outweighed the negative impact of not planning well for leadership change (Boykins 2019; Li 2019; Yawson 2019).
	Collaboration	Internal collaboration aspect incorporates the internal mechanisms of the NPO which underwrites the way of work and is most often presented as the silo effect. Efficient internal collaboration and communication can reduce the negative effects of silos and promote the NPO's ability to achieve its mission. Externally, as the NPO sector expands, competition accelerates, causing reason for inter-organisational alliances and collaboration. NPO funders have also increasingly required collaboration among the NPOs they support. Despite external pressures, it may be inferred that collaboration with a clear purpose and well-defined intent is essential to both internal and external collaboration efforts and is a key element of the SDGs. People are most important in the achievement of successful collaboration outcomes and need to be engaged from inception, underwriting efficient tactical planning (Daniels and Valdés 2021; Fowler 2016)
	Mergers and acquisitions	Tactical restructuring is a key adaptive capacity for NPOs to act at opportunistic times, particularly when competition is high, and funding is constrained. Mergers and acquisitions in the NPO sector require consistent scanning of the external environment to anticipate changes and adapt to the funding landscape. Well-timed restructuring efforts may avoid the existential concerns of NPOs and ensure that they can continue to deliver on their missions. Some of the motivating factors for mergers in the NPO sector relate to the expansion of the service offering and improved service value, and securing funding (Krige, Hawarden and Cohen 2019; MacIndoe and Sullivan 2014).

Source: Author's own work

Table 2-2 Adaptive capacities: Practises summary identified from the literature review

Category	Description	Key Elements
Practises	Governance	Governance regularly deemed as a measure of control and justification, can also be an opportunity for NPOs to demonstrate proactively their legitimacy, and withstand claims. During times of instability, boards play a greater role in sourcing additional resources but also have a key function in the flexibility of an NPO in terms of guiding its strategic direction. NPO board members are often volunteers who are well-intended and not remunerated for their time, a key challenge is that they lack the skills required to perform their governance oversight functions. When the most capable board members are appointed, NPOs are impacted positively by underwriting NPO synergy, therefore, and the appointment, recruitment and selection of board members is imperative (Murray and Thomas 2019; Van Zyl and Mans-Kemp 2020; Wells 2012).
	Financial practices	An awareness of building a diversified funding stream concerning the optimistic effects of revenue diversification on NPO financial resilience. Intensified monitoring of cashflows practised by NPOs during financial crunches is a critical element of responses to shocks. Accumulation of cash reserves from other donors is necessary, before considering novel ways of fundraising such as demonstrating a project's investment potential before donors can reimburse expenses and be convinced of its worth. When funds are constrained, NPOs should adopt a precautionary stance before expending their offerings in times of crisis. An NPO's ongoing success is dependent on societal trust and assurance in their activities, therefore, authenticity, accountability and trust are interconnected factors required in more discerning societies (Arora et al. 2021; Ebrahim and Rangan 2014; Privett and Erhun 2011).
	Brand and stakeholder engagement	Increased competition to acquire and retain donors has forced NPOs to strengthen their marketing efforts; an NPO's inability to communicate about their social work proficiently remains a problematic focal point that is related to funding constraints and the limited number of skilled employees dedicated to marketing and a dearth of buy-in from leadership alongside a general dearth of understanding of the need for a brand from NPO stakeholders. NPOs usually have a greater number of stakeholder groups necessitating an openly distinguishable and coherent position to beneficiaries, sponsors, donors, volunteers, board members, staff, suppliers and regulators, all of whom require different communication requirements. NPOs regularly offer varying project activities and services to different stakeholders, making it difficult to contextualise the NPOs' offerings in a single brand communication. Building an NPO brand is a worthwhile effort, as the benefits significantly outweigh the costs in the long run (Andreassen 2012; Mitchell and Clark 2019).
	Information and communication technologies	Technology is unsettling old-style NPO funding mechanisms and radically altering societal engagement, while political tensions are limiting civil society activities. These shifts create opportunities, present challenges and demand swift adaptation; NPO employee technological appetites and NPO leadership agility are vital determinants of an NPO's swift adaptation to new technologies. barriers to the use of social platforms in NPOs are constrained resources, lack of ICT expertise, ineffective leadership commitment and a lack of ICT comprehension in NPO constituents. ICT has become a contemporary social catalyst for improving the lives of communities and, for NPOs, technology has presented a transformative power; information technologies can be leveraged by NPOs to improve project and fundraising activities, stakeholder information access, raise cognisance of social issues and establish legitimacy (Ayanso et al. 2010; Howson 2021; Lovejoy and Saxton 2012; Trotter et al. 2020).

Source: Author's own work

## 2.8 Adaptive capacities of non-profit organisations

Adaptive capacity can be explained as the competency to react to evolving threats and pressures to decrease the probability of the occurrence or the extent of detrimental outcomes (Brooks and Adger 2005). When confronted with unpredictable situations, adaptive capacity is deemed a critical prerequisite, entailing the ability to rally scarce resources to foresee or react to apparent or current pressures. Furthermore, adaptive capacities are not equally dispersed and often vary between unique situations and systems (Engle 2011).

As adaptive capacities are embedded in organisational procedures and practices that utilise collective learning and inferred knowledge, they cannot easily be duplicated or valued (Day 2011). Similarly, Karman (2020) postulates that organisations that own strategic resources, according to the RBV, have key competitive advantages over other institutions as resources are considered strategic; they add value and are rare, challenging to imitate and unique. The RBV highlights the framework delineating how for-profit entities generate continued competitive gains from resources and competences (Tate and Bals 2018).

Brooks and Adger (2005) posit that when adaptive capacities are expressed as actions, the result is adaptation and a heightening of a system's managing capability; in so doing, the system's vulnerability to environmental hazards is reduced. "The adaptive capacity represents the set of resources accessible for adaptation, including the capacity to utilise these resources efficiently in the quest for adaptation. Resources may be natural, financial, institutional or human, and include access to ecosystems, information, expertise, and social networks" (Brooks and Adger 2005, p. 168). According to Westley (2013), adaptation requires the efficient use of the resources immediately available to respond effectively to disturbances – a critical requirement for NPOs to survive.

The adaptive capacities identified from the literature and other organisational challenges related to developing adaptive capacities are the lack of capacity and concern managing the fragile balance between productivity, efficiency, purpose and enthusiasm that drive NPOs (McMurray et al. 2010). To answer the research questions, the literature review focuses on the resources accessible to NPOs and the NPOs' abilities to utilise these resources effectively. The adaptive capacities identified from the literature reviewed were grouped and are discussed under 11 headings. Completing the review of the literature and identifying the adaptive capacities from previous literature was an important step and needed to be undertaken before collecting the primary data and developing the semi-structured interview questions and piloting the interview protocol.

### **2.8.1 People: Human resources: employees and volunteers**

An employee's aptitude for organisational resilience is an individual's belief in their ability to execute activities with expertise and understanding when performing to the specifications required in turbulent conditions (Kim 2021). Efficacy, which refers to the employee's belief that their employer can deal with a turbulent situation, is a crucial dimension of resilience (Kim 2021).

During a crisis, the staff's levels of concern increase. Lower productivity, decreased staff morale and higher absenteeism rates, including employee unrest, are a consequence of this, thereby negatively impacting the NPO (Spillan 2003). Employees are vital assets and when employees believe that decisions are made to maintain stability, they are more inclined to participate and meet the strategic goals of the entity responsibly. Equally, when stakeholders know that the organisation's response to a crisis is speedy, truthful and considers all involved, their trust in the integrity of the organisation increases (De Waal et al. 2019; Gardner 2016; Kaltenbrunner and Reichel 2018; Spillan 2003). In an atmosphere of trust, turbulent events can be reviewed explicitly across different organisational levels by several stakeholders (Broekema, Van Kleef and Steen 2017).

NPO underwriting of human resources is below standard in comparison to other segments, however, the outcomes concerning staff performance are encouraging and significant for the realisation of NPO missions (Ariza-Montes and Lucia-Casademunt 2016). NPOs tend to consider their human resources key to novel individual and organisational capabilities being advanced. They focus on adding value to the NPO, thereby necessitating their upkeep and management. Codes of ethics and social responsibility are often implemented in the human resource realm to achieve good governance of an entity, however, staff can equally affect the principles of good governance (Gile, Buljac-Samardzic and Van de Klundert 2018; Oliveira et al. 2021).

Considering the critical link between strategy and human resources in NPOs, major characteristics of human resources presume a distinct significance. Combined with financial resources in an effective method, human resources can prevent excessive reliance on external funding (Kicová 2020). Accentuating the NPO's mission and values through human resource practices, such as recruitment, induction and training, attracts interested candidates and assists with the orientation of new employees (Kellner et al. 2017). An effective human resource system, as well as a strong environment and organisational strategy, which is equally reinforcing and consistent with the NPO mission, can motivate, appeal to and, therefore, retain quality employees (Kellner et al. 2017).

Volunteers provide an equally valuable resource to NPOs as do employees (Marquis and Raynard 2015). Volunteers can reduce the costs of project implementation but require investment in

enrolment, teaching and management costs (Manetti et al. 2015). Volunteers as a key resource to NPOs offer their time, expertise and labour that NPOs could not ordinarily afford to leverage (Erks et al. 2020). The capability to recruit and administer volunteers within the parameters of its functional environment is critical to an NPO's success (Crotty and Ljubownikow 2020; Oliveira et al. 2021).

Similar to the for-profit sector, NPOs have established a resource management style grounded on the personal links of NPO leaders (Batjargal et al. 2013). These connections are used to source and retain volunteers, reducing uncertainty present in environments where volunteering is considered ambivalent (Batjargal et al. 2013; Crotty and Ljubownikow 2020). According to Crotty and Ljubownikow (2020), this subsequently results in compromised durability and quality of volunteers due to the restricted network reach.

When volunteers leave an NPO, turnover rates increase and this has a negative impact on the NPO's productivity (Lee 2016). A volunteer's intent to continue contributing at a particular NPO is dependent on their satisfaction with the NPO meeting their expectations. Volunteer expectations could be met by an NPO manager who satisfies the volunteer's reasons for volunteering. A volunteer's relationship with an NPO and its employees or leaders is central to the length of time the volunteer remains engaged with the NPO (Crotty and Ljubownikow 2020).

Supportive communication from management or supervisors to volunteers will increase positive engagements, subsequently increasing their volunteer experiences and intent to remain with the NPO. This will reduce NPO expenditure on attracting and training new volunteers. Satisfied volunteers are also more likely to assist with recruiting other volunteers to join the NPO (Lee 2016; Usadolo and Usadolo 2019). Leadership teams in the for-profit segment should explore implementing employer-subsidised volunteer curricula that provide staff with an opportunity to volunteer (Brenner 2010). Volunteer programmes have been adopted by several multinational companies and may increase the volunteer rate of employed individuals who already form the majority of volunteer workers contributing to NPOs (Erks et al. 2020).

Some downsides to volunteers working in local communities include the needs and pursuits of locals being neglected and substandard work output. Volunteers' continuous engagement can also cause the reinforcement of reliance and justifications for poverty (Guttentag 2009). The use of volunteers to deliver on the NPO's mission could also create tension with trade unions and accountability challenges when refunding volunteer endeavours (Malinen and Harju 2017). Furthermore, NPO employees could also be concerned about job security as they harbour worries about being replaced by volunteers (Manetti et al. 2015).

Effective human resource administration is centred on the specific learnings of staff that make up an entity. Subsequently, the capacity of the entire entity to inspire learning and the construction of new knowledge is shaped by the human resource system (Alerasoul et al. 2021). Measures undertaken to augment organisational resilience are dependent on the discernment of the situation by managers (McCann, Selsky and Lee 2009). For example, if managers notice a threat from disturbances such as increased competitive behaviour, they take steps to deter this (Hillmann and Guenther 2021).

According to Malinen and Harju (2017), volunteers who feel supported are more likely to show improved levels of commitment to the NPO's cause. It is therefore imperative that human resources policies and procedures of NPOs consider the well-being and support of both their employees and volunteers (Crotty and Ljubownikow 2020; Lee 2016; Steele, Dredge and Scherrer 2017). Furthermore, policies adopting an inner marketing approach form a remarkable capability for NPOs. Consequently, managers should enable generating internal market data about staff and volunteers' needs and fulfilment as competing NPO policies, including a labour market perspective (Sanzo et al. 2015).

NPOs also need to consider various tactics to attract and retain volunteers. One of these methods could be to affiliate the objectives and vision of the NPO strongly with the work of the volunteers (Malinen and Harju 2017). A high level of power distribution can also assist employees to feel empowered, encouraging trust and responsible behaviour. However, the downside of a high level of power distribution is sustaining a commitment to the NPO holistically rather than its parts (Andersson et al. 2019).

Human resource procedures could align employees and volunteers to the long-term endurance of the entity. This is possible when human resource principles are matched with desired staff contributions for organisational resilience to formulate the entity's human resource policies (Andersson et al. 2019). In this way, the NPO's human resource policies become a regulating control to align volunteers and employees to organisational resilience (Andersson et al. 2019). The amalgamation of skills with intellectual, social and contextual practices from an organisational perspective enhances organisational resilience. Likewise, the mixture of individual traits, methodically developed and incorporated into an entity's human resources approach, also promotes organisational resilience (Beuren, Dos Santos and Bernd 2020).

Team resilience can be developed over time by addressing circumstances preceding a crisis and acting as an anticipatory measure. It can also be developed by managing behaviours as a crisis occurs and by regaining resources and team well-being following a crisis (Varajão et al. 2021). According to the organisational resilience framework developed by Ducheck (2020), team

members require time and leeway to observe the environment and identify critical developments. If staff are consumed by operations and cannot examine the environment, significant developments would go unidentified.

In summation, both employees and volunteers are vital resources to the NPO sector and need to be managed sensitively from a stakeholder perspective and in line with stakeholder theory (Balser and McClusky 2005). Unlike the corporate world, NPOs rely on volunteers to work both at the director level, e.g., trustees, and at the operative level, e.g., administering daily tasks or serving on committees etc. Consequently, managing unpaid workers at different levels has its own challenges (Sneath 2021). There, therefore, exists a complex yet central relationship between the employees of an NPO and the volunteers who work across different levels (Guttentag 2009; Malinen and Harju 2017; Sneath 2021).

From the preceding discussion, it can be inferred that during times of crisis, both employees and volunteers must be led effectively, alleviating fear and providing reassurance for continuity, while inspiring staff and volunteers to achieve the NPO's mission. Moreover, as key stakeholders, both employees and volunteers within their respective positions at the NPO, play a key role in scanning the environment and recognising significant occurrences. They contribute to strategic planning while underwriting the organisation's resilience with swift reactions to a crisis and boosting a sense of efficacy and trust. Effective human resource practices and stakeholder management may alleviate the tensions that can occur between volunteers and staff, promoting the long-term retention of this valuable resource set.

Related closely to the human resources adaptive capacity is the culture and leadership of an NPO. This is the next adaptive capacity explored.

### **2.8.2 People: Culture and leadership**

Several aspects influence organisational resilience concurrently and in diverse and often competing approaches (Andersson et al. 2019). Organisational culture is described as “the values, beliefs, and assumptions that are held by members of an organisation and which guide behaviour and facilitate shared meaning” (Nieminen et al. 2019, p.5) Focusing on organisational resilience and management features could significantly enhance the total operation of the organisation (Zahari et al. 2021). An organisational culture that promotes resilience and innovation recognises that an adverse event is unpredictable from a timing perspective, therefore, a risk-consciousness culture based on long-term survival is proactively nurtured (Vakilzadeh and Haase 2020).

According to Pryce (2021), organisational culture offers a means of producing transformative change and provides continuous organisational resilience that can confront the unanticipated.

Organisational culture is regularly cited in studies relating to organisational resilience but has often been discussed with a focus on specific factors. For example, a culture of innovation (Westley 2013), risk (Vakilzadeh and Haase 2020), collaboration (Pittinsky 2010) and monitoring and evaluation (Bach-Mortensen and Montgomery 2018). However, Pryce (2021) proposes a holistic approach to organisational culture to build organisational resilience. This is possible when organisational resilience is entrenched in underlying values and principles and operations are incorporated within the multiplicities of the entity to address turbulent events.

The translational leadership concept was introduced as a key factor of organisational resilience by Zolli and Healy (2012). Translational leadership relates to the capacity to connect different networks by forming harmonising connections. According to Andersson et al. (2019), with translational leadership, the distribution of power is central. Leadership must combine operational proficiency and accountability with organisational principles and strategic objectives, thereby producing prerequisites for initiatives in daily activities, despite formal top-down responsibilities (Crevani, Lindgren and Packendorff 2010).

A similar concept to translational leadership is proposed by Routhieaux (2015): shared leadership can boost an NPO's resilience and adaptability and guarantee its capability to traverse turbulence and insecurities. Similar to translational leadership, shared leadership is also premised on decentralised decision-making and leadership is broadly distributed rather than being vested in a few executives (Routhieaux 2015). Evolving a culture of shared leadership in NPOs requires broad engagement and participation in dialogues about leadership and requires the promotion of trust across all levels (Routhieaux 2015).

Transformational leadership is another style that was found to be similar to translational leadership. Transformational leaders motivate staff and volunteers towards a collective shared purpose that reflects the social obligations of the NPO and also empowers teams to make decisions (McMurray et al. 2010). A transformational leadership style can increase a volunteer's intention to remain at an NPO and is partly related to gratification, organisational commitment and role distinctiveness (Almas, Chacón-Fuertes and Pérez-Muñoz 2020). According to Parsehyan (2017), the NPO competition atmosphere is not as complex as in the for-profit sector, however, NPOs are reliant on external donations and visionary leaders can motivate and persuade their staff to make tactical movements aligned with the vision of the NPO.

The quality of NPO leadership can shape the opportunities and experiences of entire communities (Howieson and Hodges 2014). Effective NPO leaders share the prospects of tactical thinking and are involved in enlisting volunteers who are well-matched to the NPO and their level of service (Sneath 2021). According to Sneath (2021), NPOs can benefit from utilising leadership

inventories, such as team building retreats, staff profiles etc., by relating leadership behaviours with the NPO's core values and systems. Furthermore, NPO leaders can encourage employees to allow their staff to volunteer, thus, promoting the NPO across different sectors and recruiting vital resources (Erks et al. 2020).

Units within an organisation are inclined to mistrust others, believing that other units only work towards their own interests (Cilliers and Greyvenstein 2012). The regular perception is that it requires a leader with influential charisma to neutralise such mistrust, however, according to Pittinsky (2010), the necessary leadership qualities are concentration, perseverance and patience. Trust can be lost quickly and needs to be formed or rebuilt in deliberate and systematic steps. Leading teams from a culture of mistrust requires the creation of opportunities for teamwork and collaboration and relies on vigilant and constant execution and reiteration (Cilliers and Greyvenstein 2012; De Waal et al. 2019; Gardner 2016; Pittinsky 2010).

Leadership agility and adaptableness in employing various strategies during turbulent times are identified in the literature reviewed as required critical skills (Hollingworth 2016; Hutchinson et al. 2021; Jackson and Dunn-Jensen 2021). The study by Moore (2019) finds self-knowledge, conduct, connectedness and interpersonal openness to be substantial factors of an authentic leadership approach. Furthermore, characteristics such as enthusiasm, self-care, dependability and empathy improve the genuineness of the NPO leader (Moore 2019).

Several studies have found that effective leadership can forecast an entity's performance (Dall'Agnol et al. 2017; Kitonga, Bichanga and Muema 2016; Zollo et al. 2019). Corporate leaders have become the face of their firms on Twitter; therefore, the executives' use of Twitter influences the intangible social goodwill of an entity. According to Hwang (2012), corporate executives who use Twitter were found to be seemingly more transformational by customers than their counterparts who did not engage on Twitter.

Studies have found that corporate leaders who gained the most followers influenced the firms' social goodwill, posted constructive messaging to diverse online users and dynamically sustained various stakeholder relations (Ala-Korteesmaa et al. 2021). Similarly, a study into leaders of American NPOs based on their online communication tactics related to Twitter found that NPO leaders regularly leveraged dialogic practices along with messaging tactics. Furthermore, NPO leaders actively disseminated information and established online communities (Yue et al. 2021).

Taliento and Silverman (2005) identify aspects, such as multiple stakeholder engagement, the measurement and monitoring of performance and the trials of developing an operative entity with limited resources, which could be adapted from leaders in the for-profit sector for leaders in the NPO sector. However, this approach emphasises the risks of assuming similarity instead of

aligning leadership within the context of the NPO sector (Howieson and Hodges 2014; McMurray et al. 2010). NPO leadership is challenged with bolstering the legitimacy of the NPO sector, consequently, the NPO sector must convince a discerning community of their worth to ensure continued support as the sector boundaries become indistinct (Hodges and Howieson 2017). Challenges confronting leadership in NPOs concern managing the fragile balance between the productivity, efficiency, purpose and enthusiasm that drive NPOs (McMurray et al. 2010).

In summation, several aspects affect a leader's capacity to shape an organisation's culture and leaders must utilise wide-ranging styles to achieve objectives via effectual communication and utilising their power of influence. Progressive entities can diversify the organisational culture with the inclusion of under-represented genders and previously disadvantaged groups. Several leadership approaches can be utilised by NPO leaders and staff, funders and other stakeholders who demand and expect more from NPO leaders (Moore 2019). The general theme across the aforementioned leadership attributes is the ability to empower and motivate staff for improved decision-making, thereby, promoting accountability between the different levels of the NPO as well as uniting staff under a common purpose.

Gibson and Tarrant's (2010) resilience triangle model depict leadership, people and knowledge, as competences that are all equally crucial to organisational resilience. The model developed by Lee, Vargo and Seville (2013) is also included within the adaptive capacity element of leadership. It can be inferred that a positive culture, supported by strong leadership can impact organisational resilience positively and this aligns with the model developed by Ducheck (2020), which facilitates the coping ability of an entity.

Certain facets present in the NPO set-up, such as being self-regulating, private and voluntary, make NPOs well-positioned to stimulate new ideas and launch new practices (Adro and Fernandes 2021; Mulgan et al. 2007). The next section discusses innovation as an NPO adaptive capacity.

### **2.8.3 People: Innovation**

Innovation can be interpreted as "the multi-stage process whereby organisations transform ideas into new/improved products, services or processes, to advance, compete, and differentiate themselves successfully in their marketplace" (Baregheh, Rowley and Sambrook 2009, p. 1334). The process of innovation can be facilitated with the inclusion of stakeholder participation (Wehnert et al. 2018). Three groups of stakeholders related to societal influence are policy creators, professional consumers, such as corporates and NPOs, and end consumers, such as communities. Each of the stakeholders plays diverse roles in the process of innovation, for instance, as initiators or beneficiaries (Spaapen, Dijstelbloem and Wamelink 2007). Respectively,

each category of stakeholder will have different incentives founded on what they believe to be of value (Adams et al. 2016).

In the NPO world, there is often pressure and expectation from corporate donors and governments for NPOs to improve their management and overall systems (Balduck et al. 2015; Singh and Mthuli 2021). Yet, often the funds required to develop and improve systems and reporting efficiencies are not underwritten by donors (Adro and Fernandes 2021). Systems that are better geared towards introducing novelty are more resilient (Cahill 2010). In turn, it enables better able systems to survive and acclimatise to shocks (Cahill 2010; Mehmood 2016). According to the RDT, pressure on resources will prompt a search for alternate resources (Balduck et al. 2015). NPOs implement innovative tactics to diversify income streams to avoid their dependency on the resources mentioned in the RDT (Margiono, Zolin and Chang 2018). In differentiating income streams NPOs are forced to adopt an entrepreneurial approach and transform into social innovation enterprises (Peng and Liang 2019).

Certain facets present in the NPO set-up, such as being self-regulating, private and voluntary, make NPOs well-positioned to stimulate new ideas and launch new practices (Adro and Fernandes 2021; Mulgan et al. 2007). NPOs are regularly encouraged to make investments in innovation as an organisational tenet (Adro and Fernandes 2021; Dover and Lawrence 2012). However, this remains a key challenge facing NPOs as it is not clear how to achieve this (Adro and Fernandes 2021).

A solution to this challenge may lie with NPO employees. NPO employees often engage on the front lines with low-income earners and local communities where they will have the ability to create pathways for social innovation. In addition to the employees within the sector, the large number of volunteers who hail from diverse economic sectors are also able to listen to the unmet needs of society in general (TEPSIE 2014). This unique interface that the NPO sector holds enables possible social innovators to be mindful of the untouched assets and capabilities within local communities that can be exploited to design solutions, engage communities and generate expert knowledge (Altuna et al. 2015; TEPSIE 2014). Engaging employees at all levels could influence an NPO's culture to become more amenable to innovative habits. An environment that encourages innovation, individual creativity and emotional well-being can improve an entity's innovative abilities (Do Adro and Leitão 2020).

The process of NPO innovation is reliant on factors such as culture, leadership, internal properties, such as control and formalisation, external turbulence and general aspects, such as the size or age of the NPO (Bernstein et al. 2016; Do Adro and Leitão 2020; Jaskyte 2015; Shin and Choi 2019). Studies have revealed that an organisation's capability to innovate during periods of adversity is

crucial for organisational resilience (Vakilzadeh and Haase 2020). During a crisis, innovation by employees could become an appropriate strategy to use to overcome adversity (Senbeto and Hon 2020). Turbulent environments often breed opportunities for social innovation and frequently occur when there is a liberation of resources via cultural shift, political change or fiscal crisis (Westley 2013). Society's capacity to generate a stable stream of social innovations, especially ones that contribute to vulnerable populations, is vital for overall societal and environmental resilience (Cahill 2010).

Building resilience in multifaceted systems requires strengthening the culture of innovation. Where cultures value diversity, the greater the prospects of original and deep-seated combinations employing bricolage (Westley 2013). These cultures should boost communication that propagates experimentation and support instead of blame. Such cultures promulgate social innovation which in turn builds organisational resilience (Lopes et al. 2017; Westley 2013).

The significance of the social dimension in innovation has become a broadly accepted notion and studies on innovation have expanded to acknowledge the actual course of innovation as a societal action (Altuna et al. 2015; Hellström 2004). Inhabitants of developing countries that are undergoing rapid globalisation become important consumers and innovative providers of technological subject matter including social media (Nicholson, Nugroho and Rangaswamy 2016).

Innovation is a multidisciplinary pursuit and the positive outcomes resulting from good quality relationships between divisions and firms on knowledge generation and interchange impact innovation accomplishments (Sanzo et al. 2015). The NPO advancement of process and organisational innovations is notable and can be attributed to organisational tasks (Hurrell, Warhurst and Nickson 2011). The more NPOs and firm relations are trusting and committed, the greater the expansion of an NPO's innovation capability, although the strength of this is dependent on the kind of resources supplied by the firm (Sanzo et al. 2015).

Firms should engage with NPOs and communities in various ways, availing their core proficiencies to support innovation and, thereby, improving NPO capacities and ultimately assisting NPOs in accomplishing their social objectives (Sanzo et al. 2015). Certain NPO actors initiate innovation while others reproduce existing social arrangements and practices (Coule and Patmore 2013). A downside of innovation practices is possible when, according to Coule and Patmore (2013), the incentive to disrupt social practices seems to be led by the degree to which existing standards serve NPO interests.

In summation, according to the RDT, pressure on resources often prompts a search for alternate resources and, to achieve this, NPOs are regularly encouraged to make investments in innovation

as an organisational tenet. However, it is not clear how to achieve this and it remains an ongoing challenge. Building resilience in multifaceted systems requires strengthening the culture of innovation and this is possible when diversity is valued, bricolage is employed and communication that propagates experimentation and support instead of blame is promoted. Consequently, this may manifest in enhanced decision-making and solving of dilemmas. Furthermore, engaging employees at all levels could influence an NPO culture to become more amenable to innovative habits, and an environment that encourages individual creativity and emotional well-being can improve an entity's innovative abilities (Do Adro and Leitão 2020).

Certain facets present in the NPO set-up, such as being self-regulating, private and voluntary, make NPOs well-positioned to stimulate new ideas and launch new practices. It was inferred that during a crisis, innovation by employees could become an appropriate strategy to use to overcome adversity. The organisational resilience model of Lee et al. (2013) includes innovation and creativity as an adaptive capacity. It is proposed that as staff are central to formulating novel solutions to existing and novel predicaments, they should be encouraged and rewarded accordingly. The innovation adaptive capacity is strongly people-centric and related to the human resources, collaboration and leadership adaptive capacities as well.

An important aspect related to the leadership and culture of an NPO is the succession of its leaders and planning for it. This aspect is discussed next.

#### **2.8.4 Planning: Succession planning**

According to Pfeffer and Salancik (2003), an executive's succession is viewed by the RDT as an internal tactical response to environmental qualms and dependencies. An effective succession plan can reduce environmental reliance and increase organisational performance (Hillman et al. 2009). The planned replacement of executives is imperative for all types of entities and could be necessary at any stage of an entity's life cycle (Li 2019). An uneventful and successful executive changeover underwrites organisational performance; an unsuccessful effort could result in resource shortfalls, identity calamities and power struggles (Kavadis, Heyden and Sidhu 2020; Li 2019; Farah et al. 2020).

In the for-profit sector, some studies have shown that succession planning augments performance as it enables organisational learning, while other studies have shown that succession planning reduces organisational performance as it raises staff insecurity and interrupts work normalcy (Cooper and Maktoufi 2019; Li 2019). Studies on leadership succession planning in the NPO sector have been sporadic over the past three decades but have seen an uptake on the subject in recent years (Boykins 2019; Li 2019; Yawson 2019).

While both NPOs and for-profits must recruit, retain and grow leaders, NPOs must do so with constrained budgets and limited resources (Yawson 2019). NPO executives are concerned with acquiring resources and maintaining transparency for complex relationships with the board, donors, communities and other stakeholders while ensuring the NPO achieves its mission (Worth 2020). NPO executive leadership succession is significant for both internal and external stakeholders, however, studies conducted in 2013 found that a substantial number of NPOs were not ready for leadership succession (Santora and Sarros 2013).

An executive plays a fundamental role, holding operational and strategic functional responsibility and is the uppermost remunerated employee. Researchers have studied executives' performances as a stimulus for executive turnover and accountability in the business world extensively, tasking a corporate board with the replacement of an underperforming executive (Jenter and Lewellen 2021). However, similar performance-related studies on NPO leaders have been limited (Stewart 2016). NPO boards are similarly tasked. However, underperforming leaders are not necessarily replaced in the NPO sector, as the functioning of the board is inconsistent across entities and individuals (James and Soref 1981; Stewart 2016; Stewart and Diebold 2017). Furthermore, monitoring the NPO leader's performance is challenging as abstract missions frequently offer vague measures of accountability (Stewart and Diebold 2017).

An executive succession plan enables stakeholder security and comfort ensuring that the NPO mission will continue with the successor (Yawson 2019). Leadership succession can be a complicated process involving a smooth transition between leaders and can also involve how well the replacement appreciates and purposefully responds to situational opportunities and limitations (Stewart 2016).

An NPO must be well prepared for a successful leadership transition for both a planned and unforeseen departure (Do Adro and Leitão 2020). A significant number of leaders in the NPO sector are ageing alongside a lack of qualified leaders (Do Adro and Leitão 2020). This challenge is exacerbated when an NPO leader is dismissed and a new appointment necessitates swift action (Li 2019). NPOs are faced with elevated expectations from donors that require apparent and effective management. To ensure that they live up to this expectation, NPOs try to professionalise their leadership structures (Do Adro and Leitão 2020; Jaskyte 2015).

However, in contrast to mainstream academic conclusions, Jules (2021) argues that NPO leadership succession planning is not the only method of ensuring the survival of the entity. A study by Jules (2021) found that not all NPOs appreciated the need for a leadership succession plan and relied on alternative mechanisms such as purchasing the services of an interim leader within budget constraints. Furthermore, engaging in actual planning activities for a successor is

dependent on several factors, such as NPO capacity, accessibility of resources, investments and organisational culture, and these could present as barriers to planning for successors.

According to a study by Stewart and Diebold (2017), NPOs undergoing frequent financial hardship were more prone to encounter leadership turnover than NPOs with a stable financial outlook. Their study also found that small to medium-sized NPOs were more prone to leadership turnover when faced with underperformance in contrast to large NPOs with greater resources. Lee et al. (2013, p. 34) identified five indicators for the planning element of the organisational resilience model, namely, “planning strategies, participation in exercises, proactive posture, external resources, and recovery priorities”. Succession planning is a key proactive posture as well as a strategic plan that could play a vital role in the adaptive capacity of NPOs (Vito 2018). Boards and NPO leaders should collaborate to develop and examine performance measures that effectively determine the accountability of NPOs (Stewart and Diebold 2017).

In summation, although not directly mentioned in Lee et al. (2013) or Duchek’s (2020) organisational resilience models, the succession of NPO leaders is a vital dimension of the planning aspect of an entity and is deemed an adaptive capacity that would assist NPOs with tactical planning. The successful handover of leadership within the NPO may avoid resource shortfalls, identity calamities and power struggles. The role of the board is also a key factor in ensuring positive continuity at the NPO and NPO leaders need to collaborate with their boards to plan effectively for an unexpected leadership change, which is more likely in turbulent environments, and where the NPO experiences ongoing financial challenges. The study by Jules (2021) found several barriers to succession planning within NPOs, yet it was recommended that NPOs appreciate the need for succession planning as its benefits were significant and outweighed the negative impact of not planning well for leadership change.

### **2.8.5 Planning: Collaboration**

As the NPO sector expands, competition accelerates, causing reason for inter-organisational alliances and collaboration. NPO funders increasingly require collaboration among the NPOs they support (Shumate, Fu and Cooper 2018; Witesman and Heiss 2017). Obtaining knowledge via collaboration enables operative partnerships, which result in enhanced organisational capability, to develop (Urban and Gaffurini 2017). While there are several obvious benefits to collaboration, it still comes at a cost. Collaboration is viewed by many key NPO players as a necessity and a fundamental value of NPOs (Guo 2007; Witesman and Heiss 2017). Sustaining good collaborations necessitates the investment of time and resources. Cooperating in various collaborations that do not serve as actual partnerships becomes a strain on NPO resources and could result in reduced organisational capacity (Witesman and Heiss 2017; Zeimers et al. 2019).

The RDT emphasises the interdependency of different establishments and their environments and deriving resources from the outer environment is a precondition for survival (Moldavanova and Goerdel 2018). The United Nations endorses the enactment of the SDGs via multi-stakeholder undertakings and the ability of NPOs to participate in these multifaceted partner relations is expected to be a routine prerequisite for gaining access to resources (Daniels and Valdés 2021; Fowler 2016). NPOs will be required to articulate a convincing value proposition concerning their mission coherently when engaging in multi-partner relationships (Maboya and McKay 2019). Partnering with NPOs is a conduit for corporates to achieve their social accountability goals, simultaneously assisting NPOs to fulfil their missions. Such partnerships are perceived as a strategic collaboration between companies and NPOs whereby risks, assets and skills are shared within projects benefiting each partner and community (Eid and Sabella 2014).

A recent study into the motives for NPO and corporate collaborations found that NPOs and corporate managers are firmly motivated to participate in partnerships from the moral motive of resolving a societal or environmental matter (Spitz, Van Kranenburg and Korzilius 2021). Multinational firms entering local markets often seek out NPOs as a means of strategically working with local communities to leverage their unique knowledge, legitimacy with potential consumers, civil society actors and access to local sourcing and distribution practices (Barroso-Méndez et al. 2020; Eid and Sabella 2014).

Corporate and NPO alliances should comprise additional types of resources that assist both entities to nurture richer information exchanges and facilitate stronger bonds, moving away from the traditional stance of simply financing operations (Sanzo et al. 2015). Firms and NPOs should create a team comprising individuals from both entities to implement and manage the collaboration activities, encouraging meetings and using training to foster mutual understanding to enhance considerations of diverse perspectives (Sanzo et al. 2015).

Collaborations with other NPOs that share organisational culture and structures are less burdensome for NPOs (MacIndoe and Sullivan 2014). Donors and grant-makers have prescribed this to attain the best possible impact with inadequate resources by leveraging a broad range of NPO actors (Witesman and Heiss 2017). Consequently, while NPOs compete for funding, they have sought methods to collaborate to appear competent and worthwhile to funders. Donor pressure has resulted in collaboration for funding purposes instead of the actual intrinsic value of collaboration (Guo 2007; Seo 2016; Witesman and Heiss 2017).

NPOs and the government share several social aims which enable frequent partnering between the NPO sector and the government. This government funding of NPOs may cause resource reliance, mission deviation and possibly threaten civil society's liberty (Guo 2007; Seo 2016;

Witesman and Heiss 2017). Political officials and analysts have begun probing the validity of NPOs lobbying on social matters, particularly if they receive government funding (Parsehyan 2017). Funding received from the government can be limiting and bind NPO flexibility. Compliance and stringent reporting prerequisites for government funding can cause mission drift. Furthermore, boards and employees may be expected to professionalise in a manner that is not representative of communities and local needs (Witesman and Heiss 2017).

The survival tactics employed by NPOs to secure government funding have been criticised. NPOs should therefore be cautious of forming government collaborations that could undermine the NPO sector's ability to underwrite its objectives (Shumate et al. 2018; Witesman and Heiss 2017). Recent studies have also found that cross-sector collaboration by NPOs does not increase NPO capacity (Shumate et al. 2018). Employees engaging with their peers from other NPOs might feel threatened by the possibility of their positions being undermined if better solutions are presented, resulting in ineffective collaboration (Lifshitz-Assaf 2018; Mahdad et al. 2020).

The organisational resilience model developed by Lee et al. (2013) included within the adaptive capacity element the detraction of silos. Internally, within for-profit entities and NPOs, silos can develop both from a hierarchical perspective and horizontally across teams and departments (Cilliers and Greyvenstein 2012). Silos do fulfil a purpose and when individuals feel strongly connected to their units, they can feel contented, work more efficiently and carry more responsibilities. However, silos can also cause individuals to be less efficient when engaging with people from other units and less inclined to make an effort to work well with other teams (Pittinsky 2010).

Promoting teamwork and collaboration internally can be costly and the related coordination exertions, risks and start-up expenses may not yield a return if the reason for collaboration is unclear (Gardner 2016). As the complexity of tasks increases along with uncertainty in the environment, it is evident that individuals working on their own cannot solve issues faced by their organisations. Instead, there is a need for individuals from multiple disciplines to combine their expertise to address issues from an organisational resilience perspective (De Waal et al. 2019; Gardner 2016).

Moving from a silo culture to a collaborative culture necessitates prudent forethought, conscientious management and devoted upkeep. Some of the practical steps required to achieve this are assigning responsibility and accountability, sharing an understanding of the purpose and confronting mistrust systematically (Pittinsky 2010). To promote collaboration and communication among staff, leaders may also involve co-workers in retreats to engage in decisive planning for an NPO future (Sneath 2021). Endorsing internal collaboration is most feasible when

it becomes a strategic value of the entity, however, it is also imperative to reward and recognise individuals who demonstrate collaborative behaviour (De Waal et al. 2019). The quality and results of effective internal and external collaboration can strengthen an organisation's overall ability to deliver its purpose more effectively (De Waal et al. 2019; Gardner 2016; Pittinsky 2010; Shaw and Frost 2015).

In summation, the above narrative describes collaboration in two ways, and these may be further summarised as internal and external collaboration. In the model of Lee et al. (2013), the internal collaboration aspect incorporates the internal mechanisms of the NPO which underwrites the way of work and is most often presented as the silo effect. Efficient internal collaboration and communication can reduce the negative effects of silos and promote the NPO's ability to achieve its mission. From an external perspective, as the NPO sector expands, competition accelerates, causing reason for inter-organisational alliances and collaboration.

NPO funders have also increasingly required collaboration among the NPOs they support (Shumate et al. 2018; Witesman and Heiss 2017). However, despite external pressures, it may be inferred from the preceding discussion that collaboration with a clear purpose and well-defined intent is essential to both internal and external collaboration efforts. Furthermore, people are most important in the achievement of successful collaboration outcomes and need to be engaged from inception, underwriting efficient tactical planning. As such, this adaptive capacity could be linked to the human resource element for internal collaboration and be related to the leadership and culture adaptive capacities as well.

In the next section, the possible alliances, mergers and acquisitions in the NPO sector as an underutilised adaptive capacity are discussed.

#### **2.8.6 Planning: Mergers and acquisitions**

The RDT proposes an outwardly focused viewpoint including three reasons why businesses obtain other businesses (Haleblian et al. 2009): first, by assimilating an important opponent to diminish competition; second, by managing interdependency with supplier resources or product buyers by assimilating them; and finally, to diversify productions subsequently diminishing reliance on businesses with which it interacts (Haleblian et al. 2009; Hillman et al. 2009). These may also be classified as vertical integration which occurs among purchasers and donors, horizontal expansion which occurs between opponents and diversification to add varied activities or products (Malatesta and Smith 2014).

Sometimes, the resources needed by one entity to safeguard survival are carried by other entities and actors. Consequently, even officially independent entities may rely on each other for access

to key resources, creating strong motivations to form alliances and mergers to explore alternate forms of collaboration among institutions (Moldavanova and Goerdel 2018; Sowa 2009). From an efficiency perspective, the association of numerous economic organisations indicates that their efficacy is larger than the efficacy of each entity (Gabriel and Marian 2017).

The merger practice of NPOs is similar to that of the corporate sector. Similarities relate to actionable steps and components, such as commonalities, cost savings and other benefits, to be reviewed (Gabriel and Marian 2017). According to Heeley, King and Covin (2006), added reasons for business acquisitions include environmental liberality and dynamism along with the historical background of a business. Some benefits of a merger between entities are the stimulation of innovation, the enhancement of competences and the dilution of the risk of new projects undertaken (Malatesta and Smith 2014).

In the for-profit sector, merger activities motivate managers to enlarge shareholder wealth (Gabriel and Marian 2017). Corporate mergers correspond to significant environmental and technological changes and economic booms (Georgescu and Chiriac 2012). In the NPO sector, mergers arise as a tactic for development and expansion, especially when environmental uncertainty and resource shortages exist (Pietroburgo and Wernet 2010).

Motivating factors for mergers in the NPO sector relate to possibilities of stable funding and improved operational efficiencies. Other motivating factors are developing political strength, expansion of the service offering and improved service value (Malatesta and Smith 2014; Pietroburgo and Wernet 2010). External stimulus from a significant donor or endorsements from funding bodies can also be considered reasons for mergers in the NPO environment (Pietroburgo and Wernet 2010). According to Malatesta and Smith (2014), the foremost reason to consider a merger between NPOs is capacity development and improved delivery of the mission.

According to the RDT, several reasons for contemplating a merger with another entity exist: first, by assimilating an important opponent to diminish competition; second, by managing interdependency with supplier resources or product buyers by assimilating them; and finally, to diversify productions subsequently diminishing reliance on businesses with which it interacts (Haleblian et al. 2009; Hillman et al. 2009). However, of the reasons cited in the literature reviewed, the elimination of competition is not explicitly expressed and it would seem that there are no records of NPOs merging for the sole purpose of eliminating other NPOs.

The ability to obtain funding is central to the survival of NPOs (Krige, Hawarden and Cohen 2019; MacIndoe and Sullivan 2014). NPOs are commonly less reliant on outside stakeholders when they can produce their own funding from commercial actions (Seo 2016). An NPO's reliance on a solitary resource contributor for essential resources such as funding threatens their

survival (Seo 2016). The 2008 recession interjected the need for a well-organised and effective non-profit sector that could adapt positively to environmental changes (Boyd 2014). In the aftermath of the 2008 recession, following the closures of many NPOs, donors and other entities reviewed the means to strengthen the NPOs that remained (Nelson 2018). Mergers between NPOs were viewed as a strategic choice by funders to pool resources and gain access to much-needed funding stability to ensure the continuity of their missions (Cooper and Maktoufi 2019; Pietroburgo and Wernet 2010).

Donors play numerous roles, such as mediators, NPO matchmakers and financial benefactors, in the quest for restructuring NPOs. However, some donors view this role with reservation, as it may infringe on the leadership role of NPO boards. Evidence of both positive mergers, including donor involvement, and negative outcomes, regarding merger failures where NPOs were forced to terminate, have been documented (Fischer, Vadapalli and Coulton 2017).

Duchek (2020, p. 220) defines organisational resilience “as an organisation’s ability to anticipate potential threats, to cope effectively with adverse events, and to adapt to changing conditions”. Tactical restructuring is one of the approaches that NPOs can consider to achieve continuity, however, this is often ignored until no further possibilities exist (Krige et al. 2019; MacIndoe and Sullivan 2014). A downside to a merger occurs when one NPO is in a stronger resource and negotiating position than the other NPO. To avoid this downside, NPOs should consider merging and restructuring when they are in a strong position and seek opportunities before existential threats occur (Fischer et al. 2017). During a merger of two distinct entities conflict can be created at the operational and individual levels as entities with varied goals contend with complexities in accepting mutual philosophies. If an organisation does not attend to issues related to philosophy and values, the merger may eventually fail (Gabriel and Marian 2017).

In summation, tactical restructuring is a key adaptive capacity for NPOs to act at opportunistic times, particularly when competition is high, and funding is constrained. Mergers and acquisitions in the NPO sector would also require consistent scanning of the external environment to anticipate changes and adapt to the funding landscape in line with the RDT and organisational resilience constructs. Well-timed restructuring efforts may avoid the existential concerns of NPOs and ensure that they can continue to deliver on their missions. Some of the motivating factors for mergers in the NPO sector discussed above relate to the expansion of the service offering and improved service value. These are important programme and project aspects of an NPO mission and are discussed in the next section.

### **2.8.7 Practices: Project management, monitoring and evaluation**

NPO activities, from a project management study perspective, are not only a financial, technological and scientific subject but also a moral subject (Cicmil and O'Laocha 2016). The bulk of studies conducted in the NPO project management realm have focused on international progress (Golini, Corti and Landoni 2017; Lannon and Walsh 2016). Conventional project management practices suited to well-defined and measured projects may not constantly suit the requirements of the communities meant to be assisted by the NPO's social goals via the project (Lannon and Walsh 2016). From a practical perspective, project management can present overheads which are perceived as profligate of constrained resources. Furthermore, it can produce conflicts in cooperative spaces where entities working to shape societal transformation adopt diverse methods (Lannon and Walsh 2016).

Similar to corporate entities and the public sector, NPOs have experienced substantial organisational transformations concerning project management in recent years (Czibere 2014). Projects serve as tools to divide specific activities within an entity from a public and corporate perspective. This is similar to the NPO sector, however, there is an additional reliance on allotted income that directs how project work is organised (Czibere 2014). As social needs increase and projects are identified to satisfy those needs, the likelihood of executing such projects is governed largely by the NPO's ability to access suitable funding for the project. For NPOs, this accessibility to financing regularly influences the probability of the project starting up or how it will be set up (Lannon and Walsh 2016). As NPOs address the issue of constrained resources to accomplish bold objectives, they explore using managerial practices from the corporate world to build efficiency. Project management is preferred as it enables the application of knowledge, procedures, talent and practices that improve the probability of accomplishment over a broad array of projects (Anderson and Lannon 2018).

The NPO sector has become progressively reliant on projects to accomplish its tactical goals and conventional project management practices could indicate to stakeholders that an NPO is working towards improving performance. However, simply embracing practices from the corporate world without determining their efficacy could have adverse outcomes (Anderson and Lannon 2018). Subsequently, this could result in insufficient project planning, weak stakeholder engagement and unproductive risk management tactics. In the long run, this results in minimal impact and needless spending of time and funding (Anderson and Lannon 2018; Lannon and Walsh 2016). The central significance of relations and agency should be positioned with the outcomes-based priorities of project management that are progressively viewed as success factors (Moya-Colorado, León-Bolaños and Yagüe-Blanco 2021; Saleh and Karia 2020).

Globalisation, increased competition and technological advancements have boosted knowledge as a valued asset within entities (Anantamula 2005). Knowledge administration is subsequently significant as certain projects rely on the production of new knowledge incorporated into managerial practice. The transmission and assimilation of knowledge among projects avoid the duplication of past errors from both a project and institutional perspective (Javernick-Will and Levitt 2010). A study based on the four pillars knowledge management framework found that employee resource administration and stakeholder administration had the clearest connection with organisation-wide knowledge management (Oun et al. 2016). According to Duchek's (2020) organisational resilience model, a knowledge base that builds on key learnings from prior events is central to augmenting the resilience of the entity.

Oun et al. (2016) find that the administration of projects progresses as knowledge management practices across the entity are progressively used. According to Rugenyi and Bwisa (2016), project achievements and project administration can both be ascertained by the degree to which constraints are surpassed to realise the project objectives. Collaboration between different entities facilitates the interchange of resources and expertise (Rugenyi and Bwisa 2016).

Leveraging the benefits of knowledge assimilation and evolution positively impacts innovation execution, resulting in improved organisational performance (Cho, Lee and Mok 2017). The realisation of improved project outcomes is feasible with the implementation of innovation and aptitude training programmes and opportunities for staff to build their competencies (Al-Nabae and Sammani 2021; Wisdom et al. 2014). This was also corroborated by the study of Oun et al. (2016). Cost administration of projects is enhanced when entities efficiently employ leadership activities related to knowledge management such as assurances to manage knowledge gleaned from programmes at an organisational level, implementation of performance metrics tracking developments and rewarding teams for the distribution of project knowledge (Oun et al. 2016).

The majority of funding proposals require an explanation of the monitoring and assessment of the intended project, including the data collection methods, frequency, analysis and interpretation of the funding impact on donors and other stakeholders (Ssekamatte 2018). It has been generally accepted that monitoring and assessment corresponding to best practices are important for NPOs to deliver on their missions, however, there have been limited studies investigating why the NPO sector struggles to prove its impact (Despard 2016).

While most NPOs are keen to comply with a project or organisational monitoring and assessments, NPOs can also refrain by choosing what to assess, how to evaluate and what to include in reports (Arvidson and Lyon 2014). NPOs can also actively and willingly use social influence measures for educational and publicity purposes and as a means of applying control to

their environments (Arvidson and Lyon 2014). The capability to adapt and cultivate improved outcomes is connected to efficient monitoring and assessment methods (Lindamood et al. 2021).

Key enabling components required to implement efficient monitoring and assessments are securing the proper support, an ethos that advocates assessment and the desire to be answerable to parties that hold a stake (Bach-Mortensen and Montgomery 2018). A monitoring and assessment tool provides leaders and teams with an added management instrument. It provides valuable information on the performance of a project and enables learning that can improve the overall strategies of an entity (Ssekamatte 2018). Efficient project team functioning and surveillance procedures should promote confidence and collaboration among team participants, promote the practice and knowledge distribution and reward personnel for high-level knowledge management endeavours (Oun et al. 2016).

The NPO sector and the philanthropic community have been promoting monitoring and assessment, however, considering their advantages, the for-profit sector is progressively adopting monitoring and assessment practices (Ssekamatte 2018). A central challenge for NPOs is to design systems of measurement that support the attainment of clear mission objectives. Furthermore, assessment and evaluation efforts that extend outside this frame of reference could become a distraction for the NPO's project activities (Ebrahim and Rangan 2014). The effective management of socially oriented programmes is an essential prerequisite for accomplishing the best performance outcomes possible and effective administrative tools should be adopted (De Camargo et al. 2019). Projects that include a social orientation should include stakeholder management theory. This could be achieved by engaging stakeholders and including their input in project management processes advocated by the NPO, thus, including stakeholders' views in assessing the project impact (De Camargo et al. 2019; Moya-Colorado et al. 2021).

NPOs engaging in evaluations have a dual resolve: first, for compliance reasons, with audit standards and to establish organisational legitimacy and endurance; and second, it allows NPOs a degree of autonomy and influence over how the operations of NPOs are understood and determined (Arvidson and Lyon 2014). The chief impediments for NPOs to carry out evaluation are related to limited funding, a deficiency in technical ability and evaluation knowledge and challenges with identifying pertinent evaluation systems and result gauges (Bach-Mortensen and Montgomery 2018; Moxham 2014). Frequently, these impediments are substantiated by the malfunction of donors and policymakers to assist NPOs in the assessment process (Bach-Mortensen and Montgomery 2018).

A deficiency in collaboration was found to be another barrier to the effective monitoring and assessment of NPOs (Hardwick, Anderson and Cooper 2015). This is corroborated by the findings

from Bach-Mortensen and Montgomery (2018) where there was limited consensus among donors and specialists about what makes up good practice. The apparent absence of consensus implies a dearth of stakeholder collaboration (Bach-Mortensen and Montgomery 2018). Furthermore, there is a dearth of efforts to define and plan the evaluation and assessment requirements for the overall NPO sector (Harlock and Metcalf 2016; Moxham 2014).

NPO programmes have been traditionally evaluated due to funding that supported a specific programme and NPOs that deliver several programmes have found that the success of a programme does not mean success for the NPO's overall objectives (Ebrahim and Rangan 2014). Some NPOs perceived homogeneous evaluation processes as a reduction to the value generated from the intrinsic diversity and pioneering capabilities of the non-profit sector (Neesham, McCormick and Greenwood 2017). Furthermore, Neesham et al. (2017) found that NPOs that articulate a clear disagreement with a sectoral evaluation proposition are possibly more precise in defining paradigmatic distinctions from the proposition and additionally aware of the complications of the inter-paradigmatic context they encounter.

Relations with resource holders, such as donors, are characterised by irregularities of power related to resources and access to data. Moreover, social influence evaluation as both a control mechanism and voluntary reporting enables flexibility and NPOs manipulate how evaluations are performed and information disclosed (Arvidson and Lyon 2014). NPOs can symbolically implement project impact measures to implement alternate tactics. Ensuring accountability to stakeholders, enhancing community services or promoting the NPO are examples of symbolic implementation (Arvidson and Lyon 2014). This symbolic implementation of project impact measures can be challenging as the assessment tools are intended to enhance organisational knowledge and not intended for comparative objectives due to inconsistent practices (Arvidson and Lyon 2014; Bach-Mortensen and Montgomery 2018).

However, the competitive NPO environment requires an entity to stand out, justifying the allocation of an NPO's own resources towards monitoring and assessment processes (Arvidson and Lyon 2014; Hardwick et al. 2015; Harlock and Metcalf 2016). Monitoring and assessment when linked with learning and adapting from a community ownership and leadership perspective improves implementation that is otherwise not possible when a single framework is used (Stelmach et al. 2021).

Moya-Colorado et al. (2021) recommends that a methodical approach comprising a shared project management practice could enhance project management efficiencies regarding project execution and accountability for the NPO sector in general. Furthermore, this can create innovative prospects for knowledge sharing and capacity building for each stakeholder; this should be led by

the NPO sector rather than NPO donor agencies (Moya-Colorado et al. 2021). Keenan (2016) proposes that an 'awareness' of and ability to identify shifts in organisations is significant for developing an entity's adaptive capacity. This requires entities to have suitable beliefs and considerations, candidness towards learning and practices that assess an entity's environment (Keenan 2016; Pryce 2021).

NPOs have adopted centralised and regulated measurement structures and practices for compliance purposes rather than institutional learning or tactical advancement of social programmes (Neesham et al. 2017; Thomson 2011). The pressure to be compliant has led NPOs to adopt a business-like stance (Dart 2004) and the evaluation frameworks developed often diluted the abilities of NPOs to deliver on their projects (Carman and Fredericks 2008; Neesham et al. 2017).

Discoveries of the effects of managerialism and justification of evaluation results and processes in NPOs indicate that increased compliance standardisation is obtained at the cost of experimentation – this being an NPO's distinctive ability to engage in social innovation (Hwang and Powell 2009; Neesham et al. 2017). However, Yasmin and Ghafran (2021) find that regulatory compliance is a key feature that aids NPOs in increasing societal trust in their programme activities. Moulton and Eckerd (2012) propose that NPOs should be publicly funded and circumvent possible goal capture by business-positioned perspectives. Furthermore, they propose that NPOs should not be focused on centralisation and evaluation to protect NPOs' multiplicity of approaches to their public functions (Moulton and Eckerd 2012; Neesham et al. 2017).

In summation, from a practical perspective, project management can present overheads which are perceived as profligate of constrained resources. Furthermore, it can produce conflicts in cooperative spaces where entities working to shape societal transformation adopt diverse methods (Lannon and Walsh 2016). As NPOs address the issue of constrained resources to accomplish bold objectives, they explore using managerial practices from the corporate world to build efficiency. Project management is preferred as it enables the application of knowledge, procedures, talent and practices that improve the probability of accomplishment over a broad array of projects (Anderson and Lannon 2018). However, from the preceding review, a precautionary stance to implementing project management techniques applicable to the for-profit world was necessary to prevent the dilution of the NPO's capacity to deliver on its mission.

Moya-Colorado et al. (2021) recommends that a methodical approach comprising a shared project management practice could enhance project management efficiencies regarding project execution and accountability for the NPO sector in general. Despite the pressure from donors for NPOs to

collaborate with other NPOs to achieve knowledge sharing and capacity building, this can instead be led by the NPO sector from the perspective of effective project management practices and stakeholder management.

Several impediments to an NPO's evaluation and monitoring of projects exist and these may be substantiated by the malfunction of donors and policymakers to assist NPOs in the assessment process. Furthermore, limited consensus among donors and specialists exists about what makes up good practice, implying a dearth of stakeholder collaboration, often resulting in a symbolic implementation of project impact measures. However, it was inferred that the competitive NPO environment requires an entity to stand out, justifying the allocation of an NPO's own resources towards monitoring and assessment processes and training staff in project management practices (Kao 2018).

Ultimately, when monitoring and assessment are linked with learning and adapting from a community ownership and leadership perspective, project implementation, which is otherwise not possible when a single framework is utilised, is improved. Project management, monitoring and evaluation are deemed an important adaptive capacity that could enhance an NPO's ability to stand out and augment organisational resilience.

At NPOs, boards entrust the management to officials responsible for programme implementation. In general, governance is central to managing internal activities and stakeholder engagement (Zollo et al. 2019). Governance is the next adaptive capacity to be discussed.

### **2.8.8 Practices: Governance**

Corporate governance signifies that a stakeholder can trust management practices and board decisions. The international proliferation of codes related to corporate governance is evidence of its importance (Gazzola et al. 2020). When a country is connected to effective directorates, it could attract more foreign investment (Agyemang et al. 2019). The 2008 global financial predicament was partially attributed to vulnerabilities and malfunctions in corporate governance procedures (Van Zyl and Mans-Kemp 2020). Subsequently, regulations in numerous countries were revised by including country-specific concerns, as a one-size-fits-all standard is unfeasible (Van Zyl and Mans-Kemp 2020).

Governance is central to managing internal activities and stakeholder engagement (Zollo et al. 2019). An entity's governance is shaped and often structured by key external relationships which have substantial importance on the developing role of NGOs in the public sector (Kuruppu and Lodhia 2019). Financial mismanagement scandals and the exploitation of beneficiaries related to NPOs have diluted public trust and negatively affected the legitimacy of NPOs (Kuruppu and

Lodhia 2019; Visser 2020). This has increased calls for the accountability and transparency of NPOs. As NPOs hold the government and the corporate sector to greater transparency and accountability, NPOs should then also reciprocate this expectation of themselves (Dhanani and Connolly 2015).

In the NPO sector, culpability is regarded as a stakeholder prerequisite to gain access to and secure resources and can be proved by suitable governance practices and efficient resource use. This is often deemed a measure of control and justification; however, this can also be an opportunity for NPOs to demonstrate proactively their legitimacy, withstand claims and gain further legitimacy (Egholm, Heyse and Mourey 2020; O’Leary 2017).

Together with NPOs, international bodies have created codes of comportment and accountability frameworks to guide improved NPO governance (Dhanani and Connolly 2015). Following a consultative approach, the ‘Independent Code of Governance for the NPO sector in South Africa’ was completed in 2012 (Rosenthal 2012). It includes eight essential principles, six leadership tenets and five financial and legal tenets. Prescribing to the code is a voluntary process (Marais 2020). The code was a progressive method setting the tone for the King IV Report which now includes aspects of NPO governance as a sub-sector focus (Marais 2020).

According to the King IV Report, some of the benefits of good corporate governance for an NPO are enhanced trustworthiness and reputation, access to funding on improved terms, better deterrence of fraud and the ability to withstand and recover from turbulent situations (Institute of Directors of Southern Africa 2016). Corporate governance impacts the productivity of NPOs and their capacity to obtain financing resources (Gazzola et al. 2020).

At NPOs, boards entrust the management to officials responsible for operations, similar to the corporate sector. Executives are responsible to the board for operational goals and the board is responsible to donors and other stakeholders (Callen, Klein and Tinkelman 2010; Viader and Espina 2014). NPO board associates are not rewarded according to time committed and make a voluntary contribution to the NPO, which influences the recruitment and selection process of board members (Viader and Espina 2014).

Experience, proficiency and social relations are the foremost required competencies in NPO board members. When the most capable board members are appointed, these competencies impact NPOs, positively underwriting NPO synergy (Roshayani et al. 2018). Larger boards produce improved trust with stakeholders, specifically with funders. Furthermore, a positive correlation between the number of women serving on a board should exist (Gazzola et al. 2020; Ward and Forker 2017). However, according to Stewart and Diebold (2017), larger boards decrease the probability of leadership replacement when the NPO is performing poorly from a financial

perspective in relation to NPOs with smaller boards. Plaisance (2021) notes that large boards also provide an opportunity for NPOs to constitutionally encourage their financiers to join their boards.

The RDT highlights the acquisition and maintenance of resources necessary for survival and is relevant to organisational performance. Accordingly, the main functions of an NPO board are to facilitate interactions, reduce resource dependencies, improve the flow and variety of resources through their networks and exemplify the NPO to outer constituencies (Callen et al. 2010). The RDT also emphasises that partner-financed NPOs are prone to adopting governance and accountability standards akin to those utilised by these partners (Barman and MacIndoe 2012; Plaisance 2021).

NPOs differ from for-profit organisations as NPOs have no residual owners of assets. However, an NPO needs to demonstrate that donations will be used efficiently and not expropriated. The inclusion of unrelated individuals and major donors on board committees is unique to NPOs, yet other mechanisms such as audit committees are similar to the corporate sector concerning the use of assets (Callen et al. 2010; Hillman et al. 2009). Occasionally donors and certain governing bodies can have additional requirements for NPO boards, such as the need for the board to be autonomous and governance compositions that are clear and accountable (Taylor et al. 2019). During times of instability, boards play a greater role in sourcing additional resources; there is less fundraising activity during stable conditions (Callen et al. 2010).

Without a paramount profit target, the tactics, purposes and conduct of NPOs are multi-layered and fluid when responding to community, economic and governmental changes while attempting to stay relevant and efficient (Wells 2012). The strategy of an NPO may change during turbulent times, for example, the distribution of relief packages in local communities where an NPO might have a footprint, albeit this may not be the NPO's focal area (McDermont 2007; Wells 2012). Strategic flexibility includes a set of competences related to the reconfiguration of an entity's purpose and vision. Furthermore, an understanding of the environment is necessary when an entity faces turbulence that could have a significant impact requiring timely responses (Alexiou 2015).

A reactive focus and survival crises can make NPO activities short-term and *ad hoc* in nature (Murray and Thomas 2019). An NPO's risk increases when its board and management are powerless to participate in strategic preparation and delivery and, according to Murray and Thomas (2019), NPOs, such as animal shelters, have not been able to progress beyond daily challenges. Another challenge that NPOs can experience is that the required level of skills for board committees may not be available in volunteers and, as such, strategic planning for turbulent times may be compromised (Ahmed, Bahoo and Ayub 2019; Chelliah, Boersma and Klettner 2016; Murray and Thomas 2019).

A further challenge to implementing good governance is that a board member often plays dual roles on the board committee due to the lack of appropriate skills, which is not ideal for the prevention of unethical practices; the actual efficiency of the board may be questioned (Murray and Thomas 2019; Van Zyl and Mans-Kemp 2020; Wells 2012). A practical challenge for NPOs is the facilitation of upskilling board members, which may be complex considering constrained resources. This subsequently results in a conflicting scenario between the demand for expertise and stakeholder representation on board committees (Chelliah et al. 2016; Murray and Thomas 2019; Wells 2012). Furthermore, according to Murray and Thomas (2019), where training was provided, the board members often cited a lack of time and other commitments, further compounding the negative impact of unskilled members who contribute the time of goodwill but do not have the skills necessary to fulfil their responsibilities.

NPO executives regularly deal with disengaged, depleted, power-hungry and manipulative board members (Do Adro and Leitão 2020). Moreover, NPOs also deal with excessively compliant committee members who provide limited direction to the entity. Furthermore, some board committees serve as socialising opportunities and do not address the challenging issues involved in the management of NPOs; meetings are frequently misdirected (Marx and Davis 2012).

A further challenge related to NPO governance is the board's interference with the executive's role which increases executive stress levels and results in burnout, undermining the leader's performance and consequently the NPO's as well (Olinske and Hellman 2017). Certain experiments have found that the board frequently has misgivings about the NPO leader's capacity to fulfil the essential requisites of performing activities due to the board's self-confidence in its governance skills (Bernstein, Buse and Bilimoria 2016). Therefore, the behaviour of both an NPO board and the executive leader regularly underwrites uncertainties, confusion and conflict and is justified by the recurrent lack of role elucidation (Bernstein et al. 2016). Furthermore, Olinske and Hellman (2017) found that although academic studies focused on NPO organisational management increased recently, relationships and engagements between the NPO board and its executive leaders remain little studied.

In summation, as NPOs hold the government and the corporate sector to greater transparency and accountability, NPOs should reciprocate this expectation of themselves. Culpability is regarded as a stakeholder prerequisite to gain access to and secure resources and can be proved by suitable governance practices and efficient resource use. While this is regularly deemed a measure of control and justification; it can also be an opportunity for NPOs to demonstrate proactively their legitimacy, withstand claims and gain further legitimacy (Egholm et al. 2020; O'Leary 2017).

During times of instability, boards play a greater role in sourcing additional resources but also have a key function in the flexibility of an NPO in terms of guiding its strategic direction. NPO board members are often volunteers who are well-intended and not remunerated for their time, and consequently, a key challenge is that they lack the skills required to perform their governance oversight functions. Further challenges are related to the board's relations with the NPO leader, and it was inferred that a recurrent lack of role elucidation between the board and the NPO leaders regularly underwrites uncertainties, confusion and conflict.

It was found that larger boards produce improved trust with stakeholders, specifically with funders, and a positive correlation between the number of womenfolk serving on a board should exist. When the most capable board members are appointed, NPOs are impacted positively by underwriting NPO synergy, therefore, it was concluded that board members play a significant role in the governance of NPOs, and the appointment, recruitment and selection of board members is imperative. This adaptive capacity is people-centric and also important to the augmentation of NPO resilience.

NPOs implement innovative tactics to diversify income streams to avoid dependency on resources as mentioned in the RDT (Margiono et al. 2018). The next section discusses financial resources as an adaptive capacity of NPOs.

### **2.8.9 Practices: Financial practices**

Globally, governments are reducing their financial support for social and charitable work, resulting in an increased number of NPOs to fill the gap created by the reduction in government spending (Appel 2019; Brown, L.T. 2019; Mueller et al. 2005; Mueller-Hirth 2012). The subsequent competition resulting from the increased number of NPOs for the limited pool of funding garnered the attention of several academic studies looking into the financial sustainability of NPOs (Ashley and Faulk 2010; Bowman 2011; Bowman, Tuckman and Young 2012; Ye and Gong 2021). The efficient management of financial resources is vital to the performance of corporates and is similarly important for NPOs. However, instead of increasing shareholder wealth, an NPO's prime objective is to achieve its charitable mission, benefiting several stakeholders (Finkler et al. 2018).

A steady income is vital for NPOs to guarantee their budget plans, including the significant costs related to existing activities and staff compensation, underwriting financial activities in the fulfilment of its mission (Polyakov, 2021). Generally, NPOs rely on three types of funding streams: donations from individuals, funding from businesses and income from the government. Other forms of income, such as funding generated from endowment funds, revenue produced from the selling of supplies or services for a charitable cause and income from foundations are

also feasible for NPOs (Bowman 2011; Hodge and Piccolo 2005). In the wake of the global financial crisis of 2008, NPOs met unparalleled trials related to survival (Hu and Kapucu 2017). Reliance on unpredictable donation funding from the general public can compromise an NPO's realisation of its goals (Su, Nuryyev and Aimable 2014).

The RDT describes how entities deal with resource inadequacies resulting from economic recessions by utilising strategic options enabling entities to efficiently administer their resource reliance and eventually increase their self-sufficiency. For instance, when donations decrease, NPOs develop alternate self-sustaining income tactics involving more reliance on earned revenue and could form their own entities (Moldavanova and Goerdel 2018).

Academic studies on this phenomenon refer to the 'commercialisation' of NPOs (Suykens, De Rynck and Verschuere 2019; Vacekov, Valentinov and Nemeč 2017; Vaceková and Svidroňová 2014). Commercial income is produced from the trade of supplies and services that an NPO provides and entails the objective of making a profit (Dart 2004). This route of making a profit or NPO commercialisation can be risky. Risk-taking is another requirement for commercial behaviour in NPOs. A turbulent financial environment shaped by competition from other entities notably impacts the clarity and alterations in NPO goals (Seo 2016).

Isomorphism can result between the entity on which the NPO is dependent for critical resources or on the entity supplying resources (Hersberger-Langloh, Stühlinger and Von Schnurbein 2021; Hillman et al. 2009). A quest for innovative resolutions and the capacity to experiment to unlock the unique challenges and demands of societal missions are necessary for NPOs to engage in commercial actions (Lacerda et al. 2020).

Studies have highlighted that this can lead to mission drift where resources are used to make a profit rather than to serve their beneficiaries and often involves short-term versus survival decisions (Jones 2007; Ma, Jing et al. 2018). However, according to Battilana and Lee (2014), improved NPO managerialism skills that can blend both commercial and social goals could mitigate potential mission drift. These findings were later corroborated by Hersberger-Langloh et al. (2021) who confirmed that a middle ground exists between the two extreme research camps on managerialism (Hersberger-Langloh et al. 2021; Ma, Jing et al. 2018).

NPOs with more resources and those that have more access to resources can improve performance and serve a wider beneficiary base than those with fewer resources (Dall'Agnol et al. 2017; Shuib, Said and Atan 2013; Su et al. 2014). Engaging in commercial activities produces an alternative source of funding for NPOs that could be used to either substitute donor funding or become a new supplementary funding stream (Moldavanova and Goerdel 2018; Suykens et al. 2019).

Following the influential academic study of Tuckman and Chang (1991), several researchers support the notion of NPOs diversifying their funding streams to positively affect financial stability and organisational growth (Suykens et al. 2019; Ye and Gong 2021). However, diversification of income streams may not always be advantageous to all NPOs. A study by Hung and Hager (2019) found that in certain cases this could be harmful and could result in the loss of funding. Research by Chikoto and Neely (2014) established that income concentration results in financial growth and aids the accumulation of financial capacity. Furthermore, they contend that investing in administration and fundraising expenses is beneficial when focused on fewer income sources.

NPOs are dependent on diverse income streams and need to manage influences from diverse donors and stakeholders, increasing organisational complexities (Battilana and Lee 2014). Conversely, NPOs with only a few funding streams could be more streamlined with simplified decision-making procedures (Seo 2016). In exploring what triggers NPO failure, Green et al. (2021) found that a diversified income portfolio increases NPO financial resilience and specifically found that reliance on grant income was distinctly related to an elevated risk of failure. They described grant income as fixed amounts to accomplish a particular outcome. The study by Green et al. (2021) agrees with the general findings of Chikoto and Neely (2014) and Suykens et al. (2019) concerning the optimistic effects of revenue diversification on NPO financial resilience.

Regarding RDT, income diversification has continued to be utilised as a gauge of fiscal steadiness and as an illustrative component of fiscal health (Von Schnurbein and Fritz 2017). An NPO's financial health can include efficiency measures such as ratios that can be specified by NPO watchdogs (Ashley and Faulk 2010). Tuckman and Chang (1991) propose the following four standards to appraise NPO financial susceptibility: insufficient equity balances, income concentration, minimal administrative expenses and minimal operating boundaries. Following the addition of a time limitation, Greenlee and Trussel (2000) modified the standard and proposed that NPOs were financially susceptible if programme expenses were reduced for three consecutive years.

The inclination to collect earnings from different sources is reliant on the NPO's public or private nature of the services and goods offered and public activities are related to possibly increasing government funding (De Los Mozos, Duarte and Ruiz 2016). Therefore, an NPO's programme activities can determine the sources of income streams and could impact diversification (De Los Mozos et al. 2016). Rating agencies assess NPOs on the overall spending that is dedicated to programmatic activities; subsequently, these rating organisations can shape the behaviour of funders (Gordon, Knock and Neely 2009). Thus, donors and assessors may not routinely value

NPO profits, suggesting that NPOs are incentivised to boost programme expenditure or outputs annually, thereby decreasing possible gains to attract donor funding (Calabrese 2012).

NPO sources of financing are limited compared to corporates as NPOs are incapable of issuing equity stocks. Thus, net assets are valued by NPOs as a stream of internal funding (Calabrese 2012). Focusing on increasing NPO income is only advantageous if assets are also amassed (Prentice 2015). Net assets could service liabilities, sustain programme deliverables and avoid the scaling back of operations resulting from seasonal cycles impacting income streams (Calabrese 2012; De Andrés-Alonso, Garcia-Rodriguez and Romero-Merino 2015).

Studies found a negative correlation between total donations and the administrative expenses of NPOs (Carroll and Stater 2009). Administrative expenses are reduced during turbulent financial occurrences; however, the reduction might be less impactful as the process is not instantaneous (Thomas and Trafford 2013). However, according to Von Schnurbein and Fritz (2017), higher programme expenditure leads to fiscal growth, while administrative outlays reveal no substantial impact on fiscal growth, consequently, exclusively reducing administrative expenses could not enhance fiscal growth.

The size of NPOs is also a key factor to be considered. Larger NPOs can successfully reduce their administrative expenses during a financial shock (De Andrés-Alonso et al. 2015). A study applicable to disaster relief entities proposed that a precautionary stance be adopted before broadening their NPO offerings when funds are constrained (Arora, Rahmani and Ramachandran 2021). This precautionary stance enables NPOs to expand the effectiveness of existing projects and help beneficiaries receive assistance timeously. While fundraising expenditures are essential to fund potential activities, an NPO should establish what ratio of its recurring reserves to assign to fundraising activities rather than serving its beneficiaries. A distinct understanding of the trade-off confronted by NPOs in assigning resources to beneficiary activities or fundraising activities is important for NPOs to boost expenditure on beneficiary services in the long run (Sarikaya and Buhl 2021).

According to Von Schnurbein and Fritz (2017), NPO finances are determined by two processes referred to as 'nature', i.e., the unmanageable elements that directly impact an NPO mission or configuration, and 'nurture', i.e., the manageable aspects which can be met with managerialism. The nature aspects are considered to be an NPO's age, size, composition and mission; considering the management of NPO finances, income diversification and reduction of overhead expenses are the two foremost strategies (Ye and Gong 2021).

Fundraising efforts and the size and make-up of the board are among the nurture factors that can be dynamically influenced to impact NPO finances. Certain NPOs might not have the required

set-up or competences to acquire several categories of income (De Los Mozos et al. 2016). Considering that large NPOs can recruit employees dedicated to fundraising efforts, the relation between income structure and fundraising proficiency is not consistent among different sectors (Von Schnurbein and Fritz 2017). Both the nature and nurture aspects affected by varying factors need to be included in managerial decisions to achieve an optimum income structure (Von Schnurbein and Fritz 2017; Ye and Gong 2021).

A common challenge faced by NPOs is their ability to raise funds for their core overheads such as office rental, electricity and water costs etc. “Starve the organisation by under-investing in core organisational functions and you sacrifice productivity and undermine the grantee’s long-term stability (Sussman 2003, p. 3).” Other organisational challenges related to developing adaptive capacities are lack of capacity and concern managing the fragile balance between productivity, efficiency, purpose and enthusiasm that drive NPOs (McMurray et al. 2010). Increasing expenditure on management costs could improve an NPO’s financial steadiness and NPO boards could reconsider keeping overhead costs to a minimum (Tevel, Katz and Brock 2015). NPOs should make constructive investments in fundraising efforts and administrative provisions to enhance the growth of financial capacities (Chikoto and Neely 2014). Educating donors on the need for administrative funding is also recommended to change the mindset of traditional philanthropists and to ensure that NPOs remain resilient during turbulent times (Scarce and Wang 2020).

Accountability at NPOs varies in form, e.g., quantifiable financial releases focusing on numerical accounts of income and expenses or narratives with a qualitative feel (Connolly and Hyndman 2013). NPOs have a diverse range of stakeholders and a key subject of concern is balancing the info and accountability expectations and needs of the stakeholders (Rathi, Given and Forcier 2014).

Larger NPOs grapple with beneficiary accountability as they are more rigid and are inclined to focus on upward donor accountability (Jacobs and Wilford 2010; Kilby 2006). However, a study by Van Zyl et al. (2018), found the contrary; larger NPOs performed better at accountability to both donors and beneficiaries facilitated by the presence of more resources. Furthermore, larger NPOs focused most on financial accountability and to a lesser degree on observing project output and assessing the project’s effectiveness at solving a development challenge (Van Zyl et al. 2018).

Conformity with regulation is a key factor in assisting NPOs to build trust from a public perspective, however, certain accountability agendas promoted by governments may counteract productivity (Yasmin and Ghafran 2019; Yasmin and Ghafran 2021). An NPO’s ongoing success is dependent on societal trust and assurance in their activities, therefore, authenticity,

accountability and trust are interconnected factors required in more discerning societies (Yasmin and Ghafran 2021).

Traditionally, funders support NPOs financially before project inception, however, contemporary donors have concerns with this traditional support mechanism (Salamon, Sokolowski and Haddock 2017). Donors may be indeterminate about an NPO's ability to deliver on its projects and uncertain of the actual benefits provided to beneficiaries (Devalkar, Sohoni and Sharma 2019). Rating platforms of NPOs can afford some transparency to donors, however, they are unable to provide comprehensive info regarding the NPO's capacity to produce outcomes that donors support (Ashley and Faulk 2010; Gordon et al. 2009).

To surpass these challenges, certain NPOs have adopted a novel approach which entails donor funding the NPO after the project is executed and the results of the project are examined (Devalkar, Sohoni and Arora 2017; Devalkar et al. 2019). This approach might overcome the donors' concerns, however, the NPO needs to fund the project initially from internal funds, presenting a risk of funding shortfalls (Devalkar et al. 2019). Smaller NPOs with no access to endowment funding or loan funding cannot afford a pay-for-results approach (Sharma, Devalkar and Sohoni 2021). Studies into this downside have proposed that there should be an optimal quantum of funding accumulated from traditional donors before initiating any new and unfunded projects to avoid potential revenue shortfalls (Devalkar et al. 2017).

Furthermore, according to Devalkar et al. (2017), with a minimal amount of preliminary funding, an NPO can produce double the gains of traditional funding by enabling donors to fund projects after reviewing initial results. Potential cross-subsidising of projects could be alleviated by high levels of transparency with prospective donors, as well as adopting suitable measures of project impact which will underwrite the donors' understanding and support of the NPO activities (Arora et al. 2021; Ebrahim and Rangan 2014; Privett and Erhun 2011).

Studies have found a positive correlation between an NPO's online fame and its financial upshots, therefore, enhancing that online prominence should become part of an NPO's tactical plan to improve its financial accomplishments (Campbell and Lambright 2019; Lee 2021). Furthermore, a recent study by Modi and Sahi (2021) found that NPOs adopting a marketing disposition with an emphasis on funders, beneficiaries and partners, facilitate NPOs to attract greater resources, underwriting financial stability.

The intensified monitoring of cashflows is practised by NPOs during a financial crunch as a critical element of the NPO's response to a shock (Searing et al. 2021). NPOs funded by governments are mindful of cash flows, particularly when government funding is received after programme service delivery as a reimbursement. NPOs also access reserves accumulated to

supplement cash shortfalls to continue delivering on programme objectives (Searing et al. 2021). Adequate financial resources are a vital resilience mechanism for NPOs, preserving liquidity and financing investments into unexpected but necessary items such as face masks during the COVID-19 pandemic (Stötzer et al. 2022).

In summation, there is a need for NPO leaders to have an awareness of building a diversified funding stream concerning the optimistic effects of revenue diversification on NPO financial resilience. Intensified monitoring of cashflows practised by NPOs during financial crunches is a critical element of NPOs' responses to shocks, and NPOs can access reserves accumulated to supplement cash shortfalls to continue delivering on programme objectives (Searing et al. 2021). Furthermore, NPOs need to accumulate cash reserves from other donors, before considering novel ways of fundraising such as demonstrating a project's investment potential before donors can reimburse expenses and be convinced of its worth. When funds are constrained, NPOs should adopt a precautionary stance before expending their offerings in times of crisis. Furthermore, a distinct understanding of the trade-off confronted by NPOs in assigning resources to beneficiary activities or fundraising activities is important for NPOs to boost expenditure on beneficiary services in the long run.

Reduction in overheads is also an indication of the financial practices adopted by NPOs to survive turbulence. Educating donors on the need for administrative funding, such as overheads and systems development, is also necessary to change the mindset of traditional philanthropists and to ensure that NPOs remain resilient during turbulent times (Searce and Wang 2020). Donor fatigue is an ongoing challenge experienced by NPOs and adopting a marketing disposition with an emphasis on funders, beneficiaries and partners, facilitates NPOs to attract greater resources and, supported by a stakeholder management perspective, underwrites financial stability. Early-adopter NPOs can consider exploring cryptocurrency platforms and other online mechanisms to underwrite their fundraising strategies and expand funding streams to navigate turbulent environments. This is discussed further in the next sub-section, i.e., the brand and stakeholder engagement adaptive capacity of the NPO.

#### **2.8.10 Practices: Brand and stakeholder engagement**

In the NPO sector, marketing efforts are an effective means of acquiring prominence and support for project activities or other NPO offerings (MacDonald and Sharp 2003). Similar to the corporate sector, NPOs communicate with targeted groups to increase public visibility and improve fundraising efforts (Mano 2010). Large corporates have directed efforts at transforming their traditional philanthropic tendency into more of a commercial activity deriving business benefits (Liu and Ko 2011). NPOs and businesses form alliances to address social issues and

cause-related marketing (CRM) is predominantly implemented to highlight the alliances (Liu and Ko 2011). Such strategic alliances expand access to resources for each entity, thus, enabling the joint entity to become more driven (Lin, Yang and Arya 2009). Social investments undertaken by corporates are promoted via CRM and underwrite the legitimacy and profitability of the entity (Liu and Ko 2011).

The advancements and sophistication of marketing tools facilitate their utilisation in combination with proficiency related to enticing and retaining current and potential donors (Fonseca, Paço and Figueiredo 2021). Increased competition to acquire and retain donors has forced NPOs to strengthen their marketing efforts (Naskrent and Siebelt 2011). Studies of NPOs from 15 countries found that marketing efforts were considered important and carried out, however, the efficiency of their efforts was uncertain. Furthermore, a distinction was found where countries in the Global South relied less on direct mail, advertising and Facebook and instead relied on ‘word-of-mouth’ communication channels (Proust et al. 2013).

A study undertaken by Li and McDougle (2017) found that donors are reliant on info about NPOs to assist them when making altruistic decisions, however, they are also cognisant of trusted sources such as direct interactions with the NPO. An NPO’s inability to proficiently communicate about their social work remains a problematic focal point that is related to funding constraints and the limited number of skilled employees dedicated to marketing (Göttlichová and Soukalova 2015).

Further challenges to effective brand build are a lack of budget from an organisational perspective, a dearth of buy-in from leadership and a general dearth of understanding of the need for a brand from NPO stakeholders (Chapleo 2015). Another challenge identified in several studies was the lack of appropriate leadership skills and the prioritisation of marketing efforts by the board (Lin et al. 2009; Liu and Ko 2011; Pope, Isely and Asamoá-Tutu 2009). Specifically, Pope et al. (2009) propose that marketing skills become a prerequisite for board members; this will address brand promotion and weaknesses in the marketing sphere, such as fundraising and efficiently reaching volunteers or beneficiaries.

According to Maurya and Mishra (2012), a brand is difficult to define in a few lines. “Brands are conditional, intangible and legal assets for a firm. They act as a signal of perceived value to all the stakeholders. The perceived value (benefits) may range from functional to psychological associations” (Maurya and Mishra 2012, p.128). Brand portrayal is the awareness, emotions and opinions individuals uphold about an entity and through which they relate to an entity (Huang and Ku 2016). A constructive brand icon has a worthwhile impact on brand worth and stakeholder behaviour (Belenioti and Vassiliadis 2017).

Similar to corporate firms, NPO brands also create affinity and delineation qualities in a competitive setting, intensifying trust in social undertakings and, thereby, promoting donation income (Voeth and Herbst 2008). Studies have shown that an NPO's brand has a substantial effect on potential donors' intent to contribute towards a cause (Michel and Rieunier 2012; Wan et al. 2017). In contrast with corporate brands, NPO brands need to accentuate their central values of credibility, compassion and idealism (Huang and Ku 2016; Voeth and Herbst 2008).

An NPO's website content can influence an individual's perspective of the entity, contributing to brand build; however, branding is still a developing concept in the NPO sector (Huang and Ku 2016; Voeth and Herbst 2008). For NPOs, the practical association of its brand image refers to its mission or cause and the emblematic association refers to its principles. Additionally, the empirical brand association refers to the individual's sensation when connecting with the NPO, e.g., the act of giving (Hankinson 2004).

Each of the three brand associations can be communicated via an NPO's website to introduce practical and emblematic benefits and can provide functions for an empirical benefit as well (Huang and Ku 2016). The findings from a study conducted by Huang and Ku (2016) suggest that info regarding operations and communication on a website will generate a brand image of usefulness, enhancing a website viewer's intent to donate resources. Additionally, they found that info on the NPO's projects and potential opportunities to serve a community could create a brand image of dynamism, increasing the intent of a donor to contribute their time when viewing a website. A positive correlation exists between the quantity of financial info divulged on NPO websites and philanthropic contributions (Saxton, Neely and Guo 2014).

Studies have found that social media such as Twitter and Facebook positively influence philanthropic contributions (Guo and Saxton 2014; Li and McDougale 2017). For NPOs, social media presents benefits such as minimal cost, enabling dialogic communication and boosting engagements, all resulting in increased brand awareness (Belenioti and Vassiliadis 2017; Nah and Saxton 2013). NPOs utilising information processing technology to strategically construct communication and networking capabilities can boost organisational capacities enabling the achievement of their missions (Sun and Asencio 2019). Social media utilisation can connect stakeholders of an NPO, facilitating the advancement of new groups and assisting stakeholders in acquiring new information (Fulk 2017; Sun and Asencio 2019). While using social media to promote their social cause, NPOs that serve underprivileged communities must also be mindful of protecting the privacy of their constituents (Sun and Asencio 2019).

The current rapid expansion of the NPO sector requires NPO leaders to reassess their approaches to their missions and project offerings and to explore innovative means of providing services,

particularly during times of financial predicaments (Göttlichová and Soukalova 2015). NPOs that embark on re-branding strategies are confronted with the integration of their organisational identities between their traditional social objectives and their business orientations (Lee and Bourne 2017). Re-branding to attract donors and diversify income streams is perceived both as over-commercialisation and, simultaneously, as a pragmatic response to long-term survival (Lee and Bourne 2017; Maier, Meyer and Steinbereithner 2016).

NPOs that are predominantly reliant on statutory financing are more inclined to emphasise their core mission distinctiveness and have fewer demands to adjust to outside stakeholder pressures. Furthermore, communication with statutory donors is probably more personalised during re-branding activities and less dependent on the brand image (Lee and Bourne 2017). The use of a social media strategy can support NPOs to increase revenue and also increase collaboration between employees and other stakeholders (Sun and Asencio 2019).

NPOs usually have a greater number of stakeholder groups necessitating an openly distinguishable and coherent position to beneficiaries, sponsors, donors, volunteers, board members, staff, suppliers and regulators, all of whom require different communication requirements (Stride and Lee 2007). NPOs regularly offer varying project activities and services to different stakeholders, making it difficult to contextualise the NPO's offerings in single brand communication while managing the expectations of multiple stakeholders (Chapleo 2015). Effectively, an NPO has to administer each of these multi-valued relations with a unique influence on performance and ethos through consideration and delivering on the interchange required by stakeholders (Mitchell and Clark 2019).

Similar to corporates, NPOs aim not only to continue but also to prosper, i.e., to become financially strong, thus, necessitating a persistent search for funding and partnership prospects (Lefroy and Tsarenko 2013). To this end, NPOs can concentrate on marketing efforts, e.g., improving the NPO's brand or raising public alertness of the NPO (Kim and Woo 2019; Lefroy and Tsarenko 2013). During a crisis, a decent business reputation is perceived as an elusive asset, serving as a safeguard to diminish institutional harm (Kim and Woo 2019).

An NPO's brand reputation is also considered an asset, with the additional advantages of NPO resource influence and surviving adversities (Lefroy and Tsarenko 2013). A decent NPO reputation can also assist with recruiting and retaining volunteers and staff and can enhance funder loyalty (Sarstedt and Schloderer 2010; Schloderer, Sarstedt and Ringle 2014). NPOs with a poor reputation have adverse implications, such as the curbing of donation funding, poor volunteering and the erosion of public trust (Mews and Boenigk 2013; Peng, Kim and Deat 2019).

Consumers who have a strong brand affinity with a business brand can have this affinity transferred to an NPO brand when an alliance is formed to meet social goals (Vafeiadis et al. 2021). Vafeiadis et al. (2021) expand on the framework developed by Michel and Rieunier (2012). Subsequently, Vafeiadis et al. (2021) propose that NPOs should focus on consumers who strongly connect with a business brand, particularly when the business is well suited to the NPO mission and has its own strong reputation.

For advocacy NPOs, social media platforms enable the expansion of activism efforts reaching new groups of advocates and rallying these networks to act (Guo and Saxton 2014). Furthermore, social media sites allow NPOs to educate, connect, rally and build affiliations with a large number of supporters (Guo and Saxton 2017). Technological advancements in information processing have been piloted in an era of information-rich environments, making it difficult for NPOs to voice their standpoints. Media sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn facilitate stakeholder engagement by engaging current and probable stakeholders, communicating, collaborating and organising cooperative activities in real time (Guo and Saxton 2014; Sun and Asencio 2019).

Financial accomplishments are not the principal aim of NPOs and financial instruments alone are inadequate to measure performance (Balsler and McClusky 2005). Instead, NPOs typically acquire resources and acceptability from stakeholders, therefore, stakeholder management positioning is more pertinent (Leipnitz 2014). The NPO sector is academically under-researched, specifically concerning relations of vested parties holding a stake and branding (Andreasen 2012; Mitchell and Clark 2019).

From an NPO perspective, market orientation is indirectly determined through three aspects: stakeholder satisfaction, partner repute and resource draw (Shoham et al. 2006). From a corporate perspective market orientation delivers on goals based on the corporate mission as it drives commercial performance, however, it has been suggested that perhaps the term social orientation is more appropriate to the NPO sector (Mitchell and Clark 2019).

Key stakeholder performance factors, such as contentment, loyalty or NPO affiliation, offer a practical base for management decisions and NPO managers are required to manage and control the quality of their offerings to enhance the gratification of their stakeholders (Leipnitz 2014). NPO managers must also take into account the natural environment as a relevant stakeholder, bringing ecological concerns to the attention of corporates (Driscoll and Starik 2004). Furthermore, an NPO needs to comprehend what each of the stakeholder groups requires in exchange for their investment of time, resources or manpower (Mitchell and Clark 2019).

An NPO brand image scale was developed by Michel and Rieunier (2012) and this work was later expanded by (Michaelidou, Micevski and Cadogan 2015). Discernment of an NPO's image and

brand involves linkages concerning effectiveness, dynamism, productivity, influence, dependability and ethicality (Michaelidou et al. 2015). The identification and measurement of these factors enable the assessment of the impact on donor behaviour and provide NPOs with the ability to determine if their brands are effective (Michaelidou et al. 2015). Adapting the NPO to localised needs and environmental conditions is a prerequisite to the success of the NPO brand (Keller, Dato-On and Shaw 2010).

From an institutional level, tactical branding and brand equity exploitation form a management model that can assist the NPO with a successful corporate volunteer programme including enriched volunteer administration practices (Liang et al. 2021). A marketing tactic indicates the prominence of branding for stakeholder engagement. Through the tactical utilisation of social media and quantification and qualitative portrayal of its brand value, an NPO can effectively articulate its brand uniqueness and convey clear paths for varying stakeholders to collaborate (Liang et al. 2021).

In summation, NPOs usually have a greater number of stakeholder groups necessitating an openly distinguishable and coherent position to beneficiaries, sponsors, donors, volunteers, board members, staff, suppliers and regulators, all of whom require different communication requirements (Stride and Lee 2007). NPOs regularly offer varying project activities and services to different stakeholders, making it difficult to contextualise the NPOs' offerings in a single brand communication while managing the expectations of multiple stakeholders, as such, an NPO has to administer each of these multi-valued relations with a unique influence on performance and ethos through consideration of and delivering on the interchange required by stakeholders (Mitchell and Clark 2019).

Increased competition to acquire and retain donors has forced NPOs to strengthen their marketing efforts; an NPO's inability to communicate about their social work proficiently remains a problematic focal point that is related to funding constraints and the limited number of skilled employees dedicated to marketing (Göttlichová and Soukalova 2015). Further challenges to effective brand build are a lack of budget from an organisational perspective, a dearth of buy-in from leadership and a general dearth of understanding of the need for a brand from NPO stakeholders (Chapleo 2015).

An NPO's website content can influence an individual's perspective of the entity, contributing to brand building, however, branding is still a developing concept in the NPO sector, and it was found that info regarding operations and communication on a website will generate a brand image of usefulness, enhancing a website viewer's intent to donate resources. Additionally, Huang and Ku (2016) found that info on the NPO's projects and potential opportunities to serve the

community could create a brand image of dynamism, increasing the intent of a donor to contribute their time when viewing a website; thus, NPOs should invest in maintaining an updated website. From the preceding reflections, it can be inferred that despite the challenges and resources required to build an NPO brand, it is a worthwhile effort, as the benefits significantly outweigh the costs in the long run.

The brand and stakeholder engagement adaptive capacity is significantly related to the leadership, financial practices and the last adaptive capacity – information and communication technologies of NPOs, which is discussed next.

### **2.8.11 Practises: Information and communication technologies**

A vast digital gap exists between established and developing nations and information and communication technologies (ICTs) are key to bridging this gap (Ayanso, Cho and Lertwachara 2010). ICT can be interpreted as “technologies used by people and organisations for their information processing and communication purposes” (Zhang, Aikman and Sun 2008, p. 628). Broadly, the implementation of information technologies can be a compelling driver of institutional change. Wide-ranging use of automated networking technologies could stimulate the transformation of an entity’s composition, values, operations and stakeholders (Hackler and Saxton 2007). Similar to the corporate sector, the NPO sector can gain considerably from utilising emergent information technologies (Huang and Karthikeyan 2015).

ICT has become a contemporary social catalyst for improving the lives of communities and, for NPOs, technology has presented a transformative power (Nicholson et al. 2016). Access to the internet and cellular devices has enabled movements via social media which were significant developments in the NPO sphere (Raman 2016). Active users of social media are attracted to this medium for their contributions, disclosure and dissemination of material, enabling the spread of awareness (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). Telecommunications has progressively supported the merging of technology, underwriting an improved reach; the field of analytics provides meaning to data and cloud processing has enabled real-time access (Raman 2016).

Research has established a positive correlation between a firm’s increase in status on social media, trades and other routine indicators of the business. Social media measures, such as the volume of followers and positive sentiments, are important gauges of the firm’s worth (Lee 2021; Moon, Lee and Oh 2015). Social media has a superior proclivity to serve if it is combined with upward mobility, enterprise analytics and cloud processing and can assist NPOs in achieving their social missions (Raman 2016). Information technologies can be leveraged by NPOs to improve project and fundraising activities and stakeholder information access, raise cognisance of social issues

and establish legitimacy (Levine and Zahradnik 2012; Richardson, Parrish Jr and Rosenthal 2011).

The working conditions of NPO staff, such as workloads and interactive relationships, can be affected by information technologies, impacting job satisfaction (Hackler and Saxton 2007; Saidel and Cour 2003). Information distribution, including an accessible communication standpoint and the use of dashboards with info being available on demand, are important for building effective teams (Raman 2016). Analytics requires significant staff involvement and NPO volunteer enrolment can be enhanced through the use of analytics (Liang et al. 2021; Raman 2016). Analytics are also important for decision-making, thereby, improving institutional efficiencies (Davenport, Harris and Morison 2010).

Economically practicable new ICTs are available to aid NPOs. Charitable departments of corporates have created simpler editions of software for NPO use (Lovejoy and Saxton 2012; Raman 2016). Facebook NPO initiatives keep users informed of NPO activities and users contributing to these platforms have been broadly noticed and valued (Lovejoy and Saxton 2012). The implementation of social media, cloud processing and analytics can assist NPOs with the scalability of project activities. Furthermore, smart technology on cellular devices in conjunction with other technologies can assist NPOs in setting up information hubs in rural areas where accessibility is difficult (Davenport et al. 2010; Raman 2016). However, there are also downsides to social platforms such as cyber-bullying and opportunities for the dispersal of hatred (Awori, Benesch and Crandall 2013).

ICT implementation barriers in rural areas are physical access to applications and low levels of ICT awareness (Nicholson et al. 2016; Raman 2016). Sun and Asencio (2019) named four barriers to the use of social platforms in NPOs: constrained resources, lack of ICT expertise, ineffective leadership commitment and a lack of ICT comprehension in the NPO constituents. Regarding information system development within NPOs, software production and project administration practices that are effective in corporate entities may be insufficient due to the various stakeholders involved having fragmented perspectives compared to the corporate world (Sun and Asencio 2019).

New technologies, coupled with the stakeholder acuity of being more engaged with the NPOs that they support, place pressure on NPOs to include such stakeholders in a meaningful manner. Effectively, this is propelling NPOs towards an adaptive learning progression, disseminating stakeholder information for strategic decision-making (Ebrahim 2010; Levine and Zahradnik 2012). Furthermore, NPO leaders will need to be open-minded to find means of incorporating such new pressures into governance (Dumont 2013). The COVID-19 pandemic is augmenting

fundraising uncertainties related to traceability and governance scandals, promoting distrust and donor indifference (Prakash 2019). NPOs are exploring ‘crypto-giving’ platforms as a potential solution to possible mismanagement scandals (Trotter et al. 2020).

Younger individuals are conventionally unlikely to consistently contribute to NPOs and are more prone to using cryptocurrencies as a donation means (Howson 2021; Scarce and Wang 2020). Furthermore, this group is unlikely to trust NPOs or contribute as a result of direct donation petitions (Gregory 2014; Howson 2021). To appeal to this group, fundraising methods are innovative and occur across numerous means, including the blockchain (Christie 2020). However, fundraising opportunities presented by blockchain have some drawbacks, such as price instability, exchangeability of crypto-assets and the consequences of use in terms of taxes (Howson 2021). Furthermore, to guarantee that funders have evidence of the impact of their donations, NPOs have begun surveillance of cryptocurrencies in poorer communities, including invasive monitoring and assessment techniques. Economically disadvantaged funding recipients are vulnerable to inspection and economic experiments (Howson 2021).

Non-profit organisational resilience is the capacity of NPOs to react efficiently to change and adapt positively to new and unanticipated conditions while remaining true to their missions (Scarce and Wang 2020). Technology is unsettling old-style NPO funding mechanisms and radically altering societal engagement, while political tensions are limiting civil society activities in several countries (Salamon et al. 2012). These shifts or changes create opportunities, present challenges and demand swift adaptation (Petrillo et al. 2018). NPO employee technological appetites and NPO leadership agility are vital determinants of an NPO’s swift adaptation to new technologies (Ayanso et al. 2010; Howson 2021; Lovejoy and Saxton 2012; Trotter et al. 2020).

According to the Global NGO Technology Report (Global NGO 2019), ten years ago, European NPOs that implemented a website and Facebook platform were considered to be the vanguard of technology. However, those technologies have now become common practice, according to the Global NGO Technology Report, and this is corroborated by the study by Huang and Karthikeyan (2015) who found that NPOs chose to use steady and proven information technologies instead of emergent technologies. Early-adopter NPOs can explore implementing new technologies such as tools related to artificial intelligence, e.g., chatbots and machine learning, in collaboration with the public and private sectors (Global NGO Technology 2019; Mikhaylov, Esteve and Campion 2018).

Another emergent fundraising avenue is the advent of charitable contributions from spectators of live-streamed gaming such as the Twitch platform (Yoganathan, Osburg and Stevens 2021). Twitch has become a prevalent game-streaming application and regularly attracts millions of

broadcasters and spectators (Jia et al. 2016). More than 80 million dollars was raised for charity via Twitch during 2020, which was a trying year for traditional fundraising due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Partin 2020). However, fundraising is only one of the encouraging outcomes of engaging on this platform; raising awareness of social issues and promoting social causes are also substantial upshots and are other means of attracting youth to charitable causes while gaining organisational legitimacy (Yoganathan et al. 2021).

Downsides related to platforms, such as Twitch and Weibo, are the associations with gamers and opinion leaders as they would need to be reputable to gain legitimacy. Furthermore, third-party intermediaries are required to ensure that funds allocated to a charity are appropriately transferred (Jia et al. 2016; Partin 2020; Yoganathan et al. 2021). The users of online applications and their motivations for using a specific application are subject to change, along with the usage trends across applications and could also vary between generations (Dabija, Bejan and Tipi 2018; Lee 2020; Lee 2021).

Academic research on information technologies in the NPO sector has been limited and sporadic (Umapathy and Connolly 2017; Zorn, Flanagan and Shoham 2011). According to Zorn et al. (2011), NPOs frequently manage obsolete infrastructures and information applications. In a study conducted by Zhang, Gutierrez and Mathieson (2010), NPOs were found to be more focused on protecting information, as it is costly to efficiently deter security infringements which compromise data safety and privacy. Consequently, several NPOs considered information systems a risk to be managed rather than an efficient means for improved applications that could generate a competitive lead (Zhang et al. 2010).

Following a survey of NPOs in America, Huang and Karthikeyan (2015) found that NPOs chose to use steady and proven information technologies instead of emergent technologies and did not have a technology tactical plan. Additionally, they found that most NPOs executed social media management and data administration internally while outsourcing infrastructure administration. Infrastructure requirements related to data backups and onsite servers can be configured by cloud processing, thereby reducing the need for physical resources required by an NPO and reducing potential overhead costs. File sharing, checking and cohesion are also feasible in real time and cloud processing enables improved team collaboration and specialisation (Huang and Karthikeyan 2015; Raman 2016). However, Raman (2016) cautioned that while cloud-based computing may seem feasible, it may only benefit NPOs that are well-resourced.

In summation, barriers to the use of social platforms in NPOs are constrained resources, lack of ICT expertise, ineffective leadership commitment and a lack of ICT comprehension in NPO constituents. ICT has become a contemporary social catalyst for improving the lives of

communities and, for NPOs, technology has presented a transformative power; information technologies can be leveraged by NPOs to improve project and fundraising activities, stakeholder information access, raise cognisance of social issues and establish legitimacy (Levine and Zahradnik 2012; Richardson et al. 2011). Several NPOs considered information systems a risk to be managed rather than an efficient means for improved applications that could generate a competitive lead (Zhang et al. 2010).

Early-adopter NPOs can explore implementing new technologies such as tools related to artificial intelligence. Another emergent fundraising avenue is the advent of charitable contributions from spectators of live-streamed gaming such as the Twitch platform and fundraising is only one of the encouraging outcomes of engaging on this platform; raising awareness of social issues and promoting social causes are also substantial upshots and are other means of attracting youth to charitable causes while gaining organisational legitimacy (Yoganathan et al. 2021).

However, leaders should be mindful of the downsides such as the usage trends across applications and protecting the reputation of the NPO from inappropriate associations with dubious personalities. It was found that younger individuals are conventionally unlikely to consistently contribute to NPOs and are more prone to using cryptocurrencies as a donation means. Therefore, fundraising methods are innovative and occur across numerous means, including the blockchain; however, fundraising opportunities presented by blockchain have some drawbacks.

Technology is unsettling old-style NPO funding mechanisms and radically altering societal engagement, while political tensions are limiting civil society activities in several countries. These shifts or changes create opportunities, present challenges and demand swift adaptation; NPO employee technological appetites and NPO leadership agility are vital determinants of an NPO's swift adaptation to new technologies (Ayanso et al. 2010; Howson 2021; Lovejoy and Saxton 2012; Trotter et al. 2020).

## **2.9 Literature review conclusion**

In this chapter, NPO adaptive capacities were reviewed, grouped and discussed under 11 headings. It was found that the adaptive capacity groups were not standalone topics and often information related to one aspect could be related to another grouping. For example, studies have found a positive correlation between an NPO's online fame and its financial upshots, therefore, enhancing online prominence should become part of an NPO's tactical plan to improve its financial accomplishments (Campbell and Lambright 2019; Lee 2021).

Furthermore, a strong brand can assist NPOs in raising funds during turbulent times and ensure that they can influence other resources, such as manpower, and rally the masses into action when

required (Mitchell and Clark 2019; Mitchell and Clark 2020; Sun and Asencio 2019; Vafeiadis et al. 2021). The impact of NPO leadership could also be discussed under the ICT grouping and each of the groupings is interconnected. Social media has enabled NPOs to reach a large number of individuals and the opportunities to raise awareness are both simultaneously seamless and challenging (Lee 2021; Moon et al. 2015). The literature review also revealed that new NPO fundraising mechanisms can be explored following the turbulent impact of COVID-19 (Yoganathan et al. 2021; Yue et al. 2021) and academic studies into these abrupt experiences are still evolving (Macmillan 2020).

While the NPO sector underwrites a significant economic contribution to the overall South African economy, inadequate and sporadic studies have been undertaken on the NPO sector (Maboya and McKay 2019; Patel 2009; Salamon et al. 2012; Swilling and Russell 2002). The literature review indicates pitfalls concerning the knowledge and skills related to marketing, communications and brand building in the NPO sector, however, this can be mitigated with appropriate stakeholder engagement (Chapleo 2015; Fulk 2017; Nageswarakurukkal et al. 2019).

There was also a dearth of academic articles on the use of technological applications adopted by NPOs and the material available is frequently sourced from conference proceedings. Many researchers, however, have acknowledged the importance of this understudied gap (Huang and Karthikeyan 2015; Raman 2016). The bulk of studies conducted in the NPO project management realm has focused on international progress and there was also a dearth of academic focus on NPOs from a project management perspective (Golini et al. 2017; Lannon and Walsh 2016). The study by Hersberger-Langloh et al. (2021) found that a middle ground does indeed exist between the two extreme research camps on adopting managerialism, i.e., either NPO improved performance or NPO mission deviation (Sanders 2015).

Non-profit organisational resilience is the ability of NPOs to respond efficiently to change and adapt positively to new and unanticipated conditions while remaining true to their missions (Searce and Wang 2020). Several aspects influence organisational resilience concurrently and in diverse and often competing approaches (Andersson et al. 2019). Slower occurrences, such as a technically savvy generational shift, also generate both turbulence and new opportunities (Searce and Wang 2020). These shifts or changes create opportunities, present challenges and demand swift adaptation (Petrillo et al. 2018).

The users of online applications and their motivations for using a specific application are subject to change and the usage trends across applications could also vary between generations (Dabija et al. 2018; Lee 2020; Lee 2021). NPOs need to be aware of these constantly evolving

implications and impacts between generations and stakeholders to respond efficiently to change and adapt positively to new and unanticipated conditions.

Organisational resilience frameworks and models were explored. Most of the frameworks reviewed were subject to empirical testing and only a few related to McManus's ROR have been empirically tested by other academic studies (Duchek 2020; Hillmann and Guenther 2021; Karman 2020). Based on the review of these models, an NPO adaptive capacity conceptual framework was developed and presented in the preceding section. This conceptual framework will be revisited and expanded following the data analysis findings. The next chapter describes the research methodology that was utilised in this study.

## Chapter 3 – Research methodology

In the opening chapter, the central research matters, including an outline of the research question, aim and objectives, were delineated. Literature relevant to the study was set out in Chapter 2. Following the literature review, this third chapter focuses on the research methodology of the study. Research methodology is a procedure that delivers the particulars of the research strategy employed to focus on the research problem, the process of data gathering, the sample range and the assessment approach implemented (Kothari 2011). This qualitative study applied an interpretivist philosophy with an inductive research approach, a case study strategy and multiple data collection techniques over a period of time. The interpretivism epistemological perspective was implemented to obtain an intense sense of social experiences by examining the participants' understandings of and mindsets in building organisational resilience. This chapter delves into and reviews the various research philosophies, approaches and strategies through the guidance of the research onion model developed by Saunders et al. (2009).

### 3.1 Research philosophies

Each research philosophy comprises significant distinctions that influence a researcher's study and the research means (Saunders et al. 2009). Ontology is a philosophical field focused on the nature of societal occurrences as entities; epistemology focuses on what represents adequate knowledge in a study area (Saunders et al. 2009). The intrinsic distinctions in how reality is understood (ontology), knowledge is perceived and assessed (epistemology), objectivity is defined (logic) and ideals formulated are all significant to knowledge finding, innovation or formation (axiology). The junction of these maxims shapes the comprehension of what structures of knowledge are deemed legitimate by researchers (Lynch et al. 2021).

According to McGregor (2018), three prevalent research methodologies, i.e., empirical, interpretive and critical, have become apparent over the cycle of time and are based on philosophical truisms. Academics adopting an empirical methodology suppose that only one reality exists, encompassing distinct factors that are outside of the mind. Furthermore, researchers employing deductive logic believe truth is external, already exists and needs to be found (McGregor 2018). Interpretive methodology academics presume that new knowledge is dependent on how people understand a phenomenon. Interpreting differing viewpoints from peoples' experiences, academics subjectively use inductive reasoning to perceive the study participants' perceptions of truth (Scotland 2012). Academics adopting a critical methodology presume that individuals' lived experiences are regularly assembled within a repressive environment. Accessing perceptions of individuals' truth requires inductive logic; academics' values are crucial to the formation of new knowledge (Kim 2003; Scotland 2012).

Positivism embraces the feasibility of being certain of learnings or data if they were learnt by applying the scientific method (Lynch et al. 2021). This involves creating a hypothesis as a possible justification for phenomena followed by the design of trials to test these theories (McGregor 2017). Positivism is ingrained in the ontological notion that reality is separate from the observer (Aliyu et al. 2014). In the process of positivist studies, the researcher must remain objective to ensure that the results of the analysis are not tainted in any way by the researchers' predispositions (McGregor 2017).

According to Scotland (2012), a downside of positivism is that generalisations gleaned from a positivistic study frequently disregard the intentionality of the research participant, therefore, the actions of the research participants are not wholly understood. A positivist researcher adopts the stance that the world obeys unchanging rules of interconnection and complexity can be addressed by reductionism based on objectivity, repeatability and quantifiability (Aliyu et al. 2014) while justifying knowledge with the most common legitimate forms of reasoning or logic (Burton-Jones and Lee 2017). Debates questioning the legitimacy and use of positivism by academics in social studies resulted in post-positivism, which presumes that there are multiple means of knowing apart from the scientific method (McGregor 2017).

The interpretivist research approach, in contrast to positivism, is based on the understanding of the world of mankind's experience (Mackenzie and Knipe 2006). The real world is constructed socially (Cohen and Manion 1994). The constructivist or interpretivist researcher is motivated to depend on the participants' assessments and opinions of the situation being studied and appreciates the influence of their own life experiences or backgrounds on the research (Creswell 2003). Constructivists do not typically start with a theory; instead, they "generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meanings" continually during the research progression (Creswell 2003, p. 3). The interpretivist or constructivist academic relies on qualitative data collation procedures and examination of information.

Qualitative research can be labelled as a model occurring in everyday or ordinary settings that enables the researcher to construct in-depth detail from having been deeply involved in authentic occurrences (Creswell 2003; Williams 2007). Knowledge shaped by interpretive research has restricted transferability due to typical fragmentation and it is not integrated into a comprehensible body. Generalisations of research findings considered to be beneficial to legislators are commonly lacking as greatly inferred qualitative information involving subjective constructions is produced and could be perceived as a downside (Scotland 2012). Other downsides to qualitative studies are that they do not have a predetermined, limited set of subjects to examine, and important subjects could be neglected and remain undetected. Furthermore, the academic elucidations are

limited and individual experiences and expertise could impact the observations and outcomes of a study (Mohajan 2018).

The research philosophy adopted in this research was an interpretivist or constructivist philosophy. A key factor is that the researcher relies on the assessments and opinions of the participants in the study and the researcher interprets their experiences to generate numerous meanings and develop a theory from these interpretations. This study followed a similar process: executives, CEOs and NPO leaders provided information that was collected during a semi-structured interview and interpreted to develop a theory. This study was based on occurrences that are ingrained in lived work experiences. As a result of the analyses of the participants in the practices of adaptive capacities and organisational resilience, understanding was socially constructed.

The interpretivist philosophy perceives the social domain of commerce and management science as multifaceted and due to its complexity, studies into business management from a social perspective will be diluted if such complexity is condensed to law-like generalities. The interpretivist philosophy advances information and knowledge by concentrating on an idiosyncratic and descriptive method when complexities exist (Al-Ababneh 2020). This study focused on the management sciences i.e., organisational resilience of environmental NPOs which is people-centric, multifaceted, possibly more so than the corporate space, and positioned in the world of social science. Furthermore, knowledge was generated from the viewpoints of individuals, i.e., NPO leaders following a descriptive process; therefore, an interpretivist philosophy was deemed appropriate.

### **3.2 Research approaches**

According to Saunders et al. (2009, p. 129), “two key research approaches are deduction and induction. With the deduction, a hypothesis is developed, and a research strategy is designed to test the hypothesis, whereas with induction, data is collected, and a theory is developed as a result of the data analysis”. Older research areas accruing large volumes of literature that underwrite the definitions of academic frameworks and theories are more pertinent to deduction. Whereas, with newer research areas and less accessible literature, working inductively – reflecting on theoretic themes resulting from the gathered data – is more applicable (Saunders et al. 2009; Sheppard 2020).

Inductive approaches are regularly considered to be qualitative and “the most popular are case studies, ethnography and interpretivist studies”, according to Eisenhardt, Graebner and Sonenshein (2016, p. 1114). Deductive approaches usually focus on gathering quantitative data; the most popular are experiments and surveys (Saunders et al. 2009). Intense immersion into a

central phenomenon over a length of time and being open to the gathering of rich information are core requirements in the inductive approach. Such data may be collected from observations, assessments and, recently, social media content, such as individual posts or tweets from Facebook and Twitter (Eisenhardt et al. 2016; Toubiana and Zietsma 2017).

Academics debate strongly over the superiority of each approach. Deductive research has dominated the academic world from a natural sciences perspective and has been regularly favoured over inductive research approaches (Woiceshyn and Daellenbach 2018). However, inductive research is required to advance academic knowledge and create novel theories and has been utilised extensively in contemporary times (Eisenhardt et al. 2016; Woiceshyn and Daellenbach 2018).

Deductive research is often chosen when time constraints are present as the data can be collected once, although time will be required to develop the study before the gathering and analysis of data (Saunders et al. 2009; Sheppard 2020). Inductive research requires significantly more time to gather data over a period and the risk is related to the gradual emergence of valuable patterns and theories. Furthermore, most managers are acquainted with deduction and more inclined to accept findings from a deductive approach (Saunders et al. 2009). Academics reviewing a research paper may also be inclined to have a preferred choice of research approach, therefore, a clear, thought-out approach is beneficial. With deductive research, the risk is related to unanswered questionnaires. Possible errors in the interpretation of the analysis results can apply to both deductive and inductive studies (Saunders et al. 2009; Woiceshyn and Daellenbach 2018).

According to Woiceshyn and Daellenbach (2018, p. 187), “research questions derived solely through deduction from even a thorough knowledge of the extant literature are likely to generate only incremental contributions to the field”. However, studies involving an inductive method most probably mainly focus on the context in which an event occurs and are more likely to contribute to the theoretical underpinnings of academia (Eisenhardt et al. 2016). Interpretivist researchers usually “generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meanings” (Creswell 2003, p. 9).

The inductive approach applied to this study set out to examine organisational resilience and NPOs’ adaptive capacity in the context of increased competition and limited resources and from a turbulent environment perspective. Models adopted from the commercial world are commonly used to forecast the demise of NPOs, however, the strategies used to continue providing its programmatic social objectives are regularly descriptive and contextually determined, suggesting that the numbers are only one part of the dilemma (Finkler et al. 2018; Searing et al. 2021). Therefore, qualitative research related to organisational resilience is required and may be

considerably more effort intensive. Furthermore, the pursuit of organisational resilience approaches is unavoidably prescriptive, which is not necessarily the point of reference from an NPO management literature perspective; the study of organisational resilience necessitates a systemic tactic that is multifaceted and qualitatively positioned (Searing et al. 2021).

The inductive approach is lithe and descriptive, seeking to determine and comprehend the phenomenon, practice, insights and worldviews of the individuals participating in a study (Cooper and Endacott 2007). The inductive approach aims to reduce the preliminary text collated into a precis presentation, establishing strong associations between the research objectives and the precis results to advance a framework about the fundamental structure of practices, progressions or insights derived from the preliminary text (Thomas 2006; Liu 2016).

This study's research design required similar objectives to an inductive approach, in that it reduced the NPO leaders collated descriptive text into focal themes and shaped associations between the research objective and the focal themes. In addition, the study also intended to develop a conceptual framework about the multifaceted sets of resources or adaptive capacities that might enhance an NPO's organisational resilience on a case-by-case basis. In effect, this encompasses the fundamental structure of practices and insights derived from the preliminary text collated from the NPO leaders who participated in the study, thereby warranting an inductive approach.

### **3.3 Research strategies**

Research strategy is about aspects of data compilation and analysis and requires clarity on the data compilation and analysis procedures (Saunders et al. 2009). The substance of the study's questions in addition to the amount of prevailing knowledge on the study area guides the tactical choice (Saunders et al. 2009; Sheppard 2020). Certain research tactics fall into a qualitative or quantitative realm and can be used together on occasion (Saunders et al. 2009).

The implementation of a particular research method is reliant on the study's purpose; therefore, no research method can be deemed superior to another. However, on occasion, where neither the quantitative nor qualitative methods facilitate the study goals, a mixed-methods research choice has been endorsed, such that each research method plays a complementary role to achieve a balanced study (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004; Teddlie and Tashakkori 2006). A mixed-methods approach affords a researcher variability and a broader scope enabling academics to study a phenomenon deeply (Bryman 2007). Research strategies mainly utilised are controlled experiments and case studies (Ciolkowski et al. 2003). However, according to Van Biljon (2011), surveys are the most popular research tactic utilised in all research fields.

Surveys stipulate a quantitative explanation of trends, mindsets and beliefs of a populace by researching a sample of that populace (Creswell 2003). A survey can be viewed as an investigation completed in retrospect whereby the central process of accumulating qualitative or quantifiable info is interviews and questionnaires (Ciolkowski et al. 2003). While the questionnaire is the most frequently utilised technique of the survey, structured interviews and observation are also a part of this strategy (Saunders et al. 2009). Survey results are examined to develop both narrative and illustrative conclusions that are generalised to the populace from which the study sample was drawn (Ciolkowski et al. 2003; Van Biljon 2011).

A procedure of data gathering intended to assess hypotheses under precise circumstances, to eliminate dangers to internal validity can be considered an experiment tactic (Sheppard 2020). Properly designed experiments could rule out possible alternative explanations to the findings of a study, however, experiments are not often utilised in qualitative studies and have been predominantly utilised in deductive studies where large volumes of data are analysed (Bolinger et al. 2022). Studies into the use of experiments related to the subject of strategy have found that experiments can be effective and academics have advocated the use of the experiment in the strategic field (Bolinger et al. 2022; Croson, Anand and Agarwal 2007). However, the experiment strategy can also be costly and intricate to implement and would require some technical skill for implementation (Bolinger et al. 2022; Saunders et al. 2009).

A case study tactic presents the prospect of examining a phenomenon in detail in a particular context that is mainly associated with the phenomenon and focuses on interpreting the subtleties existing within situations (Eisenhardt et al. 2016; Eisenhardt and Martin 2000; Yin and Campbell 2018). Case studies are broadly utilised in studies focusing on administrative research within the realm of the social sciences and when it is difficult to find an exact solution to a problem (Gustafsson 2017; Kohlbacher 2006).

The case study tactic has five aspects: the research questions, the study's proposals including theoretical subjects, the study's unit of assessment, the reasoning connecting the data gathered to the proposals and the standards for explaining the research findings (Brown 2008; Yin 2011). Among other aspects, case study research presumes that inspecting the situation and other complexities in relation to the case is essential to the comprehension of the case (Yin 2011).

The case study approach underwrites theory construction and is especially valuable in fields where current conceptualisations are lacking (Ponelis 2015). Often with case studies, the interviewer's presence during the primary data collection process is inevitable and could affect participants' responses (Mohajan 2018). Social desirability could also lead some participants to provide unclear responses and present bias in the analysis of the attributes studied (Mohajan 2018;

Teddlie and Tashakkori 2006). However, studies into social desirability from an organisational research perspective, found that this was restricted to a minor sub-section of variables (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2006).

Using a single case study enables the academic to question older theoretical associations and investigate possible new relationships as a thorough study is undertaken and enables the academic to develop a deeper comprehension of the study's participants (Gustafsson 2017; Yin 2011). However, supporting information from a small number of "multiple cases is often considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust" (Yin 2009, p. 53). There are no standards for the selection of the ideal number of cases for a compelling study, however, Eisenhardt (1989, p. 545) recommends that "between four and ten cases often works well".

Qualitative research approaches are receptive to the needs of local stakeholders and scenarios and it is beneficial to study a controlled number of cases intensely (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004). With case studies, a weakness that may occur is that unfounded generalisations and inferences, not limited to the data collated, may be included in the research findings (Diefenbach 2009). Furthermore, Diefenbach (2009) suggests that where case studies go beyond descriptions, researchers should provide articulated theories, forming the base for any generalisations or justifications for the verification of phenomena to address this weakness.

The study's strategy was the use of multiple case studies. The case study method is a prevalent research technique which is most interesting for practical subjects because developments, difficulties and applications can be researched to produce understandings that could enhance practice (Ponelis 2015). A solid point of the case study method is that it allows the academic to build a simpatico relationship with the research participants and it also enables the researcher to get adequately rich explanations or information including comprehensive insights that could be transferred to other comparable situations (Ponelis 2015). To obtain compelling findings for the study and enable cross-case analysis, multiple case studies were chosen.

Reviewing predispositions in research methodologies is significant as it provides scholars with the direction of what route to choose and what to concentrate on in a particular study domain (Mobolaji and Ojebuyi 2021). According to findings by Annarelli and Nonino (2016), studies conducted on organisational resilience comprise conceptual and empirical studies as well as detailed reviews of the literature on the subject.

To date, only a few studies have implemented quantitative methods due to the broad nature of the subject (Oeij et al. 2017). Furthermore, a challenge in conducting research into the NPO sector and a commonly known bias is that research participants are inclined to make their NPOs look

healthier if they relate to a survey as a manner of evaluation (Van Zyl et al. 2018). Therefore, to reduce this type of bias, a case study is preferable. In addition, the general disposition and the methods most frequently used in the study of organisational resilience are the case study and construct development methods (Ma, Xiao et al. 2018).

### **3.4 Research design**

A research design is a logical thread that connects the study aim and research questions to the procedures for data collation and assessment to generate conclusions from the data collected (Ponelis 2015). According to Saunders et al. (2009), a research choice can be viewed as the means chosen to blend both quantitative and qualitative data collation procedures within an academic study. Dzurec and Abraham (1993, p. 75) found that “the objectives, scope, and nature of inquiry are consistent across methods and paradigms”. This might be so even though certain research methodologies are inclined to be related to either the quantitative or qualitative paradigm (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004). Answering the research questions appropriately lies in the data collection process and terms of the procedures and analysis measures adopted; this is aptly demonstrated by the layers included in the “research onion” as indicated by Saunders et al. (2009, p. 108).

Accordingly, this qualitative study applied an interpretivist philosophy with an inductive research approach, a case study strategy and multiple data collection techniques over a period of time. The interpretivism epistemological perspective was implemented to obtain an intense sense of social experiences by examining the participants’ understandings of and mindsets in building organisational resilience. The inductive approach begins with reflections; theories are prepared towards the end of the study and are a result of reflection. Therefore, the inductive approach was implemented as it suited the aim and objectives of this study. The following sub-sections are based on the concept of the research onion of Saunders et al. (2009) to define the process followed in this study.

#### **3.4.1 Research choice**

According to Saunders et al. (2009, p. 151), “either a single data collection technique and corresponding analysis procedures (mono-method) can be used, or more than one data collection technique and analysis procedures answering the research question (multiple methods) can be used”. The mono-method enables the combination of either a specific quantifiable data collation technique or a specific qualitative data collation method, for example, interviews, with qualitative data assessment methods (Saunders et al. 2009).

A single data collection technique was used to collect the data; therefore, a single-method research choice was adopted. Primarily data were collated from semi-structured interviews with NPO leaders. A review of annual reports or information collected from websites regarding NPO missions and governance information was used in addition to the data collected from the semi-structured interviews to generate a robust view of all the cases included in the study.

### **3.4.2 Time horizon**

A cross-sectional time horizon represents data collection on subsets of a population in a given period (Saunders et al. 2009). The primary data from the semi-structured interviews were accessed virtually and collected online from April 2022 to July 2022 from different locations in South Africa.

## **3.5 Data collection**

### **3.5.1 Pilot study**

Pilot studies before commencing the main study play a key role in qualitative research. Interview protocols can be trialled in advance, enabling the identification of future difficulties and allowing an opportunity to make adjustments before the actual data collection (Kim 2011). A properly designed pilot study can inform a good quality research process and the likely outcomes of the research (Van Teijlingen and Hundley 2010). Furthermore, the assessment of the data collated from a pilot study can identify gaps within the research design. Conducting a pilot study is imperative before collating the actual data especially to avoid wasting both the researcher's and participants' time and other valuable resources (Sampson 2004).

After considering the many benefits, a pilot study was conducted to test the interview protocol of this study. It was also conducted to ensure that the participant responses would yield rich data that would provide the means of achieving the research objectives. Two NPO leaders were interviewed during the first two weeks of March 2022; the interviews lasted between 60 and 75 minutes. A meeting request was emailed along with the meeting link, including a fifteen-minute reminder before the meeting. Both interviews were conducted via Zoom and recorded with the consent of the participants.

The first interview was conducted with an NPO leader who is based in a rural outlying area with weak connectivity; the camera needed to be turned off during the interview. The second interview was conducted with an NPO leader in an urban area where connectivity was good. On reflection of this variance between the two interviews, in the case where the camera was turned off, there was less opportunity to read the participant's facial expressions and it was difficult to judge if the

participant was well engaged or particularly interested in certain questions during the interview. Reliance was placed only on verbal cues to further explore certain themes during the interview. In the interview where the camera was turned on, it was much easier to read facial cues. The pilot interviews provided good learning.

The recordings were later used to transcribe the interviews and assess the data collated. The recorded interviews were downloaded from Zoom and transcribed using the Office 365 Word transcription function. Transcription of the interview recordings took longer than anticipated and this was also a key learning from the pilot study. More time would be required to complete this aspect of the data collation process during the primary data collection phase.

On listening to the recordings during the transcription process, it was found that one question relating to different aspects that were combined should rather be asked separately; this was adjusted accordingly in the interview protocol. On the assessment of the transcribed data, it was found that the responses did indeed yield rich data that could achieve the research objectives. At the end of the interview, the second NPO leader interviewed commented that the research was relevant and topical and addressed important issues that most NPOs were experiencing. The semi-structured interview approach worked well and allowed delving deeper into certain responses to better understand the complexities underlying the research objectives.

The participants' feedback also provided an opportunity to perform a cross-case analysis between the NPOs and revealed the potential challenges related to the locations in which NPOs operate. To work around accessing NPO leaders based in rural areas, alternative interview options such as WhatsApp were offered in addition to Zoom and MS Team interviews. The time constraints affecting both NPO leaders were also made clear when scheduling the interviews and follow-up emails thanking each participant for their valuable time were promptly sent. Challenges in pinning down NPO leaders were as expected; as they worked around board meetings and other critical deliverables, a longer data collection period would be required depending on the availability of the NPO leaders. Another challenge anticipated during the data collection process was load shedding experienced at intermittent intervals.

### **3.5.2 Primary data collection**

The tool used to collect primary data was the semi-structured interview which included open-ended questions. Completing the literature review was important as this process highlighted the adaptive capacities identified in other research contexts and expanded the author's understanding of previous viewpoints on the research topic. Based on the 11 adaptive capacity groups identified and discussed in Chapter 2, underwritten by the RDT, RBV, stakeholder management and organisational resilience theories, a preliminary interview protocol was designed. For example,

as one of the adaptive capacity groups was leadership and culture, the author opened the interview with a question related to leadership style and explored the interviewees' values. This encouraged the interviewees to focus on themselves and allowed the author an opportunity to create a rapport with each participant enabling them to feel more at ease from the start of the interview.

Based on learnings from the pilot study mentioned in the previous section, the author was able to ensure that the questions would deliver the rich data necessary for the research objectives. The questions were designed to explore the 11 adaptive capacities and their challenges and corroborate the findings from the literature review with rich data that also enabled the author to explore new or unexplored adaptive capacities not discussed in the literature review. Broad questions such as the NPO leaders' opinions on what made their organisations resilient or their thoughts on the shortcomings of the NPO sector in general were also included to ensure that discussion opportunities for new or unexplored adaptive capacities were provided.

The author emailed each of the participants requesting potential meeting times and often required several follow-ups. This was normal considering the busy schedules of their high-level occupations and time constraints. Considering the busy schedules of the participants, the interviewer often worked around the time slots provided by the participants in recognition of their valuable time provided to the interviewer. A meeting request was emailed along with the Zoom meeting link, including a fifteen-minute reminder before the meeting. On occasion, certain pre-set meetings for the online interviews were missed due to urgent matters that required the NPO leaders' attention; these meetings were rescheduled to accommodate the availability of the participants. The interviews were completed from April 2022 to July 2022 and the 11 participants were based in the Eastern Cape, Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal provinces in South Africa; the author was based in KwaZulu-Natal.

During the interviews, the camera was kept on so that the author could read the facial cues and expressions of the participant, which enabled the author to probe certain areas during the interview in more depth. On occasion connectivity was challenging when load shedding occurred, however, the bulk of the interviews were completed with stable connectivity.

During the interview, the author listened with interest and attention to the participants' descriptive responses. It was better to not stick to the numerical order of the questions but rather follow the cues of the participant. For example, if the participant mentioned volunteers, the author would move to the question on volunteers, ensuring a smooth chain of thought for the interviewees. This approach also allowed the conversation to be guided toward the author's interest. This process aimed to ensure that the data would allow a deep understanding and analysis, producing defensible outcomes. Careful of the time available to the author, each of the interviews was completed within

60 to 75 minutes, and in conclusion, each participant was thanked for their time and openness in sharing their perspectives on the matters covered during the interview.

All the NPOs and individuals who agreed to participate in the study were offered the chance to remain anonymous to protect their identities and were assured that sensitive information would not be distributed externally. Unique codes were assigned to each NPO and the individual participants to analyse data and maintain confidentiality. Data were analysed using the NVivo version 12 data analysis tool. The list of 15 open-ended interview questions was sent to NPO leaders, including managers, founders and executive officers, a little beforehand so that they could familiarise themselves with certain terminology and allow some time for reflection on the questions. This was accompanied by the informed consent forms for each of the participants. As soon as access was granted to the cases under study, further primary information was also collated to enable cross-case comparisons. All interviews were conducted virtually via Zoom from April 2022 to July 2022 and recorded to limit the risk of travel and in-person interviews during the COVID-19 pandemic.

After the interviews were completed, the process of transcribing the interviews began. The recorded interviews were downloaded from Zoom and transcribed using the Office 365 Word transcription function. Each interview question was coded beforehand and analysed to detect trends and cross-examine data in multiple ways via NVivo's search engine and enquiry functionality, following a thematic analysis process consistent with qualitative studies. Data gathered from the semi-structured interviews and the review of organisational reports and online or website information facilitated cross-case analysis.

The transcription process took longer than anticipated, however, this had been a good learning experience from the pilot interviews conducted, and more time was spent on this process to ensure that the data were accurately transcribed. The complete transcribed interviews ranged from a total of eight to 12 pages providing a wealth of raw data per participant. The transcribed data were read several times to ensure accuracy and were also compared to the notes taken by the author during the interviews. This process enabled the author to become familiar with the raw data and develop an initial impression of significant elements and recurring key words.

### **3.5.3 Secondary data collection**

To achieve the aim of the research, a review of the secondary data was first performed. "Peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, articles from professional journals, data from government websites and website material from professional associations will be reviewed and critiqued during the systematic literature review" (Sheppard 2020, p. 192). Secondary data collection searches were performed on online library databases such as EBSCO Host, Google

Scholar, JSTOR, World Cat Local and Academic Search Complete. A total of 516 secondary data sources, including approximately 475 peer-reviewed journal articles, were reviewed during the secondary data collection process.

### **3.5.4 Total population of the study**

Economic disturbances resulting from the pandemic decreased the financial and human resources of conservation and environmentally focused entities. Difficulties include funding losses for conservation generated from activities such as ecotourism, government funding that is transferred to social relief efforts (e.g., grants for unemployed citizens), funder urgencies that have shifted to pandemic relief efforts and decreased funding from corporates and high-wealth individuals (Sandbrook et al. 2019). Together these adverse effects could outweigh the brief gains for biodiversity resulting from the pandemic (Sandbrook et al. 2020). The conservation of ecosystems and a culture that respects life in water and on land, as mentioned in the SDGs, can lead to avoiding future pandemics but this cannot be achieved without institutions such as environmental NPOs that operate across business and government sectors in service of communities and the environment (Nemţeanu and Dabija 2020; Ng 2020; O'Connell 2020).

NPOs enrolled with the DSD are divided into 11 categories: culture and recreation, education, health, social services, development and housing etc. This study focused on only one of the 11 NPO categories which is the environmental category. According to the Directory of Environmental Organisations in South Africa, 92 environmental NPOs were recorded in 2018 (US Environmental Directories 2018). Thus, 92 environmental NPOs made up the target population. Twenty-four environmental NPOs were purposively selected and initially approached via email and telephone calls and invited to participate in the study. However, only 11 positive responses were received. Therefore, a total of 11 environmental NPOs were purposively selected based on their willingness to participate in the study and the NPO executive or founder of each NPO was interviewed. The 11 NPOs purposively selected formed the study sample.

Only NPOs registered with the DSD, such as voluntary associations, non-profit trusts and non-profit companies, which could be reached virtually were included in the study. Voluntary associations not registered with the DSD were excluded from the study as they have a limited governance structure. Environmental NPOs that were five years and older and had experienced and survived a turbulent environment were included. Big international NPOs operating in South Africa were also excluded and only locally established environmental NPOs were included.

### **3.5.5 Unit of analysis and sampling**

With nonprobability sampling, randomisation is not compulsory, as with probability sampling, when choosing a sample from the population (Etikan, Musa and Alkassim 2016). Instead, subjective methods are utilised to establish which elements should be incorporated in the sample; thus, all the subjects or units in the population do not have an equivalent opportunity to be incorporated (Etikan et al. 2016). In purposive sampling, the researcher determines what needs to be studied and proceeds to find individuals who, due to their knowledge, expertise or experience, are willing to and can make information available (Etikan et al. 2016). Purposive sampling is regularly utilised when occupied with small-scale samples and enables the scholar to meet the study objectives and resolve the research questions (Saunders et al. 2009).

A common purposive sampling strategy is the heterogeneous or maximal variation sampling strategy which allows the scholar to collate data to elucidate the key themes that can be observed. A small sample could comprise cases that are entirely different, however, patterns and themes that arise are expected to be of specific interest and worth, denoting significant themes and also allowing an opportunity to document distinctiveness (Etikan et al. 2016; Ponelis 2015).

For this study, a multiple case study approach was adopted instead of a single case study. Using multiple cases emphasises the requisites to determine if the outcomes of the first case appeared in other cases (Saunders et al. 2009). NPO founders or executives who were willing to participate in the study both from an individual and an organisational basis were purposively selected using a heterogeneous sampling strategy. Access to at least one leader in the NPO was required to conduct the case study. A total of 11 environmental NPOs were purposively selected and the NPO executive or founder of each NPO was interviewed. The 11 NPOs purposively selected formed the study sample.

### **3.5.6 Participant and case profiles**

A total of 11 cases were purposively selected. Table 3-1 contains information, such as their position, age, race, gender and number of years of experience, related to the NPO leaders who participated in the study. Organisational information for each of the cases, such as the NPO's age, location, revenue, number of staff and board members and registration type, is also listed. This information was sourced directly from the participants and NPO websites or official reports such as annual financial statements and annual reviews. The participant numbers were aligned with the case numbers for ease of reference.

Table 3-3 Case and participant profile information

<b>Case/Participant Number</b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>	<b><u>3</u></b>	<b><u>4</u></b>	<b><u>5</u></b>	<b><u>6</u></b>	<b><u>7</u></b>	<b><u>8</u></b>	<b><u>9</u></b>	<b><u>10</u></b>	<b><u>11</u></b>
Participant Position	Director	CEO	Founder and Director	CEO	Managing Director and Founder	Executive Director	Chairman	Managing Director	CEO	Chairman and Founder	Director
Participant Age	50-59	40-49	70-79	40-49	40-49	40-49	40-49	40-49	50-59	60-69	50-59
Participant Race	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White
Participant Gender	Male	Male	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male	Male	Male	Female
Number of years participant worked in NPO sector	21	19	29	19	12	12	11	17	22	21	16
NPO Registration Type	Non-profit Company	Non-profit Trust	Non-profit Company	Non-profit Company	Non-profit Company	Non-profit Trust	Voluntary association	Non-profit Trust	Non-profit Trust	Non-profit Trust	Voluntary association
Number of Staff	7	257	6	23	12	9	10	35	19	10	7
Number of Board Members	3	8	3	8	3	4	7	7	4	7	3
Year Established	2015	2004	2017	2005	2016	2012	2000	2008	2000	2004	2010
Location	Kwa-Zulu Natal	Kwa-Zulu Natal	Western Cape	Kwa-Zulu Natal	Western Cape	Western Cape	Kwa-Zulu Natal	Kwa-Zulu Natal	Kwa-Zulu Natal	Western Cape	Eastern Cape
Revenue	Below R10mil	Above R100mil	Below R1mil	Above R10mil	Below R10mil	Below R10mil	Below R1mil	Above R10mil	Above R10mil	Below R10mil	Below R1mil
NPO Age	7	18	5	17	7	10	22	14	22	18	12

Source: Author's own work

The participants included in the study all had at least a decade of experience in the NPO sector, collectively making up about 199 years of experience. All participants were white, held senior positions and the male-to-female participation rate was 6:5. Most of the participants were aged between 40 and 49 years. The participant numbers indicated are the codes used to extrapolate themes derived from the interview transcription analysis; these numbers are used to annotate the participant replies in the presentation of findings.

Case 2 was the only NPO that raised more than R100 million in revenue and employed many staff in comparison to the remaining ten cases. Cases 4, 8 and 9 were all above the R10 million revenue mark, while Cases 1, 5, 6 and 10 were all below the R10 million revenue mark; Cases 3 and 7 raised below R1 million in revenue.

Excluding Case 2, the combined average number of staff employed by the remaining 10 cases was 14 staff and the total number of staff employed in all 11 cases studied was 395 staff. The average age of the cases studied was 13.7 years, while two NPOs were the oldest at 22 years and one case at five years was the youngest. The bulk of the cases studied were in KwaZulu-Natal, followed by four cases in the Western Cape and one case in the Eastern Cape. In terms of board members, all the cases had a relatively small number, with the largest number being 8 members and the smallest number being 3 members. Four NPOs were registered as non-profit companies, five as non-profit trusts and two as voluntary associations.

### **3.5.7 Data analysis**

The interpretivist paradigm measures used to assess research outcomes are different from the assessment measures of the positivist paradigm (Kohlbacher 2006; Mohajan 2018). In positivist research, the measures for assessing academic research are “reliability, validity, and generalizability, whereas to better depict the varying make-up of qualitative research, the terms dependability, credibility and confirmability and transferability are used to establish the trustworthiness of qualitative research” (Ponelis 2015, p. 538).

First, credibility denotes how well the academic representation of the study participants ties in with the participants’ insights (Bloomberg and Volpe 2008; Ponelis 2015). Second, dependability denotes the worth of the data collation and assessment and is achieved by demonstrating the methodical approach of the study in terms of its objectives (Ponelis 2015). Lastly, transferability is the extent to which the study enables the reader or reviewer to apply the outcomes in the conditions examined to similar circumstances (Bloomberg and Volpe 2008; Ponelis 2015).

The systematic reporting and collation of all supporting information are significant for the reviewer to verify whether the study’s outcomes are a consequence of the data collated or the

partiality of the academic (Mohajan 2018). The primary objective of qualitative interviews relates to gaining insight into the study topic from the participants' standpoints (Alsaawi 2014). NVivo version 12 was used to interpret the primary qualitative data collected via the semi-structured interviews.

Eleven NPO leaders were interviewed between April 2022 and July 2022. Each interview lasted between 60 and 75 minutes. The recorded interviews were downloaded from Zoom and transcribed using the Office 365 Word transcription function. Each interview question was coded beforehand and analysed to detect trends and cross-examine data in multiple ways via NVivo's search engine and enquiry functionality, following a thematic analysis process consistent with qualitative studies. Data gathered from the semi-structured interviews and the review of organisational reports and online or website information facilitated cross-case analysis. The referencing style adopted throughout this research is Harvard 6th edition.

### **3.6 Thematic analysis**

Academics conducting qualitative studies often employ a thematic analysis technique involving the documentation of frequently occurring patterns determined from datasets (Lochmiller 2021). However, this systematic approach should not become a solely quantitative activity, instead, it regularly requires the academic to review the data deeply and determine the significance and meanings occurring within the data collated (Kiger and Varpio 2020).

“As an illustrative instrument, thematic analysis can be used to infer meaning about experiences, perspectives, or belief systems through the lens of a particular conceptual or theoretical framework. This approach involves considering how the patterns found within data depict particular conceptual or theoretical ideas” (Lochmiller 2021, p. 2031). This method involves matching patterns occurring within the data collated to conceptual or theoretic accounts and is regularly employed when the academic's coding is identified *a priori* (Lochmiller 2021; Vaismoradi et al. 2016; Kiger and Varpio 2020).

The thematic process followed in this study follows an *a priori* situation, whereby the interview questions were linked to the theoretical frameworks underpinning this study, as discussed in Chapter 2, and coded in advance of the primary data collection. Following the thematic analysis of the data collated from the semi-structured interviews, a total of 18 themes were identified. Some of the themes correlated well with the initial 11 adaptive capacities discussed in Chapter 2, while others referred to challenges experienced or resilience factors. The thematic analysis generated a rich data set and the participants' responses were presented within each of the 18 themes identified. Findings were summarised at the end of each of the themes discussed.

The robustness of the data collated could have been enhanced with a survey and the data later triangulated however, due to time constraints and a challenge in conducting research into the NPO sector and a commonly known bias is that research participants are inclined to make their NPOs look healthier if they relate to a survey as a manner of evaluation (Van Zyl, Claeeyé and Flambard 2018). A cross-case analysis was undertaken to further reflect on the data collated and to add to the richness of the findings. This process enabled the discussion and meanings derived from the data analysed through the lens of the theories and frameworks discussed in Chapter 2. It also enabled a streamlined process of drawing similarities and differences and identifying new themes from the findings and the literature reviewed. The coding process with the NVivo system was also streamlined following this pre-coding process. The thematic analysis process is depicted in Table 3-2, the 18 themes identified from this analysis are presented in Table 3-3 and the initial 11 adaptive capacities discussed in Chapter 2 are presented in Table 3-4.

Table 3-4 Mapping – thematic analysis process

Research question (RQ)	Research objective (RO)	Interview protocol questions	Themes arising from the interview data gathered	Related theory
1. What are the adaptive capacities of South African NPOs considering a turbulent environment?	1. To explore the adaptive capacities of South African NPOs considering a turbulent environment.	1. What values are most important to you as a leader and how would you describe your leadership style?	Culture and Leadership/Human Resources – Employees and Volunteers	OR
		2. How do you encourage creative thinking or innovation within your organisation?	Innovation/Culture and Leadership	SI
		3. How would you describe the culture of your organisation?	Culture and Leadership/Collaboration	OR
		4. How do you attract, manage and retain volunteers and employees that resonate with or champion your NPO mission?	Culture and Leadership/Human Resources – Employees and Volunteers	RBV
2. What are the pitfalls to developing adaptive capacities of South African NPOs considering increased competition?	2. To ascertain the pitfalls to developing adaptive capacities of South African NPOs considering increased competition.	5. What are the major issues facing your organisation at this time?	Financial Practices/Innovation/Collaboration/NPO Overheads and Donor Education/NPO Awareness/Human Resources – Employees and Volunteers	OR/RBV/RDT
		8. What leadership succession plans does the NPO have in place for its top management?	Succession Planning/Governance	RDT
		9. What can your Board of Trustees/Directors do to improve the overall achievement of your organisation’s mission and vision?	Succession Planning/Governance/Culture and Leadership/Collaboration	RDT
		10. What can be done to improve the measurement and reporting related to the impact of your organisation’s projects or programmes (social/financial/environmental)?	Information and Communication Technologies/ Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation	SI/RBV/RDT
		12. In your opinion what are some of the pitfalls related to collaboration with other NPOs working on similar causes?	Brand and Stakeholder Engagement/Collaboration / Innovation	SM/RBV/RDT

Research question (RQ)	Research objective (RO)	Interview protocol questions	Themes arising from the interview data gathered	Related theory
		15. Where do you think the NPO sector as a whole is lacking and what could be done to mitigate existential concerns?	Barriers to Entry/Innovation/Collaboration/ Stakeholder Engagement/Lack of Resources	SM/RBV/RDT
3. How can South African NPOs build organisational resilience in a turbulent environment?	3. To establish how NPOs in South Africa can build organisational resilience in a turbulent environment.	6. What do you think sets your organisation apart from other NPOs in terms of attracting new donor funding and maintaining ongoing funding?	Clarity of Mission and Vision	OR/RBV/RDT
		7. What plans or processes do you currently have in place to manage a crisis situation (e.g., pandemics/rioting/other risks)?	Tactical Restructuring	OR/RBV/RDT
		15. Where do you think the NPO sector as a whole is lacking and what could be done to mitigate existential concerns?	Brand and Stakeholder Engagement/Collaboration / Innovation/ Culture and Leadership/Human Resources – Employees and Volunteers/Transformation Agenda	SM/RBV/RDT
		11. How is your NPO adapting to new technologies to reduce expenditure or improve your brand and communication capabilities?	Information and Communication Technologies/ Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation/Brand and Stakeholder Engagement	SM/RBV/RDT
4. What adaptive capacity framework can be developed to promote the organisational resilience of South African NPOs?	4. To develop an adaptive capacity framework for South African NPOs to promote organisational resilience	13. Under what conditions and when would you consider merging your organisation with another NPO?	Tactical Restructuring/Financial Practices	RDT
		14. What in your opinion have been the major contributing factors to your organisation's resilience over the years considering the volatility and uncertainty of the environment?	Brand and Stakeholder Engagement/Collaboration/ Innovation	OR
		15. Where do you think the NPO sector as a whole is lacking and what could be done to mitigate existential concerns?	Brand and Stakeholder Engagement/External Collaboration/Innovation Culture and Leadership/Human Resources – Employees and Volunteers	SM/RBV/RDT

Note: OR – Organisational Resilience, SI – Social Innovation, RBV – Resource-based View of the Firm, RDT – Resource Dependency Theory and SM – Stakeholder Management

Source: Author's own work

Table 3-5 Adaptive capacities explored in Chapter 2

Number	Literature Review – NPO Adaptive Capacities	Code
1	Human Resources – Employees and Volunteers	HREV
2	Culture and Leadership	CL
3	Succession Planning	SP
4	Collaboration	Col
5	Mergers and Acquisitions	MA
6	Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation	PMME
7	Governance	Gov
8	Innovation	Inn
9	Financial Practices	FP
10	Brand and Stakeholder Engagement	BS
11	Information and Communication Technologies	ICT

Source: Author's own work

Table 3-6 Themes identified from thematic analysis

Number	Themes Arising from Data Analysis	Code
1	Leadership and Culture	CL
2	Human Resources – Volunteers and Employees	HREV
3	Financial Practices Outlook	FPO
4	Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement	CSE
5	Brand and ICT	BICT
6	Board Engagement and Governance	BEG
7	Innovation Outlook	IO
8	Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation	PMME
9	Succession Planning	SP
10	Tactical Restructuring	TR
11	Lack of Resources	LR
12	NPO Overheads and Donor Education	ODE
13	Clarity of Mission and Vision	CMV
14	Differentiation – Alignment and Reporting to the SDGs	DARSDG
15	Recognition and Awareness of the NPO Sector's Role and Contribution	RANPOR
16	Research Stance and Academic Alignment	RSAA
17	Transformation Agenda	TA
18	Barriers of Entry to the NPO Sector and Increased Accountability	BEIC

Source: Author's own work

### 3.7 Ethical considerations

In the framework of academic studies, “ethics refers to the appropriateness of your behaviour in relation to those who become the subject of your work or are affected by it” (Saunders et al. 2009, p. 183). Requesting access to an entity’s data and its leaders could prove difficult for a researcher if the contact persons initially engaged perceive the study as invasive or believe that the request may be deceptive. Nevertheless, if the researcher is trustworthy and capable of relaying the value of the study to the initial contact person and if the academic study intent is transparent, access

should be obtained (Saunders et al. 2009). A total of 24 NPOs were initially contacted, mostly via email, requesting permission to conduct the study. Eventually, permission to conduct the study was obtained from 11 NPOs and signed gatekeeper forms were received for the 11 cases, ensuring that data were collated ethically on behalf of each NPO.

The signed gatekeeper forms supported the ethical clearance application submitted for permission to conduct the study. Ethical clearance to undertake this research was received from the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of the Graduate School of Business and Leadership of the University of KwaZulu-Natal with reference number: HSSREC/00003782/2022.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, participants were sent a summary of the interview record via email requesting their review and feedback. To further support the dependability and credibility of the study, recordings of the interview were also made available to participants to clarify their notes. The interview records and transcriptions were accepted as final when no feedback was received after direct follow-ups with the participants.

The findings from this study were not generalisable but rather transferable and relevant to unique NPO case situations. To ensure the credibility of the findings from the study, a summary of the findings was shared with participants and feedback was requested to ensure the credibility of the study. One participant responded timeously and agreed with the findings and supported the adaptive capacity framework developed.

### **3.8 Limitations of the study**

This study was limited to the environmental NPOs enrolled with the DSD in South Africa. Only NPOs that could be reached virtually were included in the study. Findings from this study will not be generalisable but rather transferable, relevant to unique case situations and limited to the NPO sector.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

This chapter included an overview of the research methodology, which is the procedure that delivers the particulars of the research strategy employed to focus on the research problem, the process of data gathering, the sample range and the assessment approach implemented (Kothari 2011). First, from a broad overview perspective, the research philosophies, approaches and strategies were reviewed. This was followed by the study's rationale for the choice of the research methodology guided by the research onion model developed by Saunders et al. (2009).

The interview process was described and the learnings from the pilot study conducted before the primary data collection were discussed. The chapter concluded with the limitations of the study. The next chapter contains the data analysis and presentation of the results.

## **Chapter 4 – Presentation and discussion of findings**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In this penultimate chapter, the findings from the data analysis and the presentation of the findings are discussed. The adaptive capacity framework conceptualised in Chapter 2 is now expanded following the findings of the data analysis, where an additional seven adaptive capacities are identified. The findings are discussed according to the 18 thematic analysis themes and the research objectives which are to explore the adaptive capacities of South African environmental NPOs considering a turbulent environment from an organisational resilience construct perspective; to ascertain the pitfalls to developing the adaptive capacities of South African environmental NPOs considering increased competition and limited resources; to establish how environmental NPOs in South Africa can build organisational resilience in a turbulent environment.

### **4.2 Expansion of non-profit organisations' adaptive capacity conceptual framework**

In Chapter 2, the initial conceptualisation of an NPO adaptive capacity framework based on the review of the literature and several organisational resilience frameworks was presented. Following the analysis of the data collated from the semi-structured interviews, this initial framework was expanded to incorporate the detailed findings from the thematic analysis.

First, the initial People category was expanded into the grouping titled: Culture, Leadership and People. This broad category includes six adaptive capacities: Cogency-based Leadership; People: Employees, Volunteers and Board; Collaboration – Internal; Innovation; Resilience-based Culture; and Transformation Agenda. These adaptive capacities are largely people-centric and, accordingly, grouped into this expanded heading that more appropriately describes this adaptive capacity grouping.

The second broad category was expanded into the grouping called Tactical Administration and includes six adaptive capacities: Programme Practices; Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting; Stakeholder Engagement: Funders and Beneficiaries; Brand; Information and Communication Technologies; and Academic Institution Alignment. These adaptive capacities are largely related to the administration of the projects or daily operations of the NPO and relate well to the narrow grouping of Practices.

The third broad category of Planning was expanded into the Tactical Planning and Restructuring broad category and includes six adaptive capacities: Financial Practices; Governance: Board Compliance and Accountability; Collaboration – External; Succession Planning; Alliances and

Mergers; and SDG Alignment. These adaptive capacities are largely related to the planning and legitimacy of NPOs.

The adaptive capacity groups are not standalone groupings; often information related to one aspect can be related to another grouping. Each of the groupings is interconnected. For example, studies have found a positive correlation between an NPO's online fame and its financial upshots, therefore, enhancing online prominence should become part of an NPO's tactical plan to improve its financial accomplishments (Campbell and Lambright 2019; Lee 2021). A strong brand can assist NPOs in raising funds during turbulent times and ensure that it influences other resources such as manpower and rallying masses into action when required (Mitchell and Clark 2019).

Lastly, the adaptive capacity of collaboration has been split into external and internal collaboration and placed within the broad grouping of Tactical Planning and Restructuring and Culture, Leadership and People, respectively. Internal stakeholders, such as employees and volunteers, need to collaborate effectively within the NPO and effective collaboration is required with external stakeholders, such as the government and donors, with an emphasis on tactical planning to achieve the NPO's mission. Similarly, board members are featured within the Culture, Leadership and People and the Tactical Planning and Restructuring groupings as they are both volunteers and responsible for the effective governance of the NPO. The finalised conceptual model (Figure 4-2) is presented and discussed in the next chapter.

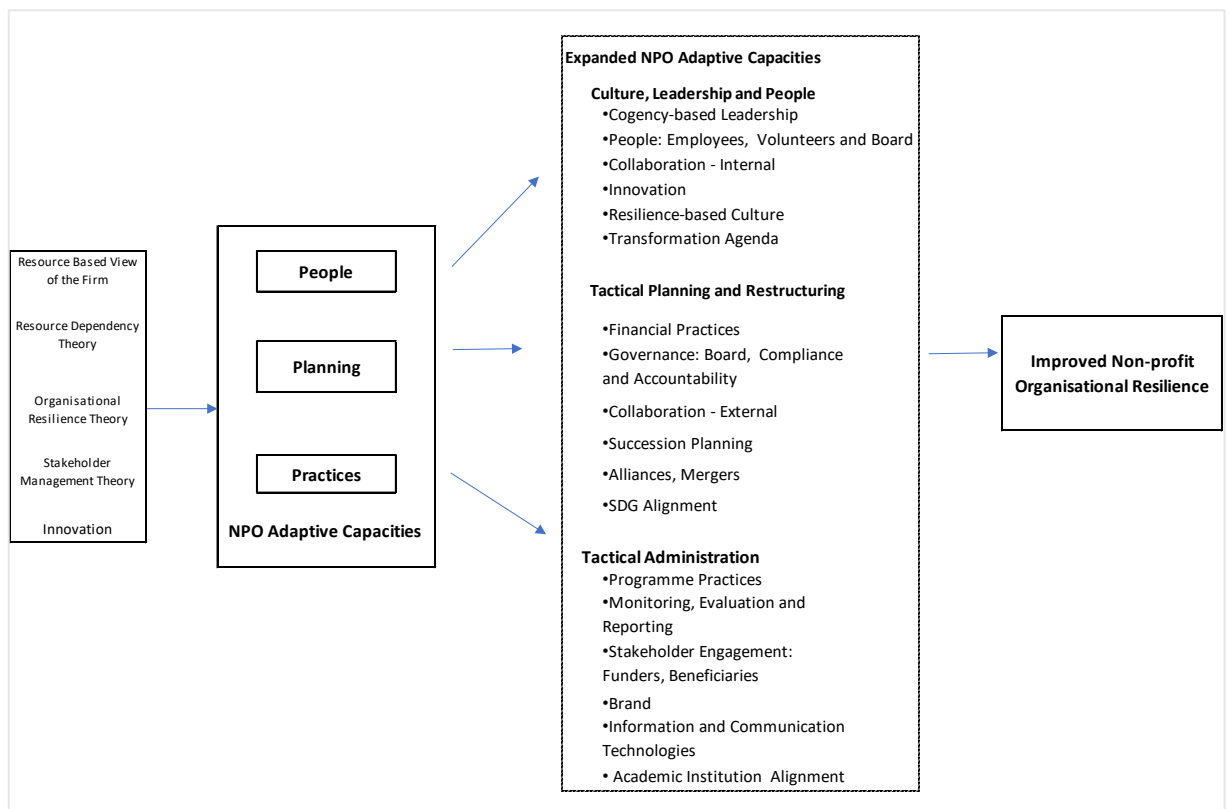


Figure 4-1 Expansion of theoretical framework

Source: Author's own work

### **4.3 Presentation and discussion of findings**

#### **4.3.1 Theme 1 – Leadership and culture**

The quality of NPO leadership can shape the opportunities and experiences of entire communities (Howieson and Hodges 2014). Effective NPO leaders share the prospects of tactical thinking and are involved in enlisting volunteers who are well-matched to the NPO and level of service (Sneath 2021). Furthermore, an evolving culture of shared leadership in NPOs requires broad engagement and participation in dialogues about leadership and requires the promotion of trust across all levels (Routhieaux 2015). Trust is an important leadership value to Participants 1, 4, 8 and 10 who demonstrated how trust is promoted at different levels within their NPOs.

Participant 10 mentioned that trust in the senior leadership team is vital and that problems could arise if it were absent: “... *the main one being trust. If you can't trust people to walk on their own, particularly senior executives, you've got a major problem either with yourself or with them.*”

Participant 4 felt strongly about not micro-managing and valued trust from a leadership perspective. In an atmosphere of trust, turbulent events can be reviewed explicitly across different organisational levels and among several stakeholders (Broekema et al. 2017).

*Ok, so I think the most important thing for me is truth. And or building on a base of truth and leading towards trust with everybody that I work with. Ultimately, I think it's relationship that is the most important thing and so, therefore, truth within relationship and truth and everything I do, trust with everybody that I work with and within the organisation.* Participant 4

From the reflections of Participants 1 and 8, it can further be inferred that trust is a key leadership attribute necessary to navigate turbulence.

*I think with that as the basis, trust is one of the most important things so because we don't have a huge amount of capacity and we rely on people doing projects well without us. Having great amounts of oversight, the whole time, I think trust and accountability are two of the most important things. If somebody works for me, I try and build their capacity to make their own decisions.* Participant 1

*So, I think the values that are most important to me are, sort of, trust. Trust and honesty. I think that's what I require. I'm, sort of, my leadership style is very much not a, not a micromanagement, sort of, level. It's more, sort of, hands-off approach and so what I hope for is capable people that then can be honest and open about, sort of, gaps or issues and challenges that they're facing and therefore that, sort of, trust in*

*each other. So, I have trust that they're doing things, and they have and also that if they're not doing things, they can let me know. And then they have trust that I'm there to, sort of, support them.* Participant 8

Gibson and Tarrant (2010) developed the resilience triangle model in which they state that resilience is drawn from a multifaceted interplay of institutional elements or proficiencies that underwrite resilience when they adjust to a substantial change. Furthermore, this framework depicts three categories of competences: process competences, resources and groundwork competences and leadership, team and awareness competences – all equally crucial to organisational resilience.

Participant 10's response to a personal leadership style alluded to the importance of the leadership value of trust and the organisational culture that a leader can develop by adopting a cogent leadership style. The leadership, team and awareness competences can be related to the comments made by Participant 10 in terms of working with the team to build individual competences and being aware of when there is a need to lead from the front. Allowing people to learn from mistakes is also mentioned by Participant 10.

Participant 2 mentioned trust again in his response to Question 6 about encouraging creativity: *"No one just shoots it down, so I think it's that probably part of that whole trust thing is like we allow people a bit of space to experiment, and that fosters creativity. Whereas if you don't allow failure then some people just end up doing their job because they're so scared of that failure, yeah."*

Both Participants 2 and 10 mentioned supporting their teams and trusting them enough to make mistakes and learn from them. This can be related to the team competences included in Gibson and Tarrant's (2010) resilience triangle model. Interestingly, in the case of both Participants 2 and 10, both their NPOs are 18 years old, and they have 19 and 21 years of experience in the NPO sector, respectively. Their combined years of experience and the fact that these two NPOs are among the older NPOs could be the reason for their open-mindedness on failure and learning from mistakes.

Participant 2, representing Case 2, also had the highest revenue (over R100 million) of all the cases and this could additionally be the reason for accepting failure as the related costs are probably more affordable from a financial perspective.

*I find myself almost impatient but it's something that you learn over time to hold back. Because you can't, you can't get some smart senior and competent people to buy into your vision and into how you want to do things if they don't have the, um, if they don't have the buy-in. And the only way they can get the buy-in is to do 'cause it's through the doing that they learn. And so, I tried my best to try and work with them in the context of either challenge the problem or the opportunity in such a way that I walk behind them. Uhm, rather than trying to pull them along and it's difficult. It's, uhm, very difficult. Uh, it's a difficult style to*

*have because you're not. Sometimes you've gotta jump in front and lead and direct and guide. People don't learn by being told what to do. They learn by doing and the only way you can get them to do is to create a framework in which they can be free to operate. And then with that goes a whole series of other issues, the main one being trust. If you can't trust people to walk on their own, particularly senior executives, you've got a major problem either with yourself or with them. So those two things are really intertwined, and the trust issue is critical because it has to do with the feedback loops that you create in the system. Uhm, if you create an environment where people feel free to grow, develop and try, even if they make mistakes, you'll get truthful feedback. If you just tell them what to do, they will do whatever you tell them. Participant 10*

Similar to the comments of Participant 10, Participant 1 valued an enabling and empowering environment for their team in response to leadership values and style. According to Andersson et al. (2019), with translational leadership, the distribution of power is central. Leadership can combine operational proficiency and accountability with organisational principles and strategic objectives, thereby, producing prerequisites for initiatives in daily activities, despite formal top-down responsibilities (Crevani et al. 2010). Both Participants 1 and 10 demonstrated traits of a translational leadership style and value accountability within their teams. Participant 1 mentioned: *"I think trust and accountability are two of the most important things. If somebody works for me, I try and build their capacity to make their own decisions."*

*Well, uhm. You know, the values that one, that one builds into your leadership. Uhm, sort of, a journey, it, uh, already become values that I suppose need to be true to who you are. Uhm, and those are often tested. Uhm, quite significantly in leadership roles. They can vary from, you know, small incidents where you have to just apply some basic that everybody can buy into, or everybody can understand. But there are sometimes those values are tested in the grey areas that you often come across in leading organisations and I think that's really where you get, where your values get tested, uhm, in sometimes incredibly different, difficult positions and difficult circumstances where people and organisations are at risk. Participant 10*

Employees are vital assets and when employees believe that decisions are made to maintain stability, they are more inclined to participate and responsibly meet the strategic goals of the entity. Equally when other stakeholders such as donors or volunteers know that the organisation's response to a crisis is speedy, truthful and considers all involved, their trust in the integrity of the organisation increases (De Waal et al. 2019; Gardner 2016; Kaltenbrunner and Reichel 2018; Spillan 2003). Participant 1 encouraged their small team of nine staff members to make decisions on their own and focused on capacitating their team: *"We don't have a huge amount of capacity and we rely on people doing projects well without us. If somebody works for me, I try and build their capacity to make their own decisions."*

Participant 3 is also focused on the empowerment of their staff from a capacitation perspective. Participant 3 drew a comparison to the corporate world in terms of 'leading by example' and emphasised that he had never been a corporate person. Participant 3 also valued integrity and

responding quickly during a crisis, similar to the thinking in Participant 5's response – reacting quickly and empowering staff.

*I think one of the most important things is empowerment, empowerment of staff and, um, and encouragement and the other thing is some recognition. When they do well, so when something is great, I always try and, yeah, just thank them and say what a great job they've done and everything. So, yeah, I think that's one of them. The other leadership style is I always have an open door and although I'm not at the so-called helm at the moment, I'm still very much there, so I'm there for anybody at any time. Uhm, when there's a crisis, I always try and respond really quickly, and I think integrity is probably one of the most important. Some things that I value the most, so I think you have to lead by example. I'm not, uh, a corporate person. I've never been a corporate person. I've always been very much of a one-man band, so I've learnt a lot with our NPO of, you know, teamwork and I've learnt a lot from everybody who works with me. Participant 3*

Interestingly, Participant 2 also drew a comparison to the corporate world and related to working with people rather than working in isolation. In terms of surviving in a crisis, Participant 2 referred to the recent lived experiences of flooding and rioting experienced in KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa; both the floods and riots resulted in a loss of life and caused detrimental damage to the natural environment. Being a positive leader, that people will follow is important to Participant 2 who reinforced this when he mentioned “*that no one wants to follow a pessimist*”. Participant 2 shared the value of the inclusivity of the team with Participant 10 and again it needs to be noted that these two NPOs are both 18 years old, and the participants have 19 and 21 years of experience in the NPO sector, respectively. Their combined years of experience and the fact that these two NPOs are among the older NPOs could be the reason for their values aligning in terms of inclusivity for their teams.

*I think from an NPO leader, you need to involve them. I think that's very important; you really need to bring people with you so it's inclusivity is probably the value over again. Uhm, it's that and then also thinking about what we've done. This last, sort of, 2, 3 years, what we've gone through. So, if we can say as an NPO in KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, it's, it's also about a lot of grit, um. But the one defining thing I think is optimism. So, I think optimism is the most important value for an NPO leader and no one wants to follow a pessimist. And I'm hoping that in terms of leadership style, that is, sort of, what, what, you know, is to always, is not to, not to deny that there's bad stuff happening and or act like we can do anything we want but it's about trying to convince everybody that we can actually survive through stuff and make stuff happen and work through stuff, so I think your optimism so, I've gone with inclusivity, creative, also grit and then optimism but I can take optimism as the most important one. Yeah, so it's we almost have two cultures, I reckon, so I think our culture is and what we're aiming it to be, is one of inclusivity, where people feel that they can make a difference and they're part of a ... not a family because it's still work but a culture where people feel that if they've got some, any, anybody can as part of making it a success. Uhm, everybody has a role to play, so it's, yeah, it's again from inclusivity. Participant 2*

According to Pryce (2021), organisational culture offers the means of producing transformative change and provides continuous organisational resilience that can confront the unanticipated. An organisational culture that promotes resilience and innovation recognises that an adverse event is unpredictable from a timing perspective, therefore, a risk-consciousness culture based on long-term survival is proactively nurtured (Vakilzadeh and Haase 2020).

The leadership style and values of Participant 5 highlighted the transformative change for continuous organisational resilience that can confront the unanticipated. Furthermore, Participant 5 valued integrity where leaders' values were closely aligned with the values which underwrite the culture of their NPOs. The leadership style and values of Participant 5 highlighted the transformative change for continuous organisational resilience that can confront the unanticipated. Furthermore, Participant 5 valued integrity – demonstrated in this extract – where the leaders' values are closely aligned to the values of the NPO, which underwrite its culture: “... making sure that as the leader you are saying what you are doing, what you say, doing what you say you're going to do and acting in alignment with our organisational values as well. So, we've got eight organisational values and they very much aligned with what we, well, how we lead.”

Additionally, Participant 5 has 12 years' experience in the NPO sector, which is the second least years of experience. Nonetheless, the leadership traits related to both an authentic leadership style and a translational leadership style are present in Participant 5's comments which indicate that several leadership styles are adopted. Furthermore, Participant 5's awareness that change is occurring fast underwrites an overall culture of organisational resilience and is evident in Participant 5's response: “*We must use the better way; we mustn't stick to the old way because life is changing so fast.*”

A similar concept to translational leadership is proposed by Routhieaux (2015) who believes that shared leadership can boost NPOs' resilience and adaptability and guarantee their capability to traverse turbulence and insecurities. Similar to translational leadership, shared leadership is also premised on decentralised decision-making and leadership is broadly distributed rather than being vested in a few executives (Routhieaux 2015). A shared leadership style and traits of translational leadership are evident in Participant 6's response – valuing inclusivity and wider consultation to achieve a shared vision.

*I think the values would be around, uhm, good transparency and good communication and my leadership style would be one of larger inclusivity. It's around wider consultation really and I think that's effective in a small organisation. It a collective we came together quite organically as opposed to maybe the other way around where we you know where, uh, a trust or an NPO was formed. And then you outsourced, or you looked for skill set to run particular things. It was actually born out of a collective that came together so that was the foundation of it was really that that collective vision. And the desire to actually want to continue*

*to work on meaningful projects and we needed a construct, we needed a something to house it and so that's where the role of inclusivity comes in – it's because it's around a shared vision. I mean, of course when it comes to like a management perspective, one then needs to take those conversations out of that shared collective and then just get on with it. Because you know you, you just won't get anywhere if you're trying to engage with anybody. But if you've got, if you've got the shared vision then you can go ahead effectively.*

Participant 6

To ensure effective resilience management, an entity is required to have a concise comprehension of the problems that underwrite its resilience from a daily operational perspective to a potential disaster scenario (McManus et al. 2008). In the resilience management framework developed by McManus et al. (2008), this is referred to as constructing situation alertness and comprises the present and predictable future operational environment, the resources to which the institute has access and the suppositions and restrictions of internal and external stakeholders.

Participant 10 reflected on the difficult positions in which both people and organisations find themselves; this risk can be related to the situation alertness included in McManus's organisational resilience framework. Participant 10 also talked about protecting the interests of the organisation when “*going beyond one's individual interests*” is mentioned. This can again be related to the suppositions and restrictions of internal and external stakeholders.

Along with transformational leadership, a contemporary cogency-based leadership approach such as authentic leadership can be implemented for worthwhile organisational change (Avolio and Gardner 2005; Moore 2019). Authentic leadership capabilities can be essential to developing a positive and principled organisational culture (Moore 2019). Although several leadership approaches can be utilised by NPO leaders and staff, funders and other stakeholders demand and expect more from NPO leaders (Moore 2019).

According to Pryce (2021), organisational culture offers a means for producing transformative change and provides continuous organisational resilience that can confront the unanticipated. An organisational culture that promotes resilience and innovation recognises that an adverse event is unpredictable from a timing perspective and, therefore, a risk-consciousness culture based on long-term survival is proactively nurtured (Vakilzadeh and Haase 2020).

The leadership style and values of Participant 5 highlight the transformative change for continuous organisational resilience that can confront the unanticipated. Furthermore, she values integrity, demonstrated in this extract, where the leader's values are closely aligned to the values of the NPO, which underwrite its culture: “... *making sure that, as the leader, you are saying what you are doing, what you say, doing what you say you're going to do and acting in alignment*”

*with our organisational values as well. So, we've got eight organisational values and they very much aligned with what we, well, how we lead."*

Participant 2 attributed their NPO's resilience to a resilience culture that was inculcated from the board level. Participants 9 and 10 also mentioned the board as a key factor of their resilience, crediting their resilience to a long-serving and stable board. Participant 9 felt that their resilience was also related to their board's ability to be flexible. Participant 2 mentioned their capital funds and Participant 9 mentioned significant funding received as well, which enabled them to survive from a financial perspective. Participant 2 felt that in the absence of such funding, they would be less resilient.

*Uh, I think that's the people that are there. It's definitely a culture and it's in this again from the board all the way down. I think there's a, there's just a character there that's helped a lot with it and then, so it's, yeah, I really do believe it's just that we are fortunate to have really amazing people. Listen, it doesn't hurt that we've got really nice back up in terms of our capital funds and things. I think if that didn't exist, you know, we wouldn't have been as resilient. Yeah, uhm, but, yeah, it's hasn't been easy. So, it's definitely a, yeah, it's a culture that's been bred and maybe it was a result of having to be resilient to face our previous year that made us all so bloody resilient. We had no choice. Participant 2*

*I think the people, you know, the people in the organisation have been pretty passionate. And they've kept it alive through two difficult times and then bolted during good times. It has, it has gone through some very difficult times, both at a political level. We as a whole that we really fight some major campaigns, uhm, to retain the integrity of that environment. But I think the one probably, one of the most important things was continuity. We had the same board members for more than 18 years and that was, that helped a lot. There was a sense of, you know, being on some, sort of, a journey together. Yeah, people, people it's good in organisation; they're the ones that build the character and an organisation for what it is. And that's why you gotta get the right people. Participant 10*

Participant 2 and Participant 8 referred to the resilience of their people or staff who have had to learn to adapt; as Participant 2 concluded, they had no choice. This reference to personal resilience is again found in Participant 11, where she felt that the NPO's resilience is largely linked to her personal resilience attributes and her personal fundraising techniques.

*I think it's very intimate knowledge of the landscape that we work in. I think it is, sort of, a diversity of staff that can help get stuff done and be quite, sort of, resilient in themselves when needed. And I think it's that, sort of, pretty large network of donors that really understand the work we do and so when it is when there are challenges or, sort of, things like COVID, we have the ability to reach out and it's not about explaining what we do and why we need the assistance, it's, guys, you know what we do and why we need your assistance. Participant 8*

*It is me and I suppose my personality type but also and one is not more, necessarily more important than the other. The fact that we haven't. We not massive and we don't have massive overheads and we fluid, you know. The fact that as small as we are in the area and the community, the resilience has been the people who support me, you know, with events, you know, because I've kept my resilience is also keeping the overheads very low, so I think resilience is making sure your overheads, you know, when the money doesn't come in because the worst thing that can happen for me is I don't plant trees. Yeah, I think the resilience is the nature of the fundraisers that I have; it's up the alley of the type of community here, you know, you've got surfers and beachgoers. Participant 11*

The general thread across the aforementioned analysis of the participant responses is the ability to empower and motivate staff for improved decision-making, thereby promoting accountability between the different levels of the NPO and uniting staff for a common purpose. Furthermore, several NPO leaders also demonstrated alertness to their environments and were often focused on the big picture. Gibson and Tarrant's (2010) resilience triangle model depicts leadership, people and knowledge as competences which are all equally crucial to organisational resilience. The model developed by Lee et al. (2013) also included leadership within the adaptive capacity element. It was found that the leaders studied displayed the crucial competences necessary to navigate a turbulent environment and promote organisational resilience.

Pryce (2021) proposes a holistic approach to organisational culture to build organisational resilience. This is possible when organisational resilience is entrenched in underlying values and principles and operations are incorporated within the multiplicities of the entity to address turbulent events. This leadership and culture theme aligns well with the adaptive capacities identified in Chapter 2.

Adaptive capacity is a crucial aspect of organisational resilience underwriting the need for contemplation and learning to stimulate new behaviour patterns (Pryce 2021; Rahi 2019). A heightened means of conceptualising organisational resilience – 'organisational culture' as a central driver of organisational resilience – was proffered by Pryce (2021). From the preceding discussion, it can be inferred that leadership and culture that is shaped by human intervention in NPOs is an adaptive capacity which aligns with organisational resilience theory and the findings from the literature review.

#### **4.3.2 Theme 2 – Human resources: volunteers and employees**

The following discussion of participant responses under the broad heading of People will be about volunteers and employees who are vital resources to NPOs. Effective NPO leaders share the prospects of tactical thinking and are involved in enlisting volunteers who are well-matched to the NPO and their level of service (Sneath 2021).

Participant 5 mentioned volunteers and donors who were key to making their work possible. This alludes to the awareness or need to share and align the organisational values with key stakeholders, further bolstering the culture of the NPO. Volunteers are equally valuable to NPOs as employees are (Marquis and Raynard 2015). Volunteers can reduce the costs of project implementation but require investment in enrolment, teaching and management costs (Manetti et al. 2015). Volunteers as a key resource to NPOs offer their time, expertise and labour that NPOs could not ordinarily afford to leverage (Erks et al. 2020). Participant 8 asserted that they had a high return rate of volunteers; this is aligned with the findings of the literature reviewed. Furthermore, in Participant 5's case, they had more than a thousand volunteers registered on their website, which is an example of the impact of access to volunteers.

*So, we attract interns because I think we provide real work experience, and we treat the interns very much like staff. They're on our team. They're in all of our meetings etc. And then the next level would be the volunteers; so, we have a volunteer form on our website where people can sign up to be an ongoing volunteer. It's a little bit tricky because we ask them to fill in all their different skills and things that they want to do. But then sometimes, we don't have opportunities for them to volunteer so we've got thousands of people signed up and we try to create opportunities. They do all the activities that we've set up and they are helping us by volunteering but they're also gaining. We have workshops and talks and sustainability events and music events so that's a real exchange. Participant 5*

*Yeah, so we have a large and, sort of, ongoing rotation of volunteers that do participate and we've got an extremely high return rate of volunteers and so. And I forget what that is offhand and, but I think for assets, sort of, shows that the sort of, retention of them shows that they are feeling like they're contributing significantly. I mean that, sort of, retention piece is very high. It's a challenge to continually recruit new people as well and so having the right people that understand what you're trying to do and say actually, I do want a quality, I do want to participate in that and I think that's something that we continually work on and I think that's where we need to, sort of, grow our marketing capabilities to be able to showcase what you do and how does that relate to, sort of, a bigger outcome in conservation. Participant 8*

Participants 3 and 11 referred to recruiting volunteers by word-of-mouth when there was a need, and this is aligned with the findings in the literature reviewed where leaders can source volunteers through this process. Similar to the for-profit sector, NPOs have established a resource management style grounded on the personal links of NPO leaders (Batjargal et al. 2013). These connections are used to source and retain volunteers, reducing uncertainty present in environments where volunteering is considered ambivalent (Batjargal et al. 2013; Crotty and Ljubownikow 2020). In the case of Participant 11, it is evident that connections and personal links are used to source and retain volunteers.

*I've been living here for 20 years; I create events and so I've, I know a lot of the locals so most of it would be word-of-mouth. So, attracting volunteers would be people who've heard from somebody and just say*

*please put me on the group. A lot of it through word-of-mouth or if I'm at a conference. I have to say that I don't find volunteers completely reliable because of the nature of where we are, and I don't know that. That's just for me. I think that you get like at least maybe 10% of volunteers are super reliable, you know, and I think that and that is extra hard for, you know, non-profit volunteering. Here is not a consistent thing, except for the 10% who really wanna be in. Participant 3*

*Attracting volunteers would be people who've heard from somebody and just say please put me on the group. A lot of it through word-of-mouth or if I'm at a conference and somebody says, and I'm in a lot of them, come. Somebody says, oh, what do you do? And then they go, oh please add me to the group. Obviously, it's a very different kettle of fish than anywhere else. One, um, because we are more, you know like with the Garden Routes, so we have very tourist-based volunteers. I have to say that I don't find volunteers completely reliable because of the nature of where we are and I don't know that volunteering here is not a consistent thing, except for the 10% you really wanna be in. Participant 11*

Participant 9 mentioned using the word-of-mouth approach to recruit employees as well. According to Crotty and Ljubownikow (2020), this subsequently results in compromised durability and quality of volunteers due to their restricted network reach. This could also apply to employees who are sourced in this way. Pryce (2021) recognises that the human rudiments of an entity, e.g., leadership, staff inspiration governance etc., are indispensable as material resources and are key to enacting organisational resilience.

NPO underwriting of human resources is below standard in comparison to other segments; however, the outcomes in relation to staff performance are encouraging and significant for the realisation of NPO missions (Ariza-Montes and Lucia-Casademunt 2016). This was evident when Participant 8 reflected on their poor employee turnover rate.

*So, this is a real challenge and so our staff, we've got quite a high, unnaturally high turnover of staff so that's because we, sort of, bringing in, sort of, early career individuals. So early mornings, late nights working with various conservation managers and tough situations. Quite emotional sometimes as well and wild dogs being put down or conflict in these areas and then you also have the people element of volunteers, sort of, participating in that space as well and so it's quite an intense, sort of, role. Initially, that, sort of, entry point into our NPO and in our monitoring space and so we tend to have burnout after, sort of, three years or so.*

*... Firstly, recruiting staff that are like they're not going to be aligned with our vision and, sort of, people wanted to stay a little bit longer and I think, part of what we're doing now is, sort of, having a broader range of staff and is part of the, sort of, recruitment process and so it's not just that normally it would just be either our HR person or that specific manager that will be interviewing those staff but what we're trying to do now is have a little bit more of another third person or a fourth person, that, sort of, is involved at some point in that recruitment process, so you can see things a little bit, sort of, outside the norm and so that's, sort of, trying to address that recruitment process for getting the individuals that we feel and, from*

*our experience, are being tracked for that position and that's the first piece, so it's that, sort of, funnel into the organisation that's important.*

*... The second piece is then around how do we showcase the sort of, future opportunities within the organisation. So without, sort of, raising expectations unfairly or some, sort of, setting ourselves up for, sort of, disaster later on, it's really around the inclusion of those people into our own, sort of, internal visioning processes then when workshops and that so that they can see they're not just this, they're not just doing this role; they're part of a bigger outcome and a bigger output and so what is my job entail and how does my job as a junior staff member contribute to the bigger, sort of, vision of the organisation? I think within the sector that's quite important because it's not just about the finances and then it's not just about, sort of, having a job, it is what I might actually achieve. So, the noise of what of I'm accomplishing, yeah, and so it's stuff that we haven't necessarily got right. We started to put in the recruitment processes upfront and now but over the last year and a half, two years we've been, we're putting in those sorts of more visioning for those stuff and, sort of, career path opportunities for those stuff so they can see they're part of a bigger engine rather than just a single, sort of, position. Participant 8*

Furthermore, Participant 8 reflected on the learnings and the changes implemented from a human resources recruitment perspective and overall alignment with the NPO's vision and mission to deal with the turnover rate. Similar reflections were made by Participant 4 in terms of changes to the recruitment and selection practices for employees. Participant 8's conclusion that an alignment with the NPO vision was necessary was also observed in the responses of Participants 10 and 11. These participant responses are aligned with the findings from the literature reviewed.

Accentuating the NPOs' mission and values through human resource practices, such as recruitment, induction and training, attracts interested candidates and assists with the orientation of new employees (Kellner et al. 2017). An effective human resource system, as well as a strong environment and organisational strategy that is equally reinforcing and consistent with the NPO mission, can motivate, appeal to and, therefore, retain quality employees (Kellner et al. 2017).

Participants 1, 2, 4 and 8 all mentioned a capacity issue. Participants 2 and 8 specified attracting the appropriate financial resources to attract and retain talented human resources. Participants 2 and 4 identified the challenge of a lack of proposal writing skills which is a key requirement to secure and submit funding applications. Participant 2 felt that this was a potential risk to the organisation as vital knowledge and skills often sit with the leader and capacity building was necessary. Participant 2 also alluded to the challenge of transformation facing the organisation.

*For me, report writing is not just a big issue. I think proposal writing is a real problem too, so I think we've got great people in our organisation that's probably younger than 40. You know, it might not be it might be unique, so it's not everybody can do it, so definitely there could be a bit of training and resources thrown into that. You know, most organisations don't have someone that can write good proposals that either way,*

*they can't. It's a real skill to take difficult issues and put it into simple ways and provide your solution simply. It's like in a hidden which is a problem that we had with our previous leader. You know, it's like it can't all information can't sit with one person and the skills are out. Uhm, I think that's a skill that we can definitely invest in as an organisation. Participant 2*

*So, I think one of the biggest things that we can't find is good writing skills. It may seem like a small thing, but it's massive because if you can't write about what you do, you can't sell your product and you wonder how people what you're doing so there's no way to clearly communicate the impact that you have or not having. You can't write proposals well so I can honestly say I'm the only person in the company that can really write and it's a big problem. And we just can't find people that can be they can have a master's degree. Doesn't mean they can write. So, it's an education issue in this country where people under 40 can't write and it's a very serious thing. I'm not, we realise that actually it's the fundamental training element that we have to focus on. Adapt with every single person, whether they're project administrator or leader. They have to be able to write basically and communicate. Participant 4*

When volunteers leave an NPO, turnover rates increase and this has a negative impact on the NPO's productivity (Lee 2016). A volunteer's intent to continue contributing at a particular NPO is dependent on their satisfaction with the NPO meeting their expectations. Volunteer expectations could be met by an NPO manager who satisfies the volunteer's reasons for volunteering. A volunteer's relationship with an NPO and its employees or leaders is central to the length of time the volunteer remains engaged with the NPO (Crotty and Ljubownikow 2020). Supportive communication from management or supervisors in relation to volunteers will increase positive engagements, subsequently increasing their volunteer experiences and intent to remain with the NPO. This will reduce NPO expenditure on attracting and training new volunteers. Satisfied volunteers are also more likely to assist with recruiting other volunteers to join the NPO (Lee 2016; Usadolo and Usadolo 2019).

Cases 5 and 8 unlocked the administration and recruitment of many volunteers thereby leveraging this resource to achieve their missions. As indicated in the literature reviewed, the capability to recruit and administer volunteers within the parameters of its functional environment is critical to an NPO's success (Crotty and Ljubownikow 2020; Oliveira et al. 2021).

*So, we attract interns because I think we provide real work experience, and we treat the interns very much like staff. And then the next level would be the volunteers, so we have a volunteer form on our website where people can sign up to be an ongoing volunteer. It's a little bit tricky because we ask them to fill in all their different skills and things that they want to do. But then sometimes we don't have opportunities for them to volunteer, so we've got thousands of people signed up and we try to create opportunities. They do all the activities that we've set up and they are helping us by volunteering but they're also gaining. We have workshops and talks and sustainability events and music events so, that's a real exchange. And then people*

*who are volunteering to be on our team for those events, but I would say the key to us attracting so many people, to be honest, our problem is that we don't have enough for all this interest to do.* Participant 5

However, not all participants were welcoming towards volunteers. Some made strong statements against them such as Participant 9 who said: *“We avoid them like the plague. Uhm, volunteers are all very well, but they are needy.”* Participant 4 said: *“We’re terrible with volunteers.”* Participant 9 flagged the resources required to manage volunteers and Participant 4 described the challenges experienced with volunteers. Expectations of unemployed volunteers where there is a high unemployment rate would need to be managed and this may be deemed a pitfall related to volunteerism which was not well documented in the literature review.

*We avoid them like the plague. Uhm, volunteers are all very well, but they are needy. You know we're not we're not, uh, we're not a big organisation where a volunteer can just slot in wild. No, we know what it takes to manage or volunteer, and we don't want to do it. Thanks very much. And we are. We are small enough. We are agile enough. We are, uhm, you know, we don't. We don't have those larger scale programmes, I mean. I don't need the free labour; it's a waste of my time* Participant 9

*Unfortunately, there's been a few times when volunteerism because of our high unemployment rates, the volunteering is in hope of a job, and it can be quite difficult to balance that volunteering when you know you literally have someone working for free. And then a job opportunity comes up and when they don't get it, they get very angry because they think they volunteered, they should get the job. It doesn't mean that they're the best person for the job, so we are more cautious now with that really more longer-term volunteering. We have to figure out a different way to do that 'cause it's created expectations that are not great for anyone yet. There's a lot of heartbreak.* Participant 4

NPOs tend to consider their human resources key to novel individual and organisational capabilities being advanced and adding value to the NPO, thereby necessitating their upkeep and management (Gile et al. 2018; Oliveira et al. 2021). Both employees and volunteers are considered key stakeholders and, in an adaptive capacity, are key to NPOs achieving their objectives. However, this adaptive capacity would need to be managed well to avoid pitfalls such as unemployed volunteer expectations and appointing staff that do not buy into the mission and vision of the NPO.

In summation, it was found that both employees and volunteers are vital resources to an NPO and are key players in building a resilient organisational culture. Furthermore, leaders play a central role in recruiting and attracting volunteers while staff influence the return rate of volunteers. During a crisis, mobilising volunteers assists the NPO in achieving its mission. This was also confirmed by the findings from the literature reviewed. Thus, this human resources theme aligns with the findings from Chapter 2, and it was found that people, specifically employees and volunteers, are considered an adaptive capacity.

### 4.3.3 Theme 3 – Financial practices outlook

The subsequent competition resulting from the increased number of NPOs vying for the limited pool of funding garnered the attention of several academic studies looking into the financial sustainability of NPOs (Ashley and Faulk 2010; Bowman 2011; Bowman et al. 2012; Ye and Gong 2021). Efficient management of financial resources is vital to the performance of corporates and is similarly important for NPOs (Su et al. 2014). However, instead of increasing shareholder wealth, an NPO's prime objective is to achieve its charitable mission, benefiting several stakeholders (Finkler et al. 2018). A steady income is vital for NPOs to guarantee their budget plans, including the significant costs related to existing activities and staff compensation and underwriting financial activities in the fulfilment of its mission (Polyakov 2021).

As demonstrated in the literature reviewed, Participant 9 also realised that irregular funding and the competitive environment compromise project funding: *“Major issue is funding. We have traditionally relied on project funding which is irregular and uncertain as we compete against global entities that operate in a relatively competitive environment.”* Generally, NPOs rely on three types of funding streams: donations from individuals, funding from businesses and income from the government. Other forms of income such as funding generated from endowment funds, revenue produced from the selling of supplies or services for a charitable cause and income from foundations are also feasible for NPOs (Bowman 2011; Hodge and Piccolo 2005).

As is evident in interview excerpts from Participants 4, 5 and 8, their NPOs have adopted either one or a combination of these funding streams. Each of the participants also reflected on the challenges related to their predominant funding streams including the unreliability of funding and the dependence related to these funding streams.

*So, we do is very much labour-based people-oriented meaningful jobs and connecting those people into their cause. They can value as well. So that is what we get the money for most easily and that's the kind of work that comes our way. Unfortunately, that is very often very skewed towards government work and it's very unreliable and unstable. So, we are trying to shift that reliance to be able to have, so that was what we call our implementation and mobilisation unit. Or it's very strong but then we have what we need to have and improve, and we haven't had.* Participant 4

*I have a funny campaign, come be quirky online. Be about hope and not doom and gloom. And tell stories that are real about real people rather than only the facts and the stats. And I think we get a lot of applications from corporates wanting to donate, which is such a lucky thing. I mean it's crazy. We've never really done like a, uh, outreach campaign. Our fundraising manager who deals with corporates is always busy answering people who've emailed us, so our problem is that they don't want to donate a lot. Our problem with corporates is that we've got a lot of corporates who donate a little bit but that's fine. It's very sustainable.* Participant 5

*Yeah, which we didn't know again so fundraising strategies. So, we rely primarily on an individual, sort of, a philanthropic space. So, and these are generally individuals that we have brought out and so that they've been exposed to what we do. They've met our teams in the field and they, sort of, generally become long-term supporters. And there's, sort of, we've found a track record of, sort of, getting individual donors from overseas on board and then, sort of, that annual donation or, sort of, contribution towards projects, as is quite good and it's what we have them as is. So, we try not, sort of, mix and match as well. It's, sort of, if you, if you have a donor. And they connect with a couple of different staff so that there's, sort of, succession elements there but that it's very much on one programme that they are supporting that that programme. That programme we can show the integration into other programmes instead of showing how their support enables a whole lot of other things. And then it's very, sort of, personalised communications with those, with that donor. Participant 8*

Participant 9 reflected on the general engagement of environmental NPOs with the same limited pool of corporate donors. Participant 9 felt very strongly about this matter and explained how they had avoided this funding stream and not engaged with other donors with whom their competitors engage.

*We deliberately do not and did not target corporates in the SA region as there is already existing relationships within the environmental sector and we did not want to be seen to be undercutting nor undermining the efforts of the other environmental organisations in KZN and SA. I didn't want the environmental sector to look like a bunch of, you know, backstabbing thieves among each other. And so, I, we deliberately didn't approach corporates. Previously, we also didn't apply to the government grants and those income programmes, you know, the job creation programmes because we just looked at the admin that was required. We had run one or two of those before. We looked at the matching funds that you're supposed to provide and the institutional support you supposed to provide, and we just didn't ever think it was worthwhile at all. Participant 9*

The RDT describes how entities have dealt with resource inadequacies resulting from economic recessions by utilising strategic options enabling entities to efficiently administer their resource reliance and eventually increase their self-sufficiency. For instance, when donations decrease, NPOs develop alternate self-sustaining income tactics, involving more reliance on earned revenue and could form their own entities (Moldavanova and Goerdel 2018). Academic studies into this phenomenon refer to the 'commercialisation' of NPOs (Suykens et al. 2019; Vacekov et al. 2017; Vaceková and Svidroňová 2014). Commercial income is produced from trades of supplies and services that an NPO provides and entails the objective of making a profit (Dart 2004).

In the cases studied, Participants 1 and 5 described some instances of developing alternative commercial funding options intended to reduce reliance on traditional donation income as mentioned in the literature reviewed. Participant 5 described in detail the limitations to raising

funds via commercial activities imposed on NPOs by SARS and also demonstrated the thinking to reduce the reliance on traditional funding in turbulent times.

*The other component is it's almost like a contractor model, you know. Mr xxx wants to secure their property and we give them a quote. We say it's going to cost you this much. We do the work, and they pay us for the, you know, so it's a service provider kind of model. And we're doing quite a lot of that for offsets for corporates who have got biodiversity offset requirements, legal requirements to offset their impacts.*

Participant 1

*So, we've got two entities. We've got our foundation, which is our NPO etc. And we've got a company which is called xxx, where we run the logistics of our events through so we because in NPOs have a threshold with SARS to keep their PBO status. If you earn through business activities to match will be beyond the threshold, then your PBO status is potentially at risk and so our events where people buy tickets and there's very normal business exchanges, they run through the company and the projects that the people help with so the people will help with tree planting and mural painting and all that. Those projects are part of our programmes which fit into our foundation. Our four themes work so we have the capacity and the ability to run big events and earn money. They're not very money-making at the moment because they, we see them as our environmental awareness arms and having them through a company, allows us to run it like a business but it doesn't really provide any profit. It's that company has a little bit of profit but it's not a hugely profit-making company but it what's good is that it has the potential to. We've got tents and overland trucks and event stuff so we can run school camps and events and things. And we've got the capacity and the know-how to do that through a profit-making business. So, if donors fall out, we can do more events and like, I don't know, sell things and I guess ramp that side.* Participant 5

This route of making a profit or NPO commercialisation can be risky. Studies have highlighted that this can lead to mission drift where resources are used to make a profit rather than serve their beneficiaries and often involves short-term versus survival decisions (Jones 2007; Ma, Jing et al. 2018). However, according to Battilana and Lee (2014), improved NPO managerialism skills can blend both commercial and social goals and could mitigate potential mission drift. These findings were later corroborated by Hersberger-Langloh et al. (2021) who confirmed that a middle ground exists between the two extreme research camps on managerialism (Hersberger-Langloh et al. 2021; Ma, Jing et al. 2018).

This finding is corroborated in the excerpts from Participants 1 and 5. In these cases, both NPOs successfully set up a commercial funding alternative and managed the commercial activities aspect well in relation to their social objectives. However, a distinct understanding of the trade-off confronted by NPOs in assigning resources to beneficiary activities or fundraising activities is important for NPOs to boost expenditure on beneficiary services in the long run (Sarikaya and Buhl 2021).

The intensified monitoring of cashflows is practised by NPOs during financial crunches as a critical element of the NPOs' responses to shocks (Searing et al. 2021). NPOs funded by governments are mindful of cash flows, particularly when government funding is received after programme service delivery as a reimbursement. NPOs also accessed reserves accumulated to supplement cash shortfalls to continue delivering on programme objectives (Searing et al. 2021).

The findings by Searing et al. (2021) are corroborated by the responses of Participants 1 and 10 in their reflections on the importance of cash flow management and planning for the short term. As indicated by Participant 9, the use of funds, the executive team not drawing salaries and the reduction in overheads are all indications of the financial practices adopted by NPOs to survive the turbulence.

*You know, this was part of, yeah, when I looked at that question it's quite a difficult one because, you know, our, sort of, our cash flow issues in 2020 were not as a result of no work, you know, or a lack of work. We had so many projects and that everything was still happening. I think there was a general slowdown of the work, so I think that's the one thing so because everybody was just now focused on other things and everybody had, sort of, disappeared off to home and was staying there and trying to figure out how to work efficiently from home, I think. Things quite a lot and as a result, the, sort of, the cash flow and the payments slowed down, I don't think we've paid enough attention to planning for those, sort of, things* Participant 1

*A massive injection of funds into our organisation in 2009/2010 enabled us to adapt and survive for the past 10 years but also increased our vulnerability as we entered into a phase of overhead that we were unaccustomed to. We have already put measures in place, downscaling our overhead to a bare minimum, reducing our rental to zero and operating virtually. We do not hold onto field staff outside of project timescales and have a basic core of only one permanently employed. Our CEO and other executive operate on a semi-volunteer basis and have not drawn salaries during times of no projects, including for the past 18 months.* Participant 9

*Yeah, we've got a core team-up that we can fund, probably for about a year. But not much beyond that. We're in the process of coming up with a strategy to build a sustainability fund which, uh, we want to push up to a point where we'll have financial coverage for four or five years. Uhm, but in fact, we're in the middle of doing that but funding is always a big issue for us.* Participant 10

Green et al. (2021) find that a diversified income portfolio increases NPO financial resilience and specifically find that reliance on grant income is distinctly related to an elevated risk of failure. The study by Green et al. (2021) agrees with the general findings of Chikoto and Neely (2014) and Suykens et al. (2019) concerning the optimistic effects of revenue diversification on NPO financial resilience. Participants 2 and 11 both described an awareness of the need to have a diversified funding stream to provide different funding options to interested donors and, therefore, are aligned with the general findings of Chikoto and Neely (2014) and Suykens et al. (2019).

*OK. So, I think the first thing is this is more of a simple language. The people that you get fatigued as corporate donors because of stuff isn't like flashy and in your face, they're the ones that mean change very quick from they want to do recycling and then next week they want to deforestation and then next thing they wanted to use. You know, so I think we've changed our, uh, donor profile quite a lot by saying well, donors, corporates because they're also unstable and get fatigued very quick. We have to look beyond that. They can't be the base on which we ground our finances, whereas a couple of years ago two large corporates were our main donors. So, I think it's the simple answer is to have a massive variety of different ways in which you get money. You can't just be an organisation that writes proposals to, uh, or you know, donor agencies. And we've gone through that way. One donor is way too big, and you have a nice mix of different things and that also checks different people to the organisation. Participant 2*

*OK, so the one is putting out actual small, uhm, proposals to corporates. Then putting big proposals to like donor companies. Then I put on actual physical events like the volleyball, you know, plant fruit trees pretty much. Then we've got the MySchool platform, if you go onto my website, there's myWorld, which is similar to my school but it's an international platform and then we've got the gift shop and then we've got the art for nature. Participant 11*

Younger individuals are conventionally unlikely to consistently contribute to NPOs and are more prone to using cryptocurrencies as a donation means (Howson 2021; Scarce and Wang 2020). To attract this discerning group, fundraising approaches must be innovative and occur across several channels, including the blockchain method (Christie 2020). Interestingly, only two participants discussed cryptocurrencies. Participant 5 was the only NPO leader who considered cryptocurrencies and was open to exploring the possibilities of accepting donations in a cryptocurrency format. Participant 10, however, considered this too risky and was not open to exploring this opportunity. Participant 5, on the other hand, had an awareness of this potential alternative means of enabling funding from tech-savvy individuals and was keen to get it implemented in the short term.

*Yeah, I would like to learn more about. We've been approached by some people who do cryptocurrencies and things like that, where we can maybe look into that, but I, yeah, we have mostly that quite traditional. But like we did the traditional stuff probably is safe for now. Yeah, I think we should just accept donations in Bitcoin or in something soon, very soon, I feel like we've been delaying it a little bit, but we're all very open to it. We've also got a big proposal out for xxx where we will hopefully be creating enough trees. Uhm, warming like that to try and get donations in, but it's a little challenging because cryptocurrencies use a lot of energy and they're controversial in themselves, so we need to balance that line we want to engage but we know that they're not the best for the environment, so there aren't newer ones and different one, different storage systems and all that stuff. I must say I get a little confused but I wanna be there. We just have to get there. It'll be probably in the next year. I'm sure you'll see crypto somewhere on our website. Participant 5*

*Yeah, with you know my philosophy about funding is if it's going to, if it's just about the money, you can always be looking for money. Uhm, you can always get money. You can always get money if you need it, but it might not be the right kind of money. I'm very wary of campaigns that just look for money and I'd rather be much more; I'd rather go for a programme where you very much aligned with your donors, but they believe in what you do. They understand what you do, and they fund you. Uhm, because they believe in what you do. Because then you can deliver but if you get money from people who are completely misaligned with your purpose and your values, you find normally you can't deliver and that's where the conflicts normally emerge because people have the wrong expectations. Cryptocurrencies, NFT's all of that stuff, we steer clear of, you know, if you want to risk your own money with that stuff, that's fine but not other people's money. Participant 10*

According to the Global NGO's (2019) Technology Report, ten years ago, European NPOs that implemented a website and Facebook platform were considered to be the vanguard of technology. However, those technologies have now become common practice, according to the Global NGO's (2019) Technology Report, and this is corroborated by the study by Huang and Karthikeyan (2015) who found that NPOs chose to use steady and proven information technologies instead of emergent technologies. This scenario of sticking to the traditional options was found in Participant 10's response and the response about the opportunity to be an NPO vanguard is in line with the literature review. Therefore, early-adopter NPOs can consider exploring cryptocurrency platforms to underwrite their fundraising strategies and expand funding streams to navigate a turbulent environment.

It was found that the NPOs studied have adopted either one or a combination of the funding streams identified, and the participants reflected on the challenges related to their predominant funding streams, including the unreliability of funding and their dependence on those funding streams. It was also found that instances of developing alternative commercial funding options, as mentioned in the literature reviewed, intended to reduce their reliance on traditional donation income were evident in some cases. These were related to the limitations to raising funds via commercial activities imposed on NPOs by SARS, demonstrating the reduction of the reliance on traditional funding in turbulent times.

Another finding was an awareness of the need to have a diversified funding stream to provide different funding options to interested donors and aligns with the general findings of Chikoto and Neely (2014) and Suykens et al. (2019) concerning the optimistic effects of revenue diversification on NPO financial resilience. In several cases, intensified monitoring of cashflows was practised by NPOs during financial crunches as a critical element of the NPOs' response to shocks. NPOs also accessed reserves accumulated to supplement cash shortfalls to continue delivering on programme objectives during the COVID-19 period. Reduction in overheads is also an indication of the financial practices adopted by NPOs to survive the turbulence. Lastly, it was

found that despite only one participant being open to the cryptocurrency, and another being resistant to the idea, it is still concluded that early-adopter NPOs can consider exploring cryptocurrency platforms to underwrite their fundraising strategies and expand funding streams to navigate turbulent environments.

#### 4.3.4 Theme 4 – Collaboration and stakeholder engagement

Collaboration is viewed by many key NPO actors as a necessity and a fundamental value of NPOs (Guo 2007; Witesman and Heiss 2017). Sustaining good collaboration necessitates investments in time and resources (Witesman and Heiss 2017; Zeimers et al. 2019). Participant 6 stated, “we have to be very diplomatic in that space” and diplomacy is indeed necessary when contemplating collaboration. Although “it is hard work”, as concluded by Participant 4, it remains an important requirement for NPOs.

Participant 10 believed collaboration to be integral to NPOs and thought of it as a global trend. In the absence of collaboration, Participant 10 believed that powerful opportunities might be lost by working in a silo or one’s own little niche and stressed the importance of investing time and other resources early on to ensure a successful and well-aligned collaborative partnership. While most participants cited pitfalls related to collaboration, several also noted the need to find workable solutions to effective collaboration – also indicated in the literature review.

Participant 10 indicated that selecting the right partners with whom to collaborate was vital and also suggested that collaborating with NPOs to fill a gap that they had from an overall programme or project basis might be most beneficial. This was suggested to alleviate the competition factor in collaborative instances where NPOs do the same work as other NPOs.

*No, no, I think it's the name of the game. I think it's a global trend. Uh, I think we often try and work in our little niche areas and we often lose powerful opportunities to leverage and get impact by working with others. Yeah, that's why when you select your partners, you've got to have those workshops. You've gotta. You can't have any expectation. Uhm, all those expectations that you may think are on the table need to be seriously, uhm, I looked at and you've got to have those strategic workshops so that you ensure that you are aligned, cause if you're not aligned, oh, that could be a mess. Yeah, so the concept of collaboration I think is very important. I think it's becoming more and more important. Uhm, and then when I talk about collaboration and alignment. There's an interesting thing that because I think you need to collaborate with organisations that fill the gaps that you can't fill. Rather than just collaborating with organisations that do exactly what you do because then you're just going to end up in a competitive conversation. So, for instance, uhm, in our NPO, we have all these conservation education programmes that we want to bring in. And values-based leadership and life skills into those programmes. But we don't know how to do that. It's not what we do, so we'd rather collaborate with somebody else; bring them in and then create a very powerful*

*programme where they do what they do well, that we do what we do but we do it in the same space.*

Participant 10

Participant 1 felt that they occupied a unique role when engaging with other NPOs and, as such, were deemed not to be competing with other NPOs. The small size of their NPO in relation to other large environmental NPOs also played to their advantage and allowed them to be perceived as not competing with the large NPOs.

*So, we've created an environment where we are partnering with other large environmental NPOs. We've created an environment of collaboration rather than, you know, a competition. And so, in effect, you know, we foster that, and we build formal relationships. We've had partner agreements with other large environmental NPOs. You know, we do collaborate, we encourage, we want to develop strong collaboration partnerships because we are never going to be a WWF; we're never going to be that size. We don't want to be that size because the way we've structured ourselves, it doesn't make sense for us to grow to be, you know, like 100 staff or whatever, it is so I think we'll always be quite small, so we'll always be seen as valuable as a collaborator and not as sort of competition.* Participant 1

Participant 4 felt strongly about NPOs collaborating to achieve a common goal and the frustrations with the resistance experienced by other NPOs are similar to those experienced by Participants 3 and 11. It seems difficult for any single NPO to sustain ongoing efforts to unite with other NPOs working towards similar goals. The technical difficulty of collaboration was explained by Participant 5 where the resources required to collaborate often began with the overhead cost recoveries that were expected from both entities. Participant 5 felt that this could be tricky to achieve but recommended transparency from inception as a means to work around this challenge. Participant 5 also thought that collaborating with organisations that had different skills would make the collaboration less burdensome for both organisations.

*I guess like its last week, we had an I'm gaining credential infrastructure partnership meeting where I presented this new non-profit company as a form of partnership and people were just like, well, what am I going to get out of it? I actually was. Like what the question is, what are you going to give? Not when you're going to get on 'cause if you could log it. And I ended up in tears like I just, I just cannot believe people selfishness and so that will saw me at my most vulnerable and impassionate where I was saying, guys, you are asking the wrong questions; you completely missing the point and that you have to partner. You have to get all in and then this will work and then we start to look after each other and we start to see a real impact. But it's, yeah, is hard work.* Participant 4

*Yeah, it can be tricky. Everyone got different expectations so when you're trying to write a grant application collaboratively, the budget is usually the tricky part like who's gonna do what. So that's tricky but not impossible. I think it's about collaborating with organisations that have different skills so that it's very clear. So, our forests programme is actually mostly a partnership programme. We are like come; we attract*

*funding, and we design the planting methodology and the monitoring and evaluation. But we pay the funding out to these partners who are on the ground where the trees are wanted so they are, for example, in the Eastern Cape, the xxx, another NGO that we then pay to plant the trees using our system. But if it's a grant like we've just got a grant from xxx for 12 000 trees so. Well, it's, sort of, a grant is corporate so. It's not a grant. Uhm, they then it's, then it's interesting, because then you've gotta make sure that we know that the budget parts are like. Ok, cool, are you happy with all your budget parts? We're going to pitch this. Are we happy with all of ours, do you have enough for your overheads and then do we have enough for our overhead? So, then the overheads get doubled because there's two organisations and you can't get 5% each. You both want 10% but I think that's the part that's challenging. But you can get around it if you're just very transparent. Participant 5*

The organisational resilience model developed by Lee et al. (2013) included within the adaptive capacity element the detraction of silos. Internally, within for-profit entities and NPOs, silos can develop both from a hierarchical perspective and horizontally across teams and departments (Cilliers and Greyvenstein 2012). Participant 2 described a situation in which competition between different departments in their NPO developed into silos. Participant 2 further described how the lack of collaboration between the different silos had a negative impact on the organisation.

Silos do fulfil a purpose and when individuals feel strongly connected to their units, they can feel contented, work more efficiently and carry more responsibilities. However, silos can also cause individuals to be less efficient when engaging with people from other units and less inclined to make an effort to work well with other teams (Pittinsky 2010). Participant 2 recounted how one team preferred to work only with a specific team and how it had taken a few years to break down the deliberate internal competitiveness that had been fostered by a previous leader.

Participant 2 acknowledged that the creation of silos had been a pitfall in achieving effective internal collaboration within the NPO. There is a need for individuals from multiple disciplines to combine their expertise to address issues from an organisational resilience perspective (De Waal et al. 2019; Gardner 2016). The example provided by Participant 2 demonstrates this need and, therefore, internal collaboration among several departments is deemed an adaptive capacity necessary for NPOs.

*Yeah, it's probably something we recognised like a couple of years ago. We did have these different silos in organisation, and I think it was sick, so I thought about it a lot. I think it was deliberate by our previous leader. We set it up so that there's competition between the different sections. Which is not necessarily bad; it's just a different way of looking, working, working it, you know, and it was they went to try and play them off against each other to see who and a measure of community of that competition is probably also a good thing. It's not necessarily bad, you know, 'cause it drives growth. But it became so that there was almost no collaboration between, and it cut that off and that at that stage it actually was bad for the organisation.*

*And it created this, these completely different silo. So, I listened and talked to each other and what was worse, I think, is that it put the core services into a problem as well because I, I think especially the one silo could work really well with them so there was a privilege to rather work with those guys than with the other ones. You know, so it's definitely like and it's just human so and, yeah, and but I think we were dealing with that nicely. It's definitely, it's taken a long time of breaking down some of that history. Historic divisions we add in organisation so that would have been the pitfall but like I said, I think it was a deliberate pitfall. It was the result of a deliberate internal competitiveness that wanted to be fostered but actually, it bombed on us. Participant 2*

The RDT emphasises the interdependency of different establishments and their environments and that deriving resources from the outer environment is a precondition for survival (Moldavanova and Goerdel 2018). The United Nations endorses the enactment of SDGs via multi-stakeholder undertakings and the ability of NPOs to participate in these multifaceted partner relations is expected to be a routine prerequisite for gaining access to resources (Daniels and Valdés 2021; Fowler 2016). NPOs will be required to articulate a convincing value proposition in relation to their mission coherently when engaging in multi-partner relationships (Maboya and McKay 2019). Partnering with NPOs is a conduit for corporates to achieve their social accountability goals, simultaneously assisting NPOs to fulfil their missions (Eid and Sabella 2014). The corporate sector in general is a key stakeholder that several NPOs rely on for funding.

However, Participant 9 explained the disconnect experienced when engaging with corporates as they lack an understanding of community engagements and the direct costs of implementing projects. Participant 9 had therefore chosen not to work with the corporate sector. This is in addition to the reasons cited by Participant 9 regarding the preservation of the NPO sector's integrity and not competing with other NPOs for the same funding.

*I think that perhaps one of the challenges that we as an institution face anew, face as well and I think I might have mentioned this somewhere is a lack of understanding of the corporate sector of the dire need and all the realities of implementing a project on the ground. There's a complete disconnect between running an organisation. A corporate that wants to fund only water tanks. So, we'll only pay for the water tanks but we're gonna have no admin oversight. And also, there's a complete, uhm, yeah, disconnect. And you want to implement this project in Richards Bay or whatever. It's 4 hours from Durban. You can't just move in there and implement. So, this is why I don't bother with the corporates. Because I've got to meet with the community 12 times before we've decided that, uh, water tanks a good idea in the first place. Yes, we make all these assumptions but the reality of it so physically implementing so those costs. The direct costs of implementing projects are completely and actually misunderstood by the corporate sector. They want bang for buck. They want it now and they want huge kudos. They want it done yesterday and all they're doing is they parachuting in capex. And wondering why it collapses a year later. Participant 9*

The corporate sector and government are both important stakeholders and require effective stakeholder management. Participant 6 described their long-term engagement with certain government entities during which they felt the need to protect their brand reputation when collaborating with other like-minded NPOs. In general, NPOs placed value on the government entity as a key stakeholder but some, such as Participant 11, expressed reservations.

*Yeah, I think that's for us, probably when it comes to collaborations. They're definitely there but they work well when we really come and work together. You know what we have found is that we are because we be closely associated with a government organisation where there's some data, so there's a lot of stuff from a media perspective that we have to be very sensitive about and time-sensitive about. Whereas and because we have a formal agreement with them, a long-term agreement, we've got to be very conscious. Looking at it and not, sort of, break it. So sometimes we've had collaboration with other partners with other NGOs in that space and they might rush to the media and, sort of, tell a good story. And that reflects negatively on us because suddenly isn't better. It's all fun and they go ahead, and the other organisation gets all the kudos for doing this amazing work but it's because it's, so I think it's really around, uh, sort of, a communication of this stuff and, yeah, it's frustrating at times. We have to be very diplomatic in that space.*  
Participant 6

*Um. Like SANParks, they are all most of their funding comes from government. So why not really? That's a pitfall. So, uhm, you know. With all good intentions and everything. They are about the environment, but they don't have legal legs to stand on to enforce anything environmental. Even when we try and collaborate with them. You know they don't push themselves.* Participant 11

One of the key enablers of the transformation and adaptability of NPOs is the availability and ability to access and use resources (Mutongwizo 2018). Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 mentioned that the lack of collaboration between NPOs was the most lacking element that required improvement in the NPO sector. Collaboration could lead to improved financial resources for this sector in general. The access to and sharing of resources mentioned by Participants 4 and 6 alluded to the findings of the literature reviewed where, according to Kraaijenbrink et al. (2010), the RBV insufficiently acknowledges the importance of combining resources.

*We should have one big board room. And that everybody must put their egos in a backpack and when they get to the door of the boardroom. The backpack with the egos must be dropped at the front door. Some organisations could work together and I'm not quite sure how to do that because when you, they say we'll work together and then you say, ok, we will all chip in a portion of the amount that's needed. Then all of a sudden, they can't. They can't work with you; that's one thing and then the other thing is whose name goes on to the research and you know my book as long as the work gets done, doesn't matter who's names on there, whose names not on there.* Participant 3

*We actually have to stick with each other and genuinely work with each other and help each other instead of trying to expand and take over each other. We don't have a problem with the amount of money in this world. We have a problem with where that money goes and how people use it and how they hold onto their intellectual property. They hold onto their little niche, and they don't just put it out into the world and, therefore, able to build, so we would see a lot more impact and a lot more change if we actually built on each other's work and blend with logs like in parallel and together instead of putting out any fires. So, things always change, so when there's always a different flavour of the day. The ones funding AIDS and then everyone funding climate change. And if you're just working in those silos and you don't have relationship and partners when things change, you just get dropped. However, when there's a change on the wind and you're all working together, you see that change and you start to work harder. We adapt. How do we move? That's how do we change the narrative and how do we encompass these new issues that are emerging as crises and therefore how do we respond? Participant 4*

*I think maybe there's a few places lacking but one of them would be getting together like sometimes we even struggle to work out who are the other NGOs in our field. So, getting together or having like, maybe this does exist and I'm just ignorant, so I definitely acknowledge that. But like, uhm, getting together as an industry and an industry, I don't know what the word is. Like a forum. That feels like one gap to me that could just be a personal gap, uhm? What else? I know, collaboration is hard and it's like we spoke about the budget stuff and who's going to get what funding, but it really is the way to go when it works, it really works and, and you can do such a lot of stuff. So, I feel like somehow getting around that, uhm, fear of collaborating. Uhm, or fight for funding? But that's very difficult and I totally understand why it's difficult, uhm, I think what else? This is something that I think we are fairly good at. We're always trying to be better but we're good at communications and marketing, but we could be better. Participant 5*

*Early on I do believe that collaboration is probably a good idea because I get a feeling that there's a lot of, I mean, there's a lot of well-intentioned people and organisations that are actually doing great work but not at scale, so to really, really amalgamate resources that you not, you don't just replicate the same kind of, you know, sort of, core costs and that your output can have bigger effect. You know, as I said, I'm speaking a little bit with, you know, not being overly informed about it. If I look at where the funders seem to be going, they are also looking at amortising their resources collectively; they are looking for a more sustainable way of how those funds are being utilised. Uhm, it'll probably starting to dry up even more, yeah, so hopefully and maybe that's where the digital media really comes into play, where with the networks and the infrastructure and they're really kind of open source around sharing. I mean, I've actually only experienced such generosity in starting with another NPO. Actually, just around sharing resources that come, you know, I didn't have the budget for to go out and get that kind of stuff and just to know what, sort of, its common practice and that I think we've got a lot to learn about that. Participant 6*

As the NPO sector expands, competition accelerates causing reason for inter-organisational alliances and collaboration. NPO funders have increasingly required collaboration among the NPOs they support (Shumate et al. 2018; Witesman and Heiss 2017). Participant 2 explained a situation in which a funder had forced collaboration. While there are several obvious benefits to

collaboration, it still comes at a cost. Collaboration is viewed by many key NPO actors as a necessity and a fundamental value of NPOs (Guo 2007; Witesman and Heiss 2017). Participant 2 further described how they were forced to build partnerships on the ground and work together.

However, as Participant 2 continued to explain, there was also value in this process as eventually, it assisted the NPO to clarify its role in contributing to a joint cause and also identify its unique offering in collaborative partnerships. This aligns with the finding that obtaining knowledge via collaboration enables operative partnerships to develop which results in an enhanced organisational capability (Urban and Gaffurini 2017). Consequently, while NPOs compete for funding, they have sought methods to collaborate to appear competent and worthwhile to funders. Donor pressure has resulted in collaboration for funding purposes instead of the actual intrinsic value of collaboration (Guo 2007; Seo 2016; Witesman and Heiss 2017).

An example of this is when Participant 2 alluded to collaborations as a means to make their NPO more attractive to donors. Participant 2, furthermore, related an example of how some NPO leaders did try to set up a forum and failed. Participant 2 cited the egos and personalities of the NPO leaders, as well as the current fear of funding constraints related to the COVID-19 pandemic, as some of the reasons that it was difficult to collaborate. However, Participant 2 concluded that during these times it was more important to collaborate as it led to greater stability.

*Ah, ok, so it's probably goes back to our previous funding as well. There's always a problem with NPOs but the devil is in non-collaboration. It's probably we're in just 'cause we are unnecessarily competing and wasting so much energy on that that the money isn't flowing at the scale it can. At our AGM, actually the speaker, who's from Flanders, he actually was talking about this very point in saying that if the NGOs can rather work together in South Africa, there's a lot more capital but now you get like a single NGO arguing that it should get €30 million to implement and it just can't absorb that amount of money. So, I think what's lacking is collaboration and probably what's lacking is leadership to achieve that collaboration. So, our biggest NGOs, like WWF, they don't even talk to other organisations, you know, and they're all nice guys. I mean, it's not that it's just that they're so focused on building their own organisation we were losing track of the value in actually working together and how much that is going to extrapolate the impact we all make.*

*... I think with the xxx partnership fund, they forced collaboration, and a lot of donors are doing it, they're saying, uhm, you won't have the ability to absorb all our money and spend it. We don't believe it. So, who are your partners in this, show us how, who you looking at hooking up with so maybe we as the competitive environment because of the donors that are coming in, they, sort of, pulling the strings a bit and forcing partnerships on the ground. Which hopefully and once people gone through that and worked together realise that, yes, we're competing for the same money but we're both doing different things for the same money, so it's actually the value in being together is better because we can now offer a wider variety of services to these NGOs. Yeah, so it's collaboration. Then one of those things that we should be talking about to demonstrate to donors and make ourselves more attractive to donors, Yeah, definitely I think, and*

*I think we are there. We're not talking about it but sometimes you know it drives me nuts with some of these projects. How many partners there are and stuff, but I think it is uh, it's actually a strong point for us that we are working with so many. The new project that's coming on board, we've got like 10 different organisations, so it's all probably for the better. You know that strengthens, and it also clarifies our role, and so who are you partnering with is people that do different stuff to us or have got different fields of specialties and that also clarifies and crystallises what we are and what we do.*

*... It's funny 'cause we're trying to actually now set this thing up where we try and get the different environmental NPOs together and like five years ago we did this. We had this meeting in the Eastern Cape with all the NPOs came together. The heads of the NGOs and to look at what is everybody doing. And you know how we can work together, and we were going to establish a forum and they were going to meet every mid-year and that was the last meeting we had on this. I think there's a personality issue with a lot of the interests is very cagey. Um, worried about losing their own dinners. Yeah, and then you just have some people that are just egotistical. They think that their way's right and don't see value in working with others. Uhm, so I think its personality-driven, the pitfalls and then donor and donor funding related. You know where people are just scared and it's probably a bigger problem now where money is even tighter. Uhm, but then on the other side in working with other organisations, you actually increase your sustainability and your resilience, I believe. Participant 2*

Further downsides related to collaboration with other NPOs identified in the participant responses were a lack of trust and a desire to protect and promote only their individual NPO interests rather than working towards the greater good or their common causes. Examples of these pitfalls were mentioned by Participants 1, 3, 6 and 9. A strong correlation to competition for limited funding is also evident.

*I just think NPOs need to work better together and outside of a competitive space and just accept that. We got so much so many resources from collaborating with other entities. You know doing a component of the work and we can, if we work together, we'll achieve so much more, you know, rather than just this is our project, and we need to do it. And this must be, you know, a WWF project and, and I guess the one other thing that's been a value to us. We don't have this big, you know, marketing and brand development. We don't care if WWF take the credit for a project, as long as we do the work we want to do, the work we want to achieve that outcome at the end of the day. Participant 1*

In summation, it was found that there is value in the collaborative process as, eventually, it can assist the NPO to clarify its role in contributing to a joint cause and also identify its unique offering in collaborative partnerships which include a variety of external stakeholders. This aligns with the finding that obtaining knowledge via collaboration enables operative partnerships to develop which results in an enhanced organisational capability (Urban and Gaffurini 2017). It was found that internal collaboration is necessary to alleviate silos within organisations and an example of this was found in Case 2, where it was necessary to manage internal stakeholders. The quality and

results of effective internal and external collaboration can strengthen an organisation's overall ability to deliver its purpose more effectively (De Waal et al. 2019; Gardner 2016; Pittinsky 2010; Shaw and Frost 2015).

As the NPO sector expands, competition accelerates causing reason for inter-organisational alliances and collaboration; an example of this was found in the example of Case 2 where several environmental NPOs gathered to explore collaboration possibilities. NPO funders have also increasingly required collaboration among the NPOs they support (Shumate et al. 2018; Witesman and Heiss 2017). Once more, it was found that donors do force collaboration which was also referenced in Case 2.

Furthermore, it was found that high competition seems to be a negative factor affecting effective collaboration between the NPOs as clearly described by Participants 1, 6 and 9. Yet once again, in Case 5, they determined how to collaborate effectively; Case 5 is 7 years old and Cases 1, 6 and 9 are seven, ten and twenty-two years old, respectively. Thus, it seems that the age of the NPO to unlock effective collaboration is not a factor. Several cases, however, recognised the need for collaboration between the environmental NPOs as the long-term external collaborative efforts yield improved results for the sector's broader environmental goals.

#### **4.3.5 Theme 5 – Brand and information and communication technologies**

A distinction was found where countries in the Global South relied less on direct mail, advertising and Facebook and instead relied on 'word-of-mouth' communication channels (Proust et al. 2013). Participants 9 and 11 both alluded to preferring a word-of-mouth scenario to attract and place volunteers and staff within their NPOs, which aligns with the findings of Proust et al. (2013).

*We have gone through a number of stages and phases in our organisation and at one point went to the open market to fill vacancies but, as a relatively small entity, we have largely relied on word-of-mouth and personal relationships to fill key positions. Participant 9*

*I create events and so I've, I know a lot of the locals, so most of it would be word-of-mouth. So, attracting volunteers would be people who've heard from somebody and just say, please put me on the group, um. Some of it is through social media platforms. Uhm, where people hear of us on social media. I don't know if there's a question about social media but I'm not a big social media person. I'm on it because I know that it's a presence and I use it to, sort of, like write a chapter. Going forward so we don't get, uh, I don't attract a lot through social media. A lot of it through word-of-mouth or if I'm at a conference and somebody says and I'm in a lot of them come. Somebody says, oh, what do you do? And I say xxx and they go, oh please add me to the group. They'd love to come in plant trees or clear and so that's generally hard work, so I guess, I'm a big role in it and but a lot of its word-of-mouth. Participant 11*

NPOs usually have a greater number of stakeholder groups necessitating an openly distinguishable and coherent position to beneficiaries, sponsors, donors, volunteers, board members, staff, suppliers and regulators, all of whom involve different communication requirements (Stride and Lee 2007). NPOs regularly offer varying project activities and services to different stakeholders, making it difficult to contextualise the NPOs' offerings in a single brand communication while managing the expectations of multiple stakeholders (Chapleo 2015). Effectively, an NPO has to administer each of these multi-valued relations with a unique influence on performance and ethos through consideration of and delivering on the interchange required by stakeholders (Mitchell and Clark 2019).

Participant 1 described how they had gone about building a brand from a different perspective in the absence of marketing staff and alluded to the difficulties of contextualising their project work in a single brand offering. Participant 1 also alluded to being present on the ground with stakeholders to build their brand and get stakeholders to understand what the new NPO was. This could also be linked to a word-of-mouth awareness-raising scenario and further supports the findings of Proust et al. (2013).

*You know, like we've got an Instagram page and a Facebook page and it's great and, when we post something, what we do is we post our posts on work. We do so people can like if they look at our page they go. This is what our NPO is doing 'cause yesterday they did this and the day before they did that so, you know, they can see the type of work that we do, and we get quite a lot of interest from. But we don't have a marketing, kind of component and we're not building our brand in that way. You know, we've got the website, and I don't think too many people look at. They don't look at it when they want to see if they want to work with us and then they go and check-up. So, uhm, we build our brand by ourselves. Being in an area, doing work and always being present. So, that's the way we've built our brand and then often very much, we're in this specific sector that, we've got that skill set in and I think it's, we've become known quite quickly, so it's been interesting to see how when you start an organisation, it's like who's this new NPO? You never heard of them, what do they do et cetera and it's actually been quite interesting to see how you look at the NPOs in the conservation field. Everybody knows those set of and now we've become part of that. Although we're not at the same scale but we, that's the way we've built our brand we've invested in being present in these areas. As individuals, representing our organisations and always being present and I think it's quite quicker than I thought, we've got ourselves quite stuck into various areas and in the provinces. Participant 1*

An NPO's website content can influence an individual's perspective of the entity, contributing to brand building; however, branding is still a developing concept in the NPO sector (Huang and Ku 2016; Voeth and Herbst 2008). The findings from a study conducted by Huang and Ku (2016) suggest that info regarding operations and communication on a website will generate a brand image of usefulness, enhancing a website viewer's intent to donate resources. Additionally, they

found that info on the NPO's projects and potential opportunities to serve the community could create a brand image of dynamism, increasing the intent of a donor to contribute their time when viewing a website.

Participant 5 described how their website attracted users monthly and that over time they had built a strong online presence. Participant 5 also mentioned how donors can associate themselves with their brand in innovative ways. Participant 5 also referred to their website under the discussion of volunteers, where they have a significant number of volunteers wanting to contribute their time. In this NPO case, they have successfully created a brand image of dynamism, demonstrated by the large number of volunteers and corporates that have chosen to be associated with their brand. The findings from the study conducted by Huang and Ku (2016) are well illustrated in this NPO's case confirming the benefits of having a strong NPO website to generate brand value.

*Yeah, so I think they get attracted to us because we give them good return on investment and that is, um, social media exposure. We quite out there so then if people are on our website, our website gives a lot of users a month. So, over the last 12 years, we've somehow built a good, uh, online presence. Some people think our organisation is way bigger than we are because that's just been a skill that's, I don't know, was by chance. But then we worked on that. Uhm, so maybe that's why corporates are interested 'cause they want marketing. Not always so easy, because then your communication also sometimes can look like a corporate Christmas tree so it's very difficult to balance. People get we don't want to say thank you to 100, yeah, that would be wild. So, we've got creative ways that they can be associated with us, and they can talk about their pledge using our brand. And we've got like a brand guide and a contract that they signed so that they use our brand correctly, but it comes with its challenges like some people do greenwashing and we're on the subject of greenwashing. Sometimes we've had legal things and all sorts of things so, it's not always easy but we do have a lot of interest which is amazing problem to have come.*

*... And then the next level would be the volunteers. So, we have a volunteer form on our website where people can sign up to be an ongoing volunteer. It's a little bit tricky because we ask them to fill in all their different skills and things that they want to do. But then sometimes we don't have opportunities for them to volunteer, so we've got thousands of people signed up and we try to create opportunities. So, every Tuesday we have an open day at our nursery in Woodstock where they, anyone can come and get their hands dirty and help us basically propagate plants for our programmes, uhm, and we email that list if we need posters put up or if we need anything and people often jump on board and say I'll drive around the credential and put posters. Participant 5*

ICT has become a contemporary social catalyst for improving the lives of communities and, for NPOs, technology has presented a transformative power (Nicholson et al. 2016). Social media has a superior proclivity to serve if it is combined with upward mobility, enterprise analytics and cloud processing and can assist NPOs in achieving their social missions (Raman 2016). Information technologies can be leveraged by NPOs to improve project and fundraising activities,

stakeholder information access, raise cognisance of social issues and establish legitimacy (Levine and Zahradnik 2012; Richardson et al. 2011).

Participant 3 explained their approach to raising awareness on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram and further explained how webinars were used during the lockdown period to engage specialists and experts in the field. Information distribution, including an accessible communication standpoint and the use of dashboards with info being available on demand, are important for building effective teams (Raman 2016). Participant 1 provided an example of the enterprise analytics they use to assist with achieving their objectives. Participant 10 felt strongly about the transformative power of technology. In Participant 10's example of their potential new projects, the intended benefit to their beneficiaries and the desire to enable greater access to research for the majority demonstrated the transformative power of ICT that is present in the NPO space.

*So new technologies, its Zoom, and in social media, we do Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for both programmes. We do tweetstorms, we do webinars, we've done a lot of webinars over the whole lockdown period to advise. We've had our team, we've had specialists, like we've worked with the IA in London. We've done a webinar with them, can't remember, and then towards the end of, end of last year we just figured that there was a lot of webinar fatigue, so we stopped them. We haven't done any webinars this year. We also do a lot of interviews, media interviews and where possible we do them on online. We do a lot of new clips. We do a lot of graphics and it's we do it all in-house. Well, most of it in-house and then we've got a guy who puts the clips together for us who was part of our film team. Participant 3*

*Yeah, so, uhm, yeah, look I mean again we small and agile, so, you know, we've got all the necessary, sort of, computer technologies and what we've done is we also we've got a monthly contract with xxx and so they provide all of our, sort of, in technology. We're trying to create like a dashboard for ourselves of impact. So, we can show all the projects and the sites that we're working on and the declarations that we achieve et cetera. You know how many projects we're doing, how many we've completed, what the financial flows are et cetera. So, it's early stages but we're exploring that the whole time and then we've also got a project management set-up that one of our staff has invested a bit of time in us understanding, its software called xxx; it's a project management, sort of, bit of software that we manage all of our stewardship sites because stewardship is a very stepwise process. Participant 1*

*We want to start using underwater cameras, GoPros and underwater sonar. There's some videographers and TV channels to try and get our outdoor classrooms televised. Real time to two schools in South Africa. And also, we think we can go global with it. Uhm, I think those are big opportunities that are now emerging. So, for instance, if we launch a new research project on gully sharks 'cause we don't know too much about them and we know this actually hasn't been too much research done on them, but they are part of our ecosystem there and they're a sort of, always there and we know where they are, and we can do good research on them. You know why we shouldn't set up a, uh, a joint, uh, a joint visual, audio and conversation*

*channel with Australian scientists doing the same thing in Australia with gully sharks, you know. Why should we wait for a PhD student to come up with a study that takes three years and then sometimes doesn't even get published in the right places? And people don't even benefit from all that knowledge. So why shouldn't we use technology to drive a global knowledge common? Participant 10*

The advancements and sophistication of marketing tools facilitate their utilisation in combination with proficiency related to enticing and retaining current and potential donors (Fonseca et al. 2021). Increased competition to acquire and retain donors has forced NPOs to strengthen their marketing efforts (Naskrent and Siebelt 2011). An NPO's inability to communicate about their social work proficiently remains a problematic focal point that is related to funding constraints and the limited number of skilled employees dedicated to marketing (Göttlichová and Soukalova 2015). Further challenges to effective brand build are a lack of budget from an organisational perspective, a dearth of buy-in from leadership and a general dearth of understanding of the need for a brand from NPO stakeholders (Chapleo 2015).

Participant 4 described their board's lack of buy-in to building a brand and admitted that the NPO lacked the skills to build or market a brand. This challenge aligns with the challenge identified in several studies where there is a lack of appropriate leadership skills and the prioritisation of marketing efforts by the board (Lin et al. 2009; Liu and Ko 2011; Pope et al. 2009) and agrees with the proposal from Pope et al. (2009) that marketing skills should become a prerequisite for board members. Including other means will address brand promotion and weaknesses in the marketing sphere, such as fundraising and efficiently reaching volunteers or beneficiaries, thereby reducing the reliance on word-of-mouth situations.

*Brand is not a word that's gone with our NPO. We're really bad at branding, marketing and that's partly because from board level, they don't believe that NPOs should brand. They say we don't know. We don't have a product. So, it is dedicated in that app that's hard to marketing department, our organisation. But we have quietly worked on just improving our social media through Facebook and Instagram, with an intern who's really taken to it and is doing a good job there. But in terms that we don't have members, we don't have database. We don't have many followers, so from that perspective, we don't use technology well; we're only just really starting to. Participant 4*

Participant 9 was not convinced that their NPO should have a brand in relation to other environmental NPOs and described the NPO's lack of support for marketing or the branding of the staff. This response talks about the challenges found in the literature reviewed and demonstrates the dearth of buy-in from leadership, the general dearth of understanding of the need for a brand from NPO stakeholders and the limited number of staff dedicated to marketing.

*So that's an interesting question. Ok, so we never really wanted to have a big brand. And because we understand what it takes to maintain that brand so. Uhm, we always wanted to be the supportive entity and*

*build the environmental sector as a whole and so we're very happy to play second fiddle to guard the environmental NPOs. And, you know, all of the guys that do drive a brand and the brand that we drove, I guess, was project xxx; the brand that we drove was xxx South Africa. Uh, and we would rather be, we would rather be supportive and so when, for instance, I mean xxx joined us in 2019 and she was kind of trying to drive the xxx brand which we weren't particularly comfortable with. And but that was what she was comfortable with, so, you know, we're not driving a brand as much as we're trying to drive a narrative at the moment and the narrative is this concept called the conservation economy and that's what we want to drive. Participant 9*

Participant 2 explained the understanding of the need for social media presence but felt that it did not assist with fundraising and alluded to using technology more effectively for improved fundraising abilities. Sun and Asencio (2019) named four barriers to the use of social platforms in NPOs: constrained resources, lack of ICT expertise, ineffective leadership commitment and a lack of ICT comprehension in NPO constituents. The lack of resources and ICT proficiency is evident in Participant 8's excerpt and the barriers of ineffective leadership commitment and a lack of ICT comprehension and resources are evident in Participant 11's feedback.

*We didn't roll that out across the board, and I think it's that perhaps at that interface, that we can look a bit more by about the technologies that's out there and also then for fundraising. I mean, we get it. Having a social media presence but it's not really driving funds back into organisation. There must be ways of using that data to bring in actual funds with some smart apps or something. Participant 2*

*Yeah, so we're not doing very well at that. So, we built a whole, sort of, system to help us come with staff and movements and vehicle movement and all of that and that's a sort of, a first year. We've just found that it's a significant cost, yeah, so I think we're trying to use technology more. Sort of, to be more efficient from a sort of, an operational vehicle use perspective, but I think it's what we found is that it requires an actual human to focus on that and, sort of, building the systems in process and all of that over. And where we are using technology is, sort of, more in the field in terms of collecting data, both inside and outside, using both ranges to try and just really streamline the collection and cooling of data and in terms of communication and whatnot. We're using and, sort of, WhatsApp is obviously our main element of communication within internally but what we've also used over COVID is to connect with donors and whatnot using one sentence. So, what we have looked at doing is creating a specific app which allows us to communicate and really get lab info to donors and communications with donors. But again, it's, sort of, the cost of set-up has been a little bit prohibitive and having a dedicated person to focus on that and so wanting to adopt it but needing the expertise and the resources to actually achieve it. Participant 8*

*I don't want technologies for me; if I want to be back in clan of the cave bear, I am so for new technology, but I am so, you know, only the basic software stuff. Online platforms like Canva are amazing. We can create pretty little things and you don't have to pay, you know, an arm and a leg to help with your social media stuff. So, you know, I have to rely on keeping up with new technology anyway, to appease the bigger companies that will help me achieve my goal and that I'm fine with, you know. No, I'm, I love Excel, Word*

*sheets and that's probably 'cause I'm 57. Uh, I everybody else backs up to the cloud; I still don't and it's not that I won't but it, it's because I, my backup is actually a laptop that keeps up to date with me every day with my normal laptop. You know, that's why I'm managing to do this, you know, so I don't need cloud and stuff like that, you know. I like Excel. Participant 11*

Participants 4 and 8 credited a portion of their NPO's resilience over the years to building strong relationships with key stakeholders such as funders or partners. Their ability to reach out to a network during a crisis period, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, was viewed as an important resilience factor. Participant 1 previously alluded to building their brand by word-of-mouth. Participant 1 again accredited their NPO's resilience to the quiet building of a brand that was well known in local circles. The intention of this was to secure a resilient organisation by ensuring that it attracted a steady stream of long-term projects.

Studies have found that social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, positively influences philanthropic contributions (Guo and Saxton 2014; Li and McDougale 2017). For NPOs, social media presents benefits such as minimal cost, enabling dialogic communication and boosting engagements, all resulting in increased brand awareness (Belenioti and Vassiliadis 2017; Nah and Saxton 2013). During a crisis, a decent business reputation is perceived as an elusive asset, serving as a safeguard to diminish institutional harm (Kim and Woo 2019). An NPO's brand reputation is also considered an asset, with the additional advantages of NPO resource influence and surviving adversities (Lefroy and Tsarenko 2013).

Participant 7 mentioned that they were doing well from a social media perspective and further discussed a period when they had sent out a request for funding due to COVID-19 constraints. Participant 7 referred to how they were able to raise funds from Australia and also how they were able to rally local stakeholders to contribute alternative resources to support their cause during that time. This demonstrates the findings cited above and provides a real-life scenario of the benefits gained from the marketing efforts, such as resource mobilisation and stakeholder engagements, to survive adversity. Through the tactical utilisation of social media and the quantification and qualitative portrayal of its brand value, an NPO can effectively articulate its brand uniqueness and convey clear paths for varying stakeholders to collaborate (Liang et al. 2021).

*Look at lockdown. That was probably one of the times when we saw how it would come together and do, they based I mean it was really great to see how people banded together. I mean we had at that time probably just the income we were getting in from our memberships because we have no events or presentations or anything happening, in that time put out a call to the local community social media and newspapers and that sort of thing and we were getting donations from as far afield as Australia. People putting in funds in our accounts, the local church banners gave us a huge donation, so much so that we*

*managed to get through those few months. We had more than enough money to buy things. It also local farmers and landowners came together, and shop owners and we put food parcels together. You know, basically essentials, toothpaste and things like that, but your vegetables and they put a whole big pile of this together so that the families would have the basically same source to get through that time. We went to a couple of the different communities in the area and targeted them specifically and went in. They spoke to the leadership and find out which were the ones that needed it; all of those people were given what they needed well, during that time and they were extremely grateful for it and yet, and we had leftover money that we eventually been giving too. Well, to help local animals and wildlife as well, so we had more than enough in that time, so I'm not worried that we have a problem with the future because we've got such great people that they will jump on board. Participant 7*

Similar to the corporate sector, the NPO sector can gain considerably from utilising emergent information technologies (Huang and Karthikeyan 2015). Access to the internet and cellular devices has enabled movements via social media which are significant developments in the NPO sphere (Raman 2016). Participant 2 reflected on being an early uptaker of smartphone technology and how the NPO was able to make an easy transition to working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic, which would not have been possible without embracing technology from an organisational perspective. Similarly, Participant 9 also reflected on their previous experience with developing and leading technology in working towards their objectives. Participants 4 and 9 also provided examples of how they had adapted to working remotely and cited the types of technology they had adopted.

*Uhm, but I wouldn't say we are at all slow on this stuff, uhm, if the fact that you know everybody had Blackberries and then as smartphones from almost from the beginning, we were very early uptakers on those things. Yeah, the fact that we do so much on email, and we were, so it was so easy actually for organisation to switch to working from home during the pandemic. Does show that we've done quite a lot in terms of embracing it. I just think we can look a bit more about how it can enhance stuff we do. Uhm, but again they are saying that and then you know we've just put the entire, yeah, this thing under the couch, you know? So, it's it is happening, uhm? Yeah, it's a tough one, I think. Maybe it's in the, in the actual stuff we do on the ground we can look a bit more on using technology. Uhm, you know we did for a while issue like tablets to our monitoring evaluation team and they used like certain apps like that poverty stoplight to test out impact in communities. But that was linked to a specific project. Participant 2*

*And then, in terms of the technology that we do use, we shifted to Microsoft Teams at the beginning of COVID and we have our fully integrate with that our entire filing, communication, project management is all done through Teams, so that is a technology base that we have really dug into. Everything is done through Teams. Participant 4*

*COVID has taught us that we can operate virtually, using Zoom, Windows, Teams, etc. We operate a tight space in terms of social media and have reduced our cost structures to adapt in that sphere. We do not*

*engage with larger CRM-type programmes as our donor database does not justify that currently. We have in the past adopted new technologies in SA that have been ground-breaking and worked on developing leading-edge tech addressing the food security and heritage spaces. Participant 9*

In summation, this theme of brand and ICT was discussed collectively due to the participant responses being clustered in this fashion even though this was split out as separate adaptive capacities in Chapter 2. Sun and Asencio (2019) named four barriers to the use of social platforms in NPOs: constrained resources, lack of ICT expertise, ineffective leadership commitment and a lack of ICT comprehension in the NPO constituents. An example of each of these barriers was found to be present in the cases studied. In the case of Participant 11, the challenges and negative outlook of the use of technology were attributed to the participants' age, although the NPO was 12 years old and still below the R1 million threshold, so this could be the reason for the slow uptake of technology.

Further challenges to effective brand build, which are a lack of budget from an organisational perspective, a dearth of buy-in from leadership and a general dearth of understanding of the need for a brand from NPO stakeholders, were found to also be present in the cases studied (Chapleo 2015). New technologies, coupled with the stakeholder acuity of being more engaged with the NPOs that they support, place pressure on NPOs to include such stakeholders in a meaningful manner and in line with stakeholder management theory.

It was found that despite the setbacks of inadequate resources to secure the necessary ICT resources and the resistance from some NPOs to develop a brand, NPOs such as Case 5, have unlocked these challenges and are doing very well from both these perspectives. The Case 5 NPO is seven years old, and its leadership has largely driven the brand and ICT aspects, which could be the reason for its success in this regard. Therefore, it was found that the brand and ICT adaptive capacities are deeply interconnected as both have a focus on communication with an inner and external organisational emphasis and are therefore deemed a key adaptive capacity.

#### **4.3.6 Theme 6 – Board engagement and governance**

Similar to the corporate sector, an NPO board entrusts the management of the NPO to officials responsible for operations. Executives are responsible to the board for operational goals and the board is responsible to donors and other stakeholders (Callen et al. 2010; Viader and Espina 2014). Experience, proficiency and social relations are the foremost required competences in NPO board members. When the most capable board members are appointed, these competences impact NPOs positively, underwriting NPO synergy (Roshayani et al. 2018).

The RDT views board members as being responsible for sourcing resources. Participants 5, 8 and 11 mentioned requiring board members that could fundraise as a need that is currently unfulfilled by their board members. The assistance of board members with fundraising efforts was a specific competency mentioned by Participant 5: *“Yeah, I think other board members that could come on board I would like to recruit board members who could help with some fundraising longer term, bigger fundraising.”*

*We’ve got the marketing skills and so we brought in people that this where at our current stage, this is where we are really needing, sort of, assistance and, sort of, guidance and what not and so that will in those, sort of, various categories that will generally continue and we will part of what we want to grow is more, sort of, network builders so might get one or two trustees that are really connected to local corporates.* Participant 8

*What board members could do would be to get more involved in fundraising and at a higher level, you know, these little events on the side. And somebody pushing your MySchool, those you know you can do that with volunteers and stuff like that but when it comes to levels and being at board members, you can get a lot more funding.* Participant 11

The RDT highlights that the acquisition and maintenance of resources necessary for survival are relevant to organisational performance. Accordingly, the main functions of an NPO board are to facilitate interactions, reduce resource dependencies, improve the flow and variety of resources through their networks and exemplify the NPO to outer constituencies (Callen et al. 2010). The reflection of Participant 2 on the changes experienced in the functioning of the board over time reflected the inability of the current board members to assist with raising resources through their networks which is considered a key function of the board.

*Ok, so I think they can be a hell of a lot more active. You know, so in the past, we had like sustainability managers for Unilever or BHP, and this was the people that were brought into the board because of their networks. They were key donors; we had relationship with two donors that they drove some of those investments for us and they brought in networks, and we had golf days, and they would like the people that bring in the high-wealth friends. I think our current board is a much better board at listening and understanding what we do and sitting in meetings helping us shape this. But they not leveraging that; none of our board members are bringing in any funding for the trust at the moment. And I don’t believe any of them can really, you know, it’s not, it’s not their game, so, yeah, I think the one guy’s probably talking again and, you know, he’s busy with his own life, you know, so we have to figure that out ‘cause it’s a balance. I wouldn’t want to go to a board that just says yes and is not really interested in our work but can bring in a lot of networking and things, but I think we’ve gone far too much the other side where we’ve got this amazing bunch of people that it’s almost part of the executive in a way but it’s, they’re not. We actually have to have a little bit of separation and where they as a board member, you know, feel the pressure of*

*having to help us fundraise 'cause that's why, you know, we are a fundraising organisation at the end of the day.* Participant 2

The reflections of Participant 2 concerning the board members' inability to leverage their networks for resources were similar to the thoughts of Participant 10. A comparison was drawn between American and South African NPO board members by Participant 10, who felt that in South Africa a combined fundraising strategy would be more appropriate.

*You know, to be a board member of some of those big non-profits in America, they that the board member has to put down that \$100 000 a year out of his own pocket to be a board member 'cause it's seen as part of the, sort of, networking status dinner party chatter; that's a very different model and those people are networked and they are hugely influential. And they operate in a highly geared giving environment; Americans give hugely to non-profits and it's not just because it's tax-deductible but it's part of their culture. Uhm, there are pockets in South Africa that are also like that. There are a lot of large family foundations, families that give a lot but it's not pervasive. What that leads to, and I've given this quite a lot of thought but I'm not sure I've got the answer. In South Africa, when you bring highly connected individuals onto a board, you very often find that because they are such close friends of people with money, they actually can't ask them for money. It's like a dichotomy, so yes. You only see it when you experience it. So, network and close friendships with or closely knit networks where there's lots of cash can actually be more of a liability sometimes because it means it closes that access to that crowd. I think it's much better to have, uh, a combined, a proper funding strategy.* Participant 10

In terms of board members' roles in fundraising for the NPO, there is a clear expectation from the NPO leaders that this should happen especially from the board members' networks, however, as indicated by Participants 2, 5, 8 and 11, this is not always the case and as indicated by Participant 10, there are more complexities involved with a board member's ability to fundraise from their own networks. This could be a reason that despite the expectations from NPO leaders for their board members to be involved in fundraising, this key competency is not easy to attract NPO board members.

Strategic flexibility includes a set of competences related to the reconfiguration of an entity's purpose and vision. Furthermore, an understanding of the environment is necessary when an entity faces turbulence that could have a significant impact requiring timely responses (Alexiou 2015). Another challenge that NPOs experience is that the required level of skills for board committees may not be available in volunteers and, as such, the strategic planning for turbulent times may be compromised (Ahmed et al. 2019; Chelliah et al. 2016; Murray and Thomas 2019). Participant 1's response indicated the awareness of the need to review strategy regularly but explained how they were falling short of this in terms of the time and resources required to achieve this.

*We need to get to the point whereas the current directors, we need to be investing at least 25% of our time into the organisational issues, the strategy, the vision managing that rather than heads down stuck in individual projects all over the country. You know, legally, financially, you know, from the strategy side that everything from an oversight point of view, we're not investing enough of our time as directors into that because of that capacity issue and, you know, we've gotta get to that point where we can invest at least 25% of our time on that component and looking at the strategy during we often talk about it but then the next day we get our heads stuck down into our projects, you know. So, we were aware of it; we're just not doing it enough now because that then talks to the re-jigging the top-level structure with independent directors creating, uh, a better level of accountability to everybody who's working and that's definitely what is required and recognise that but we're just not doing it at the moment. Participant 1*

Certain facets present in the NPO set-up, such as being self-regulating, private and voluntary, make NPOs well-positioned to stimulate new ideas and launch new practices (Adro and Fernandes 2021; Mulgan et al. 2007). Only Participant 9 referred to creativity when discussing board members' contributions towards achieving their NPO's mission.

*Our Board is consistently supportive of the mission and vision. They are not actively engaged in promoting the organisation but have been chosen rather for their technical expertise in specific focus areas as opposed to their external influence or promotional capacity. And so, we we've also been very cautious about our board members that we do not want a board member that is going to stifle our creativity. Participant 9*

Interestingly, Participant 9 emphasised that their board members had been chosen specifically for their expertise and did not have any expectation that these board members should promote the NPO or fundraise from their networks. This is in contrast to the views of Participants 2, 5, 8 and 11 and perhaps aligns more closely with the view of Participant 10, who, after some thought, felt that fundraising may not necessarily be the key function of board members. This is possibly the reason that these four cases could not attract board members with these competencies.

*So, I think it has to do with the unprofessionalism in which board members are selected for non-profits. But I also think it's got a lot to do with the fact that they're not paid. Uhm, I don't think it's a good thing to expect people to deliver large amounts of their time, especially people of calibre and not pay them. Yeah, even if you pay them something, Uhm, not some ridiculous amount, but it you know you don't not necessarily going to be paying them what they would get on a corporate board. But this concept that people should work for free is actually bad for organisations; it just doesn't work. Participant 10*

The changes experienced in the functioning of the board over time reflect the inability of the current board members to assist with raising resources through their networks. The suggestion of changing the way that NPO board members should be recruited and remunerated could be explored in further studies as it was not evident in the literature review. This could be related to the findings of Olinske and Hellman (2017) who found that although academic studies focusing

on NPO organisational management had increased recently, relationships and engagements between the NPO board and its executive leaders remain understudied.

As indicated by Participants 8 and 9, their board members all have other expertise thus contributing their specialised skills to the NPO voluntarily. Participant 8 said: “*So, we have seven trustees, and they are, they've all been brought in for various levels of expertise. At the current stage of the organisation, sort of, we've got some, so the big governance experts governance and legal we've got the financial, sort of, piece.*”

NPO board associates are not rewarded according to time committed and make a voluntary contribution to the NPO; this influences the recruitment and selection process of board members (Viader and Espina 2014). A further challenge to implementing good governance is that a board member often plays dual roles on the board committee due to the lack of appropriate skills which is not ideal for the prevention of unethical practices; the actual efficiency of the board may be questioned (Murray and Thomas 2019; Van Zyl and Mans-Kemp 2020; Wells 2012).

In line with this finding from the literature reviewed, Participant 10 had strong feelings about the efficiency of NPO board members and reflected on why this was possibly not being achieved in terms of recruitment and remuneration practices for NPO board members. This suggestion in changing the way that NPO board members should be recruited and remunerated could be explored in further studies as it was not evident in the literature review. This could be related to the findings of Olinske and Hellman (2017) who found that although academic studies focusing on NPO organisational management had increased recently, relationships and engagements between the NPO board and its executive leaders remain understudied.

*I think this is a global problem. It's a problem everywhere. It's the problem of disengaged board members. I think, uh, non-profit board members have to be much more involved with the operations and with the organisation. There's this misnomer that somehow if you're on the on a non-profit entity's board, all you have to do is arrive, you know, share some relevant wisdom and leave. I think most of them are just useless. They just want their names on site, and they offer no value and, you know, because I've worked with, I've worked on boards with these non-profits. I've often coached in these boards and run strategy sessions with them. I mean just generally I find them to be quite on the whole pretty hopeless. So, I think it has to do with the unprofessionalism in which board members are selected for non-profits. But I also think it's got a lot to do with the fact that they're not paid. Uhm, I don't think it's a good thing to expect people to deliver large amounts of their time, especially people of calibre, and not pay them. Yeah, even if you pay them something, uhm, not some ridiculous amount but it, you know, you don't not necessarily going to be paying them what they would get on a corporate board. But this concept that people should work for free is actually bad for organisations; it just doesn't work. Participant 10*

NPO executives regularly deal with disengaged, depleted, power-hungry and manipulative board members (Do Adro and Leitão 2020). Moreover, NPOs also deal with excessively compliant committee members who provide limited direction to the entity. Furthermore, some board committees serve as socialising opportunities, do not address challenging issues involved in the management of NPOs and meetings are frequently misdirected (Marx and Davis 2012). An example of such board challenges experienced was provided by Participant 4's account of a board member's negative input during a board meeting.

*The most interaction I've had from board members at the board meeting was when I changed the logo without showing them and then letting go to meeting and everybody had opinion about why we cannot change it. Never mind that it doesn't particularly work. I wasn't trying to be difficult; it just doesn't practically work. We have lots of problems with it and I was shut down. I mean I've got written responses, detailed response and there was a guy who hasn't said a word in a meeting for four years and he had something to say. Yeah, and that was the biggest interaction we had. Never mind that on the agenda we had talked about, we were talking about the previous year's entire financials which I had taken so that as a team it was half of the year, we were looking at a million rand projected loss. And by the time we closed the year, we were only 23 000-rand loss, yeah, that got one sentence and the logo got from 5 minutes. It was very disheartening that meeting to come away thinking we've just presented incredible work that's happening, and we saw how we actually pull ourselves out of a financial crisis again. And yet we can just be very angry with me for not passing a logo change by you, which I did do with one board member.* Participant 4

A further challenge related to NPO governance is the board's interference with the executive's role which increases executive stress levels and results in burnout, undermining the leader's performance and consequently the NPO's as well (Olinske and Hellman 2017). Certain experiments have found that the board frequently has misgivings about the NPO leader's capacity to fulfil the essential requisites of performing activities due to the board's self-confidence in its governance skills (Bernstein et al. 2016). The behaviour of both an NPO board and the executive leader regularly underwrites uncertainties, confusion and conflict and is justified by the recurrent lack of role elucidation (Bernstein et al. 2016).

The blurring of the roles between the executive and the board is evident in the responses of Participant 2 who also alluded to the pressure experienced in fundraising expectations. Participant 9 felt that creativity may be stifled if the wrong board members are appointed, and this finding aligns with the findings of the reviewed literature.

*But I think we've gone far too much the other side where we've got this amazing bunch of people that it's almost part of the executive in a way but it's they're not. We actually have to have a little bit of separation and where they as a board member, you know, feel the pressure of having to help us fundraise 'cause that's why, you know, we are a fundraising organisation at the end of the day.* Participant 2

*And so, we've also been very cautious about our board members that we do not want a board member that is going to stifle our creativity.* Participant 9

In summation, Pryce (2021) recognises that the human rudiments of an entity, e.g., leadership, staff inspiration governance etc., are indispensable as material resources and are key to enacting organisational resilience. While board members are also considered volunteers, they influence the mission and vision of the NPO and impact the culture of the NPO as well. The RDT and the organisational resilience theories emphasise the role of board members who underwrite the governance of the NPO and provide legitimacy for the NPO. It was found that apart from their fundraising skills, board members still possessed other important competences that they contributed to the NPO.

Furthermore, it was concluded that the fit of board members to an NPO is also important as the expectations of the NPO leaders for fundraising abilities may be unmet if not explicitly required. However, as the literature points out, this subject is understudied. Therefore, this is aligned with the findings in the literature reviewed, as when the most capable board members are appointed, these competences impact NPOs positively, underwriting NPO synergy (Roshayani et al. 2018). Therefore, competent board members are deemed adaptive capacities of an NPO that can shield an NPO from adversity during turbulent conditions. In this theme, the board's engagement and related governance practices were discussed collectively, considering the reflections of the participants, however, from an adaptive capacity perspective, each plays an important role and is interrelated.

#### **4.3.7 Theme 7 – Innovation outlook**

Certain facets present in the NPO set-up, such as being self-regulating, private and voluntary, make NPOs well-positioned to stimulate new ideas and launch new practices (Adro and Fernandes 2021; Mulgan et al. 2007). NPOs are regularly encouraged to make investments in innovation as an organisational tenet (Adro and Fernandes 2021; Dover and Lawrence 2012). However, this remains a key challenge facing NPOs as it is not clear how to achieve this (Adro and Fernandes 2021).

The majority of the participants' responses referred to examples of the types of activities that they undertake to encourage creativity and innovation in their teams. This engagement in activities with their teams was related strongly to the discoveries from the literature reviewed in that employees play a key role in promoting innovation as an organisational tenet. It was also found that many of the participants often worked with limited resources but still made efforts to minimise costs and create a stimulating environment away from the office for their staff.

Participant 4 mentioned that sometimes her own home was used to host her team. Participant 3 also mentioned that her team stayed at her home to limit costs and fondly described the time they spent together.

*One of the very simple things we do is we have family meeting every Friday. And then we will sit around and sometimes we discuss work stuff. So sometimes we use those spaces to brainstorm as well. So, we'll put a topic out there and then we put a paper on the wall, and we brainstorm and ask opinions and figure things out together, once every two months, depending on what's happening in the company. And there are days together where we have a whole day where we are out of the office and we are thinking, planning, strategizing, brainstorming within a more creative environment, so sometimes at my home or somewhere else. We just hope people can feel free to and think outside the box. To promote innovation and creativity so we have things something called a walk-in challenge. So, as you arrive, you are presented with a bit of a challenge that goes with the theme of the meeting and it's also a way to, sort of, get your head into the space of the meeting or also just reduce your anxiety, increase your volition. Participant 4*

*So that's one of the things is to get people enthusiastic and, yeah, our little think tank this year was lovely 'cause we all, they all came down here to Hermanus and we had three days over a weekend where we worked in the mornings and then we played in the afternoon, pumped up, sort of, stimulating that a little bit of playful energy Yes, I mean like the one day, we took a boat trip and we all jumped off the boat. You know, into the water and swam and like little kids, you know, and then another day we went wine tasting and, yeah, I find that when you can do that, people are chatting anyway about work because that's what you all do and lots of ideas come came out of that this year so we don't only do it once a year and then we've been away twice and lastly because of COVID. But we still tried to have it but this year, we did it properly and it didn't cost a lot. Everybody stayed with me and, yeah, so that was fun. Participant 3*

Engaging employees at all levels could influence an NPO's culture to become more amenable to innovative habits. An environment that encourages innovation, individual creativity and emotional well-being can improve an entity's innovative abilities (Do Adro and Leitão 2020). Participant 8 reflected on the inclusivity of staff from different parts of the NPO engaging in dialogue to find solutions. The resultant diversity of thought was valued by Participant 8 and is aligned with the literature review findings in that staff should participate at all levels.

Another response common to Participant 2 and Participant 8 was that the ideas generated should be appreciated even if they did not currently solve an issue at hand. Participant 2 also referred to an environment that encourages innovation and where failure is not viewed negatively. Participant 2 represents Case 2 which is also the largest NPO studied in terms of the number of staff and revenue and this stance is possibly related to the ability to allow staff to experiment. Considering the unique interface that NPOs experience, innovation was found to be an adaptive capacity necessary to address larger societal issues.

*The first thing is, I think we draw people that are naturally innovative and creative. Just by the type of work we do; it's cutting-edge stuff. You know, no one does, that's this type of stuff and always because we had discussed for people and the environment. And then how do you encourage it is, I suppose to keep recognising that and allowing people to fail. I suppose that's a very important thing that when someone comes up with an idea, we very keen as a leadership group today. Ok, let's try that. No one just shoots it down, so I think it's that probably part of that whole trust thing is like you, you, we allow people a bit of space to experiment, and that fosters creativity. Whereas if you don't allow failure then some people just end up doing their job because they're so scared of that failure, yeah. Participant 2*

*So, I think the biggest thing is, sort of, involvement of staff and from the, sort of, early stages, you know, what I found is that approach staff with a, sort of, a final decision but being asked for creativity is generally very, sort of, stunted and whereas if you actually have a have an open, sort of, discussion about and say guys these are the problems that we are facing. These are some of the sorts of ideas that we have with it. I have and this is where we're trying to, sort of, get to and have that, sort of, open workspace about it. But it's not about shooting down solutions that are not aligned with that bit more about. Yeah, so encouraging inclusivity and I think, you know, for so definitely getting that, sort of, inclusion of staff and I think part of it is also which staff and so trying to get. Sometimes it's good to get that, sort of, person who's not necessarily involved in that project, just for them to participate in the, uh, in that workshop or that, sort of, working space and they can just provide that outside, sort of, thought or ... and that often leads to the sort of innovative angles or elements from it so a lot of time, I think we all are all sort of, we have our own solutions, sort of, predefined in our head and we, sort of, work with the net space and then you bring someone from a different department or bring someone from the outside in and they can just, sort of, why we are doing things like that, what about this, sort of, as a function? So, I think it's probably that, sort of, diversity of thought in that space. Yes, yeah, it's actually very important concept is that diversity. Participant 8*

Innovation is a multidisciplinary pursuit and the positive outcomes resulting from good quality relationships between divisions and firms on knowledge generation and interchange impact innovation accomplishments (Sanzo et al. 2015). Participant 1 recognised that dialogue around innovation was lacking and was a shortfall of their NPO. Furthermore, one of the challenges was the amount of travel required to meet collectively which was limited by time constraints to achieve their projects.

*It's actually quite interesting because, you know, we don't really have systems there that we get involved, ourselves involved in. They're just creating. We are figuring out the way we work is or inaccessible to everybody. Discussions around new innovative ideas or projects in that and so I think one of the shortfalls that we've got is probably not getting together collectively as a group often enough to have these discussions because we've all got our heads down during our individual projects and there's a lot of travel involved, so, you know, like I'm not sure. Participant 1*

During a crisis, innovation by employees could become an appropriate strategy used to overcome adversity (Senbeto and Hon 2020). Turbulent environments often breed opportunities for social innovation and frequently occur when there is a liberation of resources via cultural shift, political change or fiscal crisis (Westley 2013). Society's capacity to generate a stable stream of social innovations, especially ones that contribute to vulnerable populaces, is vital for overall societal and environmental resilience (Cahill 2010).

The account of Participant 10 describing his experiences with creativity from different perspectives is important as it alludes to the limitations of staff and that being aware of this is important to assist staff with developing creativity. It also alludes to the insights of leaders who need to know when to step back and let their teams be unencumbered to realise innovation. Therefore, while innovation by employees could become an appropriate strategy to use to overcome adversity (Senbeto and Hon 2020), this would need to be tempered by the limitations of staff and the leader's awareness of such limitations.

*So, what I'm trying to say is that if you're dealing with teams that are highly creative, they need all the space and time that they can get. The last thing you want to do is start friction or roadblocks because creative people need to immerse themselves in the space in which they operate and sometimes it can take months and years for them to develop to a point where they're actually developing world-class material. And you've just gotta let that be. All you've got to do is create it, take all the admin away from them, take all the governance issues away from them, take all the things away from them that are going to stop them from thinking and doing what they need to do. That, sort of, concept of neuroplasticity is in everyone, but you've got to know how to get those juices running in a way that people feel inspired, and they feel that that it can get them somewhere it can somehow to solve a problem. But there I think that takes time and you just gotta keep working at it, keep developing people mindset around tips, around solutioning. Uhm, and that takes a lot of one on one. And some people really take to it, especially those with that, that have a latent capability. But it's never been developed and then other people because of the way their minds work. I've also seen people who are genuinely not creative. Because their minds have not been developed at all across or during their career, even when they were kids their minds are not developed to be creative. If you put them under too much pressure, you put them under a lot of stress and you can absolutely destroy their confidence if you, if you push that too hard. Participant 10*

In summation, it was found that this theme aligned well with the discussions in Chapter 2. The process of NPO innovation is reliant on factors such as culture, leadership, internal properties such as control and formalisation, external turbulence and general aspects such as the size or age of an NPO (Bernstein et al. 2016; Do Adro and Leitão 2020; Jaskyte 2015; Shin and Choi 2019). Although from an age and size of the NPOs perspective, it was found that there was no correlation as each of the cases varied in age and size.

Studies have revealed that an organisation's capability to innovate during periods of adversity is crucial for organisational resilience (Vakilzadeh and Haase 2020). Furthermore, the insights of Participant 10 are valuable and reveal the deep connection of an NPO's inner attributes such as inspiring leaders and a work environment that is conducive to innovation. Cultures that boost communication and propagate experimentation and support instead of blame, promote innovation and Participant 1 recognises that this is a shortfall present within their NPO. Therefore, building resilience in multifaceted systems requires strengthening the culture of innovation, and this is possible when diversity is valued, and bricolage is employed by NPO leaders. Consequently, this may manifest in enhanced decision-making and solving of dilemmas.

Another finding was the key need for diversity attribute, mentioned by Participant 8, while Participants 3 and 4 engaged in bricolage with the use of their own homes for team activities. Therefore, it can be concluded that most of the NPO cases studied have implemented important elements of innovation or are at least aware of their shortcoming concerning innovation and are well-positioned to utilise innovation in an adaptive capacity.

#### **4.3.8 Theme 8 – Project management, monitoring and evaluation**

Projects serve as tools to divide specific activities within an entity from a public and corporate perspective. This is similar to the NPO sector, however, there is an additional reliance on allotted income that directs how project work is organised (Czibere 2014). As social needs increase and projects are identified to satisfy those needs, the likelihood of executing such projects is governed largely by an NPO's ability to access suitable funding for the project. For NPOs, this accessibility of financing regularly influences the probability of the project starting up or how it will be set up (Lannon and Walsh 2016).

Participant 9 identified the need to address watersheds at a massive scale in urgency. Participant 9 recognised that the project he was currently working on was creating jobs and he was using the opportunity to track the project deliverables on the ground. Participant 9 intended to use the results of this project to raise funds via crowdfunding focusing on the overseas funding market. This demonstrates fundraising and the ability to access funds which is necessary to implement key projects. The current project also directs how the project works, i.e., “job ticking” is organised.

We know that unless we address watersheds at massive scale now, like these ill-conceived Working for Water programmes, I mean, the programme we're doing is a job ticker, that's all it is. But I've made my deliverables very achievable but what I'm doing outside of that is my future income source. So, we're establishing these 590 nurseries. We're going to be doing 17 650 food gardens and we're going to be doing 9 800 square metres of erosion control wards. I'm gonna throw in, you know, erosion and trees and all that sort of stuff as well, so that's because then I will, seriously overachieve. But those, the trees and the erosion

is what's going to tie me into the international markets because I can quantify an erosion value and a tree value to a dollar value. Yeah, so we'll be doing that crowdfund that the minute we get this project started. I'm overseas to go and sell these moving forward. Participant 9

The NPO sector has become progressively reliant on projects to accomplish its tactical goals, and conventional project management practices could indicate to stakeholders that an NPO is working toward improving performance (Anderson and Lannon 2018). Globalisation, increased competition and technological advancements have boosted knowledge as a valued asset within entities (Anantatmula 2005). Knowledge administration is subsequently significant as certain projects rely on the production of new knowledge incorporated into managerial practice. The transmission and assimilation of knowledge among projects avoid the duplication of past errors from both a project and institutional perspective (Javernick-Will and Levitt 2010).

Participant 1 described their annual process to document their organisational achievements from a project perspective and recognised that this positively influenced stakeholders. Participant 1 referred to several knowledge management tools used in the NPO and that their teams all have access to information, therefore, they can transmit and assimilate knowledge into the management of their projects. Participant 1 reiterated that although they were able to achieve a project import report a few years back, they were not able to consistently prioritise this task due to a lack of capacity and time constraints; however, he recognised the value in this process from a tactical perspective as well and admitted that they needed to improve on documenting the impact of their projects.

*I mean this is important, so our current reporting is pretty much as projects require. So that's you know if you've got a WWF project you do your normal reporting etc., so that's just project based. I think as an organisation what we try and do is we try and pull together, kind of our successes you know, what we've done well and it's like this year we weren't able to put enough time into that. But that is the thing; there's a lot of things that I'm indicating to you that we recognise we need to do and it's that capacity issue that's preventing us from. We've also recognised the need to do that and in, sort of, correlating, you know, that impact, which then adds value to your partners and that if they can see what's happening. So, we have to get better at that, and that comes up to having a portion of a person time that can pull that information together. We've got a nice, shared drive, OneDrive and Office 365 around sharing documents. So that everybody in the organisation has access to information, so it's not like we don't have access to the information to be able to pull it together; we just need the time to pull those impacts and monitoring reports together and, you know, distribute it to partners and that is one thing again that we've recognised we need to do, and we need to do better. Participant 1*

Leveraging the benefits of knowledge assimilation and evolution positively impacts innovation execution, resulting in improved organisational performance (Cho et al. 2017). The realisation of

improved project outcomes is feasible with the implementation of innovation and aptitude training programmes and opportunities for staff to build their competencies (Al-Nabae and Sammani 2021; Wisdom et al. 2014). This was also corroborated by a study conducted by Oun et al., (2016). Cost administration of projects is enhanced when entities efficiently employ leadership activities related to knowledge management such as assurances to manage knowledge gleaned from programmes at an organisational level, implementation of performance metrics tracking developments and rewarding teams for the distribution of project knowledge (Oun et al. 2016).

Participant 9 felt that they could improve the management of projects by defining the baseline studies to collect data from inception and ensure this is achieved consistently to measure impact from a household perspective. Participant 10 also felt that they could improve at impact measurement and felt that they require external skill sets for this aspect. Participant 10 mentioned that their new director is however skilled at this and would focus on this. Leaders must implement activities, as mentioned above, for the realisation of improved project outcomes.

*We can do better in defining baseline studies and gathering data at the outset and to consistently follow up after and during programme interventions. We are making an effort to do so and in future will conduct more detailed household-level data to measure impact. Participant 9*

*I think it's an area that we can really improve on because we are, so you know, focused on the very practical application of the conservation work that we do there and we don't sometimes step back and understand it at a more, sort of, meta-level. We're quite used to that. Over the years, we've been subjected to pretty rigorous reporting standards. Because of the kinds of its, you know, that the impact measurement we struggle with it with because we're not very good at it but and we also can't always afford the more expensive consultancies that do that stuff. But it's something that our new director is particularly good with, and I think he's going to do that. Participant 10*

While most NPOs are keen to comply with project or organisational monitoring and assessments, NPOs can also refrain by choosing what to assess, how to evaluate and what to include in reports (Arvidson and Lyon 2014). NPOs can also actively and willingly use social influence measures for educational and publicity purposes and as a means of applying control to their environments (Arvidson and Lyon 2014). The capability to adapt and cultivate improved outcomes is connected to efficient monitoring and evaluation methods (Lindamood et al. 2021). Key enabling components required to implement efficient monitoring and assessments are securing the proper support, an ethos that advocates assessment and the desire to be answerable to parties that hold a stake (Bach-Mortensen and Montgomery 2018).

Participant 5 explained the many instances in which they used technology to assist them with the monitoring and assessment of their projects. Participant 5 understood the importance of

transparency when communicating about their success stories to donors. Participant 6 demonstrated an ethos that supported assessment “*to take more seriously and kind of respect that space because there actually is an engaged audience out there, that have kind of bought into the brand and could direct interest and kind of an investment in it*”. This alludes to the desire of the NPO to be accountable to stakeholders.

*There's monitoring technology out there that can help us with our tree monitoring, so we monitor quite extensively for years after we plant the trees. And it means visiting the sites et cetera. And in the last five years, various drone and satellite apps and technology have taken on monitoring. With the decade on restoration, people are starting to apply that technology to restoration work to monitor trees that we've planted or things like that. We gotten most of our work on an app called xxx. So, we've mapped all of our trees, and they can be seen with satellites et cetera, and I think it creates a very good method of communicating our story and our success rates to the donors. But it also creates a whole lot of transparency and ways we can go and check things online if we need to. So, we're working with both for our monitoring evaluation. We were asked to go on there so sometimes these things can be time-wasting, but anyway, we're very open to it, so we are using explore and annex and restore, which are very well known in the land restoration spaces and I think you must be on a on a thing like that because your project must be seen now from satellite. Things like that that are always just trying to help them save time and money and there's various things like Meltwater and things that can help you with communications in terms of knowing who your audience is and who feeds what.* Participant 5

*We feel that we really need to take a top-down approach to that to ensure that the kind of reporting or the messaging that we put out even though we not the work that we do is not about garnering like high numbers in social media or it's quite an optical for us but it's something that we do need to take more seriously and kind of respect that space because there actually is an engaged audience out there that have kind of bought into the brand and could direct interest and kind of an investment in it. So, we are just we're really looking at how to just engage with each other as a team but look at some. This is where an external person will more than likely add value to the organisation. To come in, to really develop a kind of media strategy and road map, uhm, that we don't currently have. I mean, we've got some of the top media people in the world, but it's something that, I mean, financially it's one of the things that we are, you know, I'm looking at it. It's a position that I feel is very critical to our organisation or we will be tremendous value at our organisation going forward and it'll be part of like a, sort of, a cash flow projection to raise funds for that particular individual, so I think that's probably an area that we could improve on and really make a larger impact in terms of quality reporting or sharing it that way.* Participant 6

Projects, including social orientation, should include stakeholder management theory. This could be achieved by engaging stakeholders and including their input in project management processes advocated by the NPO, thus including stakeholders' views in assessing the project impact (De Camargo et al. 2019; Moya-Colorado et al. 2021).

Participant 4 described how NPOs try to develop monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning tools in-house which is challenging because of the limited resources available for this aspect. Participant 4 provides an example of how they are trying to solve this issue by creating a hub containing resources, tools and systems that different non-profits can use. Participant 4 closed by describing how different donors require different reports. Additionally, Participant 4 found that donors were excited to be part of a blended finance model while other donors supported projects and integrated reporting was possible.

*I think one of the biggest problems that non-profits have is that we have such limited resources and we're trying to develop our own thing and work in our own boxes. So, I also lead an organisation called xxx, which is a non-profit company that is just being actually registered at the moment and it's the entity that is the arm of the xxx partnership, yeah. So, to link it back to your question, the reason, one of the reasons, why I want, I mean, there's so many reasons that we're setting up this non-profit company. It's all about stability of none of the catchment and impact in the catchment through a strategic, collaborative way of working and one of those things that this resource hub that we are trying to set up is around neural, so monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning and being a hub that creates resources and tools and system for different non-profits to be able to use so that we don't have to keep trying to develop them in-house. But instead, we can take from the toolbox and apply them, adapt them to our own environment. So, I'm hoping that that would really help. It's not easy. We're experimenting with different ways of doing it because it has to be adaptable and how we report so from a financial perspective, we're having blended finance models where many funders are reporting and they all want slightly different things so I don't think I have an easy answer to that and I think that's the innovation that's coming now in the sectors that before we report it individually to everybody just on their own objectives. Now when you speak to your donors, and you tell them you're just one of a few and you find the way to do these integrated reports. Not only financial but on the objectives and impact, they start to see that they're just 25% of the pie and they like that. So, I am seeing some level of flexibility from funders coming through now in their excitement at it being this blended finance multi-party product. Participant 4*

The effective management of socially oriented programmes is an essential prerequisite for accomplishing the best performance outcomes possible and effective administrative tools should be adopted (De Camargo et al. 2019). It was found that the competitive NPO environment requires an entity to stand out, justifying the allocation of an NPO's own resources towards monitoring and assessment processes and training staff in project management practices (Kao 2018). Ultimately when monitoring and evaluation are linked with learning and adapting from a community ownership and leadership perspective this improves project implementation that is otherwise not possible when a single framework is utilised.

It was found that several participants have an awareness of the importance of project management, monitoring and evaluation and have acknowledged that they need to be better at this, however,

resource constraints and lack of capacity were contributing factors. The theme of project management, monitoring and evaluation is aligned to the adaptive capacity discussed in Chapter 2; therefore, it is deemed an important adaptive capacity that could enhance the NPO's ability to stand out and augment organisational resilience. Including key stakeholders' views in assessing the project impact is important for stakeholder management. This aligned well with the findings from the reviewed literature as recommended by De Camargo et al. (2019) and Moya-Colorado et al. (2021).

#### **4.3.9 Theme 9 – Succession planning**

According to Pfeffer and Salancik (2003), an executive's succession is viewed by the RDT as an internal tactical response to environmental qualms and dependencies. An effective succession plan can reduce environmental reliance and increase organisational performance (Hillman et al. 2009). The planned replacement of executives is imperative for all types of entities and could be necessary at any stage of an entity's life cycle (Li 2019). An uneventful and successful executive changeover underwrites organisational performance; an unsuccessful effort could result in resource shortfalls, identity calamities and power struggles (Kavadis et al. 2020; Li 2019; Farah et al. 2020).

An executive succession plan enables stakeholder security and comfort, ensuring that the NPO mission will continue with the successor (Yawson 2019). Leadership succession can be a complicated process that involves a smooth transition between leaders but also involves how well the replacement appreciates and purposefully responds to situational opportunities and limitations (Stewart 2016).

Participants 3 and 11 have established succession plans for their roles. In Participant 3's case, the successor is being groomed into the position over two years. Participant 11 felt that it was important for the successor to be aligned with their vision and their time, which is voluntary. The successor would also serve on the board and step in if Participant 11 was not able to perform the requisite duties. The succession plans of both Participants 3 and 11 enable stakeholder security and comfort ensuring that the NPO mission will continue with their successors.

*Yeah, that's what we have been doing with xxx for the last two years. So, we identified her as somebody to take over the day-to-day stuff from me. And we phased that in over the last two and a half years. So, she came on board as campaign manager. Last year, we made her director. I don't make any apparent decisions; she bounces everything off me anyway. She keeps me in the loop. And uhm, but that was my role, was a very important one. The other director is not so important because he's not involved in the day-to-day business. Yeah, he's not involved in any of the business. Participant 3*

*I have a very good friend who loves animals and trees, that's why I'm doing this. You know, it's like animals and forests really, I suppose. But animals and trees and she's just recently come on board as my very first volunteer who is dedicating half their time and I've known her for many years and, uhm, she's, I'm going to be making her a board member and she, if something happens to me tomorrow, she knows she's driving it. Participant 11*

While both NPOs and for-profits must recruit, retain and grow leaders, NPOs must do so with constrained budgets and limited resources (Yawsom 2019). NPO executives are concerned with acquiring resources and maintaining transparency for complex relationships with the board, donors, communities and other stakeholders while ensuring the NPO achieves its mission (Worth 2020).

NPO executive leadership succession is significant for both internal and external stakeholders, however, studies conducted in 2013 found that a substantial number of NPOs were not ready for leadership succession (Santora and Sarros 2013). Participant 4 shared their thinking on how this role should be structured going forward and admits that from a successor perspective, their NPO is lacking. Participant 4 identified that there was a significant reliance on this leadership position, particularly from the internal team. Participant 4 acknowledged that the NPO was at risk if the successor was unable to fill Participant 4's position. Participant 10 described how their plans for appointing a new director had not worked out and felt that it would be the responsibility of the recruit to find a successor for the director position and implement a succession plan.

*Yes, I'm trying very hard to put in. Moving away actually from a general manager; it doesn't work. Doesn't seem to work with our organisation through to a leadership team with different portfolios because it's such a diverse organisation and really requires career management and one person is, it's not best suited for that actually. And so, I'm trying to work it so that when I leave that I, even if I leave fairly slowly, I'm handing over more responsibility and that I could try and convince the board not to appoint a general manager. It's got better but we're still a long way from people being interdependent and not dependent on me. So, we need to have someone who's very good with detail and someone very good big picture and someone that can do both. Yeah, it doesn't always work 'cause I haven't got around to building strong leaders but I think that would be the ideal. Participant 4*

*I'd say it's starting. We thought we had one, but it was tested too soon in the programme last year. We had a new director who arrived in November and left in June. There was a guy called xxx that joined us from xxx and he was with us for six months and then went back to xxx because of family reasons. Ok, uhm, so we didn't have time really to ... we, you know, part of his appointment was to build a successor. And then we fell onto Plan B, and I took over. I ran the trust up until we could find somebody new so but now the new guy is great, and I think he's going to be there a long time mostly. His job is definitely to put in place succession plan. Participant 10*

Participants 2 and 5 both admitted that they did not have a succession plan but acknowledged that they should ideally have this in place. Participant 2 described their approach to implementing a succession plan and felt that this was also important from a transformation perspective. It was viewed as an opportunity to recruit and retain talented black individuals in the organisation. Alternatively, they would need to identify existing talent and build a career path that enabled growth into a successor role; however, they had been ineffective with such previous attempts.

*Uh, ok, so we suck at this, and we've acknowledged that and it's that's part of our, like, longer history, I think. I think we've got the pressure in terms of succession to have transformation and that's very real. There aren't people that are sitting on our executive, that are like currently running around in the conservation fields, of colour. Uhm, we've tried that in the past with two black managers, I mean to an extent, they were, sort of, tipped in the company. So, we, sort of, having now this forced succession plan and that's why we advertise to bring in an executive of high calibre that is hopefully, you know, black person and I mean African person, you know. And I don't know how it got to this point, but I don't think, I think, we're gonna go probably one of two ways. Either we're gonna succeed in bringing in an executive from outside to impart this succession plan or, based on who we had applying, it will now be to identify deliberately someone in the ranks. We actually got a path, have a career path, for you for a couple of years.*

Participant 2

*We don't and we should. We thought about it many times. Uhm, we did when we were big and burly and had that big office and I was going on maternity leave. I thought about it long and hard, and we were going to employ, and we did employ an operations manager who we were going to see if that role could become my role and it's not. It kind of did and she was great, and she still works for us part-time. So, we've got a lot of people who could do things, who can do things. So, it's not an actual succession plan. Uhm, but we could move puzzle pieces around and get the ... and the organisation would continue to run.* Participant 5

An NPO must be well prepared for a successful leadership transition for both a planned and unforeseen departure (Do Adro and Leitão 2020). NPOs are faced with elevated expectations from donors who require apparent and effective management. To ensure that they live up to this expectation, NPOs try to professionalise their leadership structures (Do Adro and Leitão 2020; Jaskyte 2015). Participant 1 is similar to Participant 4 in that they are aware of the need to appoint a successor but are constrained from a resources perspective and admit that no immediate successor has been identified. Participant 1 felt that they also needed to be professionally structured from a hierarchy perspective and explained that they first needed to recruit new independent directors as in their current structure the directors served as employees as well.

As found in the literature reviewed, Participant 1's response to the succession planning expectation was to try to professionalise their leadership structures. Participant 1's role needed to have a road map first with guidance from the board which could be followed by a succession plan for the leader position. This alluded to the collaborative effort required between the board and the

NPO leader in succession planning and is a key proactive posture as well as a strategic plan that could play a vital role in the adaptive capacity of NPOs (Vito 2018). Boards and NPO leaders should collaborate to develop and examine performance measures that effectively determine the accountability of the NPO (Stewart and Diebold 2017).

*Good question. At the moment zero. So, this is something that we've looked at, you know, because we started small and try to be, sort of, efficient and, you know, agile and we currently sit with the need to relook at our overall organisational, sort of, leadership. In terms of the way we structured and we need to look at that long-term plan of, you know, how it's structured and one of the most important things is that we need to, we wanting to bring on board some independent directors, uhm, you know, to create us as that long-term structure because you see the three of us are registered directors as the company within the company, non-remunerated and then all of us are employees, so we employ ourselves through an employment contract so, you know, we can actually, we can resign as an employee but still be a director of the company. So, and we need to look at bringing in some independent directors to create a structure above us to allow better 'cause for me that's the successional plan. We'll be part of that overall leadership structure, but we don't have to. In the future, you know, other people can be directors and then we need to be employees, you know. And so that hasn't been dealt with up to now because we've just been growing the organisation, but this is something very front and centre right now and I've been speaking to quite a few people. You know, similar organisations and, you know, looking at how we can do it and transition ourselves and we are going to do this in the next little while. We have to, I think this is our next logical step in growing the organisation to be more professionally structured at the top. So that's a critical thing that we haven't done up to now, which we need to do shortly.* Participant 1

A study by Jules (2021) found that not all NPOs appreciated the need for a leadership succession plan and relied on alternative mechanisms such as purchasing the services of an interim leader within budget constraints. Furthermore, engaging in actual planning activities for a successor is dependent on several factors, such as NPO capacity, accessibility of resources, investments and organisational culture, and these could present as barriers to planning for successors.

Participant 9 explained that they were currently limited in terms of resources and would recruit an individual into the role at some future point but did not see a need for a succession plan. Participant 8 described their approach to succession planning from a multiple-level perspective within the organisation. Participant 8 felt that while they did not have a succession plan for top management in place, they were focusing on developing their middle management to at least have the potential for a manager to step into a leadership role.

*We have considered for a number of years the possibility of a leadership succession plan, but our current leadership is committed and passionate about remaining engaged in the organisation for at least the next 5 to 10 years. Our current resources do not enable us to consider another senior executive in a mentorship*

*space but as and when the time comes, we will certainly seek out an individual that can take the founding trustees and leadership's vision forward. Participant 9*

*So, it's very much top of mind at the moment and it's as a fairly, sort of, young organisation where we coming from as this, sort of, top leadership has been doing a lot of the day-to-day operational management as well as, yeah, sort of, operational elements and fundraising and all of that obvious organisation. What we've been working on over the last couple of years is to get, sort of, stronger middle management. And so, we've been building this, sort of, layer of middle and that's been our priority to date so. And that's, sort of, succession with the new organisation and so what we've had is, sort of, quite a strong middle manager that's then left and left a big hole. And so, what we're trying to do is to say, ok, we've got several middle managers. You now have another person who naturally just steps and holds it for a while. While a junior person moves up into that space and so that's a sort of, a succession piece at mid-management. It's the interesting word from the succession at the sort of, upper management. Part of that is having more stable management 'cause if we have more stable and, sort of, experience mid-management in the succession and top management becomes easier because those people don't understand more organisational processes and can step into that space. So, trying to, sort of, get things right at the different levels and then moving on from there. Participant 8*

In summation, it was found that this theme of the succession of NPO leaders is a vital dimension of the planning aspect of an entity and is deemed an adaptive capacity that would assist NPOs with tactical planning, which aligns well with the discussion of Chapter 2. The successful handover of leadership within the NPO may avoid resource shortfalls, identity calamities and power struggles. In the case of Participant 1, they admit that this is the next step in professionalising as they are seven years old. In the case of Participant 8, they were twice the age of Participant 1 and still had not implemented a succession plan for their top management. Similarly, Case 2 which had the largest revenue and was one of the older NPO's also admitted to not having a succession plan in place for their executive team. Thus, it was found that despite the age of the NPO, succession planning was not well conducted.

The study by Jules (2021) found several barriers to succession planning within NPOs and it was found that this is evident from the above discussion. Aligning to the literature review, it is thus also found that NPOs ought to appreciate the need for succession planning as its benefits were significant and outweighed the negative impact of not planning well for leadership change.

#### **4.3.10 Theme 10 – Tactical restructuring**

Sometimes, the resources needed by one entity to safeguard survival are carried by other entities and actors. Consequently, even officially independent entities may rely on each other for access to key resources, creating strong motivations to form alliances and mergers and explore alternate forms of collaboration among institutions (Moldavanova and Goerdel 2018; Sowa 2009).

Participant 4 described learnings around scaling an organisation and conveyed the pressure that was regularly experienced in terms of bringing in specialised skills. Participant 4 would have preferred to partner with another organisation but was unsure about a merger.

*So, we've done some research around scaling. It was a xxx project and the scaling showed that you can grow from small to medium successfully but growing too big means that you ultimately implode which I think xxx would understand. They're scaling their research is showing that you should not only not scale too big, but you should also stay in your lane. So, continue to do what you're good at and when an opportunity comes to diversify, you partner, you don't diversify into that. And I have to hold this space at our NPO quite a lot 'cause people saying, oh no, we need specialists around ecological restoration. Like no, we don't. Our core business is mobilisation implementation on the ground. We need to contract in partners. We've got specialised and we do that and then in terms of education and training, that's not a core function. It's a very important part of what we do. We've got others that are very good and that we partner with them, so I'm not sure about a merger 'cause I don't know if I think that that is a good idea. I think that we need to partner. And by partner, I really do mean collaborate.* Participant 4

Participant 4's sentiments are related to the strong motivations described above to ally and secure access to key resources such as the specialists referred to. Participant 9 similarly preferred to collaborate and referred to instances where they had supported other NPOs and would only consider a merger if it could provide additional resources such as assets or funding.

*It is not likely that we would merge with another entity unless there were assets to be transferred or we felt that we could use it as a funding conduit to access funding from inter alia NLC but we have always provided admin and secretarial support to other NPOs rather than merge. We would prefer to work in collaboration and support of a cause rather than merge.* Participant 9

The merger practice of NPOs is similar to that of the corporate sector. Similarities relate to actionable steps and components to be reviewed, such as commonalities, cost savings and other benefits (Gabriel and Marian 2017). Heeley et al. (2006) added reasons for business acquisitions that include environmental liberality and dynamism and the historical background of a business. Some benefits of a merger between entities are the stimulation of innovation, enhancement of competences and diluting of the risk of new projects undertaken (Malatesta and Smith 2014).

Participant 2 supported the notion of a merger with other NPOs and alluded to environmental NPOs that were struggling as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Participant 2 provided an example of an NPO that had been unstable from a leadership and board perspective and felt that there was a strategic alignment with their NPO. Participant 2 also alluded to the critical skill development of young black environmentalists that that entity provided and felt that this should not be lost if that NPO went under. The ability to develop such skills is important to the NPO sector and is also not present in the case of Participant 2. Therefore, as found in the literature

reviewed, Participant 2 was considering the merger as an enhancement of competences along with the historical background of this NPO.

*I think about this a lot. I think there is a space for that, for merger or takeover. If you see another organisation that is likewise in terms of culture and that is doing something that it's going to be easier for you to just rather absorb them or, you know, merge with them than to develop those specialities in-house so they're the sum of the two needs to be better than the individual. I think there's lots of opportunity, especially as a result of what happened with COVID. We've seen a lot of environmental NGOs that are still really struggling. I'm thinking of like xxx and won't get their board sorted. They had two CEOs that came in and went in a few months and there might be a lot of value in us, you know, in approaching them and looking at merger or a hostile takeover of xxx. You know, just because they've got the infrastructure but they're not getting the leadership stuff right. So, it needs to be something on a similar track to what you do, I think in terms of the culture, it's a sort of, corporate. If I think of when I'm using historical xxx, they seem very old and stubborn. You know, like set in the ways of how things were done 100 years ago. Also completely untransformed, so it would have to be a relevant South African organisation. It would have to be an innovative organisation like us. And there must be benefit for both organisations. So, I think that's where we need to, like, consider a merger or something because we don't want to see them fall apart. The work they do, it's so critical for young and upcoming environmentalists and especially for young black environmentalists, you know, so they've got this amazing way in which bring those guys through a programme and then put them out into the sector. Participant 2*

NPO sector mergers arise as a tactic for development and expansion, especially when environmental uncertainty and resource shortages exist (Pietroburgo and Wernet 2010). Motivating factors for mergers in the NPO sector relate to the possibilities of stable funding and improved operational efficiencies. Other motivating factors are developing political strength, expansion of the service offering and improved service value (Malatesta and Smith 2014; Pietroburgo and Wernet 2010).

Participants 5 and 10 both felt that they would be open to considering a merger with another entity if the other NPO had more access to funding and if they were aligned with their mission and vision. Participant 5 also felt that if the burden of having to consistently fundraise could be alleviated that would be a motivation to merge with another entity. Therefore, the main motivating factors for mergers from both these participants relate to the possibilities of stable funding and improved operational efficiencies.

*If the other organisation was large and had lots of ongoing funding, which would relieve our intensive marketing, which is the part of our organisation that's stressful, I think because of all this corporate, donors and individuals. We also have a lot of individuals like fundraising for us. It creates a lot of work to communicate and make it fun and stories and campaigns and listen, thank you's and a lot of communications, blog writing and social media. If an organisation had money that could fund our*

*programmes for the next 5 to 10 years that would mean, we wouldn't have to find new corporates all the time. I say it's easy 'cause we're getting emails all the time but we're also communicating a lot to try get those emails and, yes, to be distracted. Cause then I could free up like a whole, the communications could then just communicate about our programmes and not say thank you to million people and, uhm, the fundraising lady could, we are so good at the corporate that it's like, so it's very administrative. Now it's very admin. She's gotta like to reply to the email. Which programme do you want to support? Nominee, here's a contractor. It's like very administrative so we, I would consider merging if we could have funding, ongoing funding that was already there. Our funding comes in. It's like month to month so that would be really relieving or strain, stress relieving. Participant 5*

*Oh, I think if they can do what we do better. And if they're, yeah, if they're better, they've got better access to funding than they've got. And they've got the same purpose, vision, mission. Uhm, be happy too to merge with them. Participant 10*

Participant 11, on the other hand, mentioned being open to a merger only if the other entity could achieve the bigger picture from a conservation perspective. Therefore, the motivating factor for exploring a merger would be the expansion of the service offering and improved service value. Participant 3 described how they had already explored merging with other NPOs that had not worked out. Participant 3's motivating factor for exploring a merger was similar to that of Participants 5 and 10 but also included elements of the bigger conservation requirement similar to Participant 11.

*Whether it's clear land or whatever, so it's about the biodiversity. It's about the bigger picture of restoring wildlife corridors. Now at the ground level, what I loved about our NPO is the vehicle it creates to upliftment in the local community. So, there's the bigger system environmental thing as a vehicle to drive employment. Job opportunities here and I can't align myself with any non-profit who doesn't do the same thing or who, if they're not currently, that's fine but that needs to be the understanding, um, environment first using it to uplift as the, as a cherry on the top thing. So, yeah, I would. It depends on who but I'm open to that. Participant 11*

*It's funny we've thought about that, but we would only merge with somebody who wouldn't suppress our NPO and just use our NPO for what they can get out of it. So, if we would merge with an organisation where our integrity was intact and only with an organisation that was completely on the same mission as us, all the same. Yeah, we've often thought of maybe joining with a bigger organisation. And, you know, to come in under them but the ones that we've explored so far, I think our NPO would just disappear. So, yeah, it's a difficult one. I think that when the government finally does put out their white paper and make commitment and start the process that may be a time when we can merge because then you know the bigger picture will still happen. I just don't know but we have definitely considered it, yeah. And it might be a funding issue as well because you know donors don't have unlimited funds forever and ever. And, you know, if your donors fall away and your funding falls away, then you know what you do. Participant 3*

According to Malatesta and Smith (2014), the foremost reason to consider a merger between NPOs is capacity development and improved delivery of the mission. There are several reasons for contemplating a merger with another entity according to the RDT: first, by assimilating an important opponent to diminish competition; second, by managing interdependency with supplier resources or product buyers by assimilating them; and finally, to diversify productions subsequently diminishing reliance on businesses with which it interacts (Haleblian et al. 2009; Hillman et al. 2009). However, of the reasons cited in the literature reviewed, the elimination of competition is not explicitly expressed and it would seem that there were no records of NPOs merging for the sole purpose of eliminating other NPOs.

Participant 8 referred to the many small NGOs that exist and compared the situation to the corporate sector where smaller entities are often taken over. Participant 8 expressed frustrations that these small NPOs were not able to address the big picture of the environmental NPO sector efficiently due to the need to work together and felt that this aspect should be better studied. Although Participant 8 referred to other smaller NPOs being taken over, as was found in the literature, there was no mention of considering a merger to eliminate competition.

*So, yeah, it would be very interesting to have that discussion. Uhm, it's one of my bugbears with the NGO sector, is that you see a lot of small bitty NGOs inefficient and if it was normal business world and they had a market they would just buy them out or merge with them and we can take them and move forward and the NGO sector doesn't work like that and I'm still trying to, sort of, fully understand why I have. I've had, sort of, most of the reasons why but it would be interesting to look at it in more detail. And but I think that's a space which really for a future of NGOs I think needs to be looked at. An ability to merge, an ability to, sort of, work together and ultimately streamline things and rather than, sort of, inefficient small gaps being addressed. Participant 8*

Mergers and acquisitions in the NPO sector would also require consistent scanning of the external environment to anticipate changes and adaption to the funding landscape. This was evident with most of the participants who remained open to the idea of merging with another entity and their motivating factors all aligned with the findings of the literature review. Some of the motivating factors for mergers in the NPO sector, as discussed above and in the comment of Participant 9, relate to the expansion of the service offering and improved service value which aligned with the RDT.

*It is not likely that we would merge with another entity unless there were assets to be transferred or we felt that we could use it as a funding conduit to access funding from inter alia NLC but we have always provided admin and secretarial support to other NPOs rather than merge. We would prefer to work in collaboration and support of a cause rather than merge. Participant 9*

Of the reasons cited in the literature reviewed, elimination of competition is not explicitly expressed and it would seem that there were no records or examples in the cases of NPOs studied for exploring a merger for the sole purpose of eliminating other NPOs. Tactical restructuring is one of the approaches that NPOs can consider to achieve continuity, however, this is often ignored until no further possibilities exist (Krige et al. 2019; MacIndoe and Sullivan 2014).

Participant 1 was uncertain about merging and felt that this would not be something that they would consider at this point in their growth cycle. Participant 1 briefly mentioned the possibility of shared philosophies and policies that might be a factor, however, Participant 1 divulged an uncertainty concerning answering the question. Participant 6 did not believe that a merger with another NPO would be possible and felt that the NPO would simply be disbanded and the individuals that made up the NPO would return to working for themselves. Therefore, tactical restructuring was not an adaptive capacity that they would consider to counter existential concerns.

*And you know, again, it's that's a timing thing, because we knew we, we wouldn't consider at that at the moment. Yeah, but I think but if you, if I had to kind of, you know, look in the crystal ball and look into the future, I mean, that's an interesting one, I mean, it's not something that we've even given any thought because we're still trying to build our own entity. But probably only if you've got, yeah, that's an interesting one. I'm no, I'm just trying to think of you know the why, why we would on what conditions and, and that's my gut response was I will with this common, you know, work or common policies and philosophy, but even at that point, I'm not sure if we would come, yeah. I don't know, I might answer that because I'm not actually sure. Participant 1*

*So, I don't believe that merging with another entity would enhance our cause or the work that we're doing. I believe that we'll just go back to the way we started which is you just continue to make you know, connect with nature, make incredible media and it's not that it doesn't matter whether there's our organisation. I mean, I think it's a wonderful vehicle and it really supports the different projects that come in. But I think all of us come from quite an independent freelance background that it would be, sort of, yeah, I can't see it. I mean not to say that I would welcome you know, if there was, if there was a real desire for it, I would be open to listening to it, but it doesn't make sense to me. I mean I can't imagine that would be what we wanted. Participant 6*

Duchek (2020, p. 220) defines organisational resilience “as an organisation’s ability to anticipate potential threats, to cope effectively with adverse events, and to adapt to changing conditions”. Mergers and acquisitions in the NPO sector would also require consistent scanning of the external environment to anticipate changes and adapt to the funding landscape in line with RDT and organisational resilience. It was found that this was evident with most of the participants who

remained open to the idea of merging with another entity and their motivating factors all aligned with the findings in the literature review.

Conversely, it was further determined that there was some resistance to the idea from Participants 1 and 6 and this indicates that not all NPO leaders are open to the possibilities that a merger might bring about from an existential perspective. However, both these participants indicated that they had few financial resources on hand. This theme relates to the mergers and acquisitions adaptive capacity discussed in Chapter 2 and the reflections of the participants were more of a strategic planning nature, hence, the theme entitled tactical restructuring was viewed as more appropriate.

#### **4.3.11 Theme 11 – Lack of resources**

The lack of resources was found to be mentioned several times by participants when discussing the challenges that they currently face with the COVID-19 pandemic. Resource constraints were generally mentioned, and some resource constraints were specified particularly as an impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This relates closely to the previous theme of NPO overheads and donor education as well.

Participant 4 mentioned that the foremost challenge was a general lack of resources: *“I think one of the biggest problems that non-profits have is that we have such limited resources and we’re trying to develop our own thing and work in our own boxes.”* Participant 4 further mentioned the lack of human resources that have the skills required for proposal writing. Participant 2 mentioned a similar constraint, and this may reflect the education and skills shortage experienced in South Africa as alluded to by Participant 4.

*So, I think one of the biggest things that we can’t find is good writing skills. It may seem like a small thing but it’s massive because if you can’t write about what you do, you can’t sell your product and you wonder how people what you’re doing so there’s no way to clearly communicate the impact that you have or not having. You can’t write proposals well, so I can honestly say I’m the only person in the company that can really write and it’s a big problem. And we just can’t find people that can be, they can have a master’s degree. Doesn’t mean they can write. So, it’s an education issue in this country where people under 40 can’t write and it’s a very serious thing. I’m not, we realise that, actually, it’s the fundamental training element that we have to focus on. Adapt with every single person, whether they’re project administrator or leader. They have to be able to write basically and communicate. Participant 4*

*For me, report writing is not just a big issue. I think proposal writing is a real problem, too so I think we’ve got great people in our organisation that’s probably younger than 40. You know, it might not be it might be unique, so it’s not everybody can do it, so definitely there could be a bit of training and resources thrown into that. You know, most organisations don’t have someone that can write good proposals that either way, they can’t. It’s a real skill to take difficult issues and put it into simple ways and provide your solution*

*simply. It's like in a hidden which is a problem that we had with our previous leader. You know, it's like it can't, all information can't sit with one person and the skills are out, uhm, I think that's a skill that we can definitely invest in as an organisation. Participant 2*

Participants 1 and 6 both mentioned that they were challenged by insufficient financial security in that they may either run out of funds soon or that they only had three months' worth of salaries available before they needed to close. Participant 6 mentioned that despite a good brand, they are unable to cover their overhead costs and have short-term existential concerns. Participant 1 further explained the difficulties related to cash flow and the negative impact of COVID-19 affecting their growth and the risk of employing more staff.

*And we've just been very frugal in employing more people because it's a big risk. We don't have a huge amount of financial security; I mean, literally, we've got like three months of salaries. If we didn't get another income in, we've got three months and then we'll close our doors. You know so, it's fine in this environment to build up cash for long-term security, so that's the main reason why we don't want to become known as an organisation employs people quickly and then also get rid of people quickly as things get tough, so we want to be seen as an organisation that if you come to work with us is that you there for the long term. Participant 1*

*COVID, I know it's been hard for everyone. But we are going to run out of money fairly soon, so you know it's to cover one's overheads because you know we don't have the infrastructure just to keep on taking on projects. You know it's we are a non-profit, but we don't have a commercial stream to the projects that we make. You know, people seem to think that possibly there was a whole bunch of revenue that came in and we've got tremendous brand association and goodwill and so many doors that have opened. There's not like it translated into this incredibly large cheque per se. Participant 6*

Participants 4, 5 and 6 described the challenge of working with donors or funders who did not understand their project models and the need for long-term impact. Participant 4 referred to this as short-termism and, similar to Participant 5, felt that donors should be educated about the need to pay appropriate staff salaries and commit to long-term projects.

*And because the big funders and through public-private partnerships, that kind of thing only are interested in larger scale and donors not big enough to take on that larger scale. And also, we don't want to; we want to work with other people in the catchment. So, it's short-termism. Reliance on government funding. And then the having the right finding the right calibre of people who are able to actually in the kind of work we do that they can do practical work.*

*... It really does very become disruptive. I think that the key thing that keeps people at xxx is the culture, not the money because we pay very badly and something I'm trying to turn around. We are actually reliant on them and funding and we can never get out of the hole of poor salaries. Participant 4*

Funding was the most cited challenge among the bulk of the participants and Participant 4 specified their reliance on government funding to build the financial sustainability of projects which was forcing a blended finance model approach. Participant 3 mentioned government interaction in a different way than Participant 4. Participant 3's engagements with the government eventually resulted in a request from the government for scientific evidence of their work. They experienced the challenge of playing more of an advocacy role than a conservation role and, as such, they battled to raise funding from traditional conservation donors. Instead, they supported other conservation-based NPOs to conduct their research and were able to publish peer-reviewed research articles over the COVID-19 period.

*We produced a number of research papers which have been peer-reviewed and published, and that's how we've managed to get government attention. Through research, which has been a very exciting new thing for us, because we never, we were more in the activism field. One of the major issues is we're not seen as a conservation organisation. Well, the conservation funders donors want to contribute to conservation projects and the lion campaign as such is not a conservation project. So that's why we've put money into supporting those who do have the conservation projects to do the research papers. So, we work with partners on that, so I think we've had about, I think we've had about seven published so far, and that's just in the last couple of years.* Participant 3

Participant 9 mentioned the challenge of relying only on project funding while operating in a competitive landscape and needing to compete against large NPOs, where the smaller NPOs may fail to attract the resources needed to sustain themselves. The absence of endowment funds in smaller NPOs is also a major resource constraint.

*NPOs struggle to survive daily and in the current climate, securing legacy funding is nearly unheard of. Only a few entities in SA have a massive endowment fund; the rest are operating hand to mouth. They do not work together often enough but operate within selfish parameters and narrow visions. Having said this, the larger NPOs in SA tend to overshadow and absorb all funding that could enable a smaller NPO to survive and operate at a business level that smaller NPOs cannot compete with. And the language that NPOs speak is not understood by the corporate sector and there is a disconnect between the reality of implementing a project and the real costs thereof and the marketing requirements of the entity funding the intervention.* Participant 9

It was found that from a South African context perspective, some of the resource challenges experienced are a lack of skills such as the report and proposal writing skills mentioned by Participants 2 and 4. NPO leaders often need to work with limited resources and, according to McManus et al. (2007), resources are vital to the resilience of organisations; resources provide a strategic advantage to organisations when they are used to their full potential. Karman (2020) and Burnard and Bhamra (2011) also note the significance of a resource-based management style in

the identification of risks where resources are arranged to respond effectively during a crisis but can also provide the best possible return to normalcy after a crisis.

Furthermore, it was found that surviving a turbulent event such as COVID-19 in South Africa has been difficult for at least two of the cases studied mentioning the limited financial resources available and short-term survivability concerns. As such it was found that planning for such calamities is not well undertaken by such NPOs and constrains their ability to expand or deliver on their projects.

#### **4.3.12 Theme 12 – Non-profit organisation overheads and donor education**

This theme was found when several participants mentioned their challenges with covering the costs of overheads. These could be challenges related to the funding of office space, travel or other daily running expenses incurred by the organisation. In addition, funding is required for other important scenarios like paying recruiting fees or attracting and retaining talent, however, these NPOs are concerned over the donors' lack of understanding of the mechanisms to run an entity and ensure continuity in the long term.

Participant 10 felt that a vital component that should be improved is the donor funding of NPO overheads and operational capacities. This aligns with the finding in the literature reviewed where educating donors on the need for administrative funding is also recommended to change the mindset of traditional philanthropists and to ensure that NPOs remain resilient during turbulent times (Scarce and Wang 2020). Furthermore, donors and assessors may not routinely value NPO profits, suggesting that NPOs are incentivised to boost programme expenditure or outputs annually, thereby decreasing possible gains to attract donor funding (Calabrese 2012).

Participant 10 presented a good argument in favour of donor funding of additional resources required to deliver on their projects. Attracting and retaining talented staff is also a key requirement that donors should consider in the long term from a return-on-investment perspective, as mentioned by Participant 6, where salaries contribute to large overheads.

*And then secondly, I think there's, a, and this goes to the heart of the issue. Funders need to fund operational capabilities of non-profits. Uhm, not just their projects and delivery. Uhm, successful non-profits need to attract good people and they need to be able to pay them. And when funders tell me that they don't fund overheads, then I always say to them, why is it that you want to undermine your investment? No, what's the point? It's like giving somebody a car without a driver. It's pointless; you're putting your entire investment at risk. Yeah, because that entity that you're asking to deliver on something, if you don't give money to the resources that they require, you're immediately putting your investment at risk. And I think it's something that's got to change. Participant 10*

*So, the overheads are big when it comes to salaries because that's the real asset base in the organisation, the team is the talent.* Participant 6

To promote transparency within the sector, the NPO sector will need to convince donors of the need to fund the organisations and move away from funding on a project-specific basis. Related to donor behaviour is the concept of donor fatigue as a challenge to NPO resilience which was mentioned by Participant 11. As found in the literature reviewed, NPO fundraisers anticipate potential donor fatigue as the number and intensity of shocks increase in a turbulent environment (Searce and Wang 2020).

*The one thing that I think that goes against the resilience, unfortunately, would be donor fatigue because every second person is always, you know, what I'm saying so donor funding would be the one area, you know, that I'd, I would imagine. You know, unless you're a big knob from a big company and, you know, another big guy from another big company, you know that donor fatigue never really gonna happen, But I mean at various levels that is something that I think that undermines resilience.* Participant 11

The technical difficulty of collaboration is explained by Participant 5 where the resources required to collaborate often begin with the overhead cost recoveries that are expected from both entities. Covering overheads becomes an essential point of departure for collaborative exercises and impacts the cost of the overall project to donors who are willing to consider such costs, and each entity will need to ensure that the collaboration is worthwhile in terms of the indirect costs required. Participant 9 mentioned the disconnect between the donors and their understanding of how projects were implemented. Participant 9 further explained the stakeholder engagements required on the ground and the additional expenditures incurred such as time and travel costs.

*Ok, cool, do you, are you happy with all your budget parts? We're going to pitch this. Are we happy with all of ours, do you have enough for your overheads and then do we have enough for our overhead? So, then the overheads get doubled because there's two organisations and you can't get 5% each. You both want 10% but I think that's the part that's challenging. But you can get around it if you're just very transparent.* Participant 5

*I think that that perhaps one of the challenges that we as an institution face as well and I think I might have mentioned this somewhere is a lack of understanding of the corporate sector of the dire need and all the realities of implementing a project on the ground. There's a complete disconnect between running an organisation. A corporate that wants to fund only water tanks. So, we'll only pay for the water tanks but we're gonna have no admin oversight. And also, there's a complete, uhm, yeah, disconnect. And you want to implement this project in Richards Bay or whatever. It's 4 hours from Durban. You can't just move in there and implement. So, this is why I don't bother with the corporates. Because I've got to meet with the community 12 times before we've decided that, uh, water tanks a good idea in the first place. Yes, we make all these assumptions but the reality of it so physically implementing so those costs, the direct costs of*

*implementing projects are completely and actually misunderstood by the corporate sector. They want bang for buck. They want it now and they want huge kudos. They want it done yesterday and all they're doing is they parachuting in capex. And wondering why it collapses a year later. Participant 9*

It was found that several participants raised valid concerns over their donor's lack of interest in funding the indirect costs of projects or programmes. This could stem from the lack of understanding of how an NPO operates and that its needs are similar to the corporate world from an overhead perspective. Educating the donor is a valid means of dispelling the disconnect between the donors and the NPOs they support, as found by Scarce and Wang (2020). It was found that this route would unlock vital funding of overheads recurrently mentioned and resources that are currently lacking and support NPOs to alleviate existential concerns in the long term while building on the relations with and management of its key stakeholders.

#### **4.3.13 Theme 13 – Clarity of mission and vision**

This theme concerning the resilience of the entities was mentioned a few times by several participants. Compliance and stringent reporting prerequisites for government funding can cause mission drift. Furthermore, boards and employees may be expected to professionalise in a manner that is not representative of communities and local needs (Witesman and Heiss 2017).

In Participant 9's response, it was mentioned that consistent leadership had driven the vision that enabled their NPO to adapt. Participant 3 felt that their resilience was related to their clear mission, enabling them to be focused on their cause. Participant 3 accredited a portion of their resilience to teamwork and supporting each other during difficult instances. Participant 10 referred to the importance of prioritising the interests of the NPO over personal needs.

*We have had consistent leadership, who has driven a vision that enabled us to adapt, as well as a stable and trusting Board who provided oversight and support without unnecessary interference, as well as a flexible approach to supporting causes and funding of projects. Senior leadership that is prepared to work on a voluntary basis in times of funding shortfall has allowed continuity of the organisation. A massive injection of funds into our organisation in 2009/2010 enabled us to adapt and survive for the past 10 years but also increased our vulnerability as we entered into a phase of overhead that we were unaccustomed to. We have tried to keep the entity focused on having fun, doing good and keeping afloat. We love what we do and are good at it. Participant 9*

*Teamwork I think, teamwork and support. When the chips are down, we know that we've all got each other's back. Contributing to organisations resilience, it's hard to tell, I don't know. I definitely didn't think it would last this long. Yeah, I mean I always knew that you know the film had to have a campaign. That was what the main reason when I was approached that I said we would do it as long as we set up a campaign. And I honestly don't know. I suppose you know we've got a, have a mission. We have an insight. We have a*

*goal for the organisation and that may be because we've got a main focus. Uh, which a lot of organisations don't have because they work with so many different projects, so they don't have one. If they close the captive lion breeding industry down, then that's mission accomplished. So maybe that's been the major contributing 'actor.* Participant 3

*And my basic motto is to always be mindful of your mandate. Your mandate as a chair, particularly or as a CEO of an organisation, is your first priority is to protect the interests of the organisation. And so that's a fundamental value that I think helps me steer through quite a lot of difficult decisions. And it's although, it's more of a leadership principle. Uhm, it's embedded in a value which speaks to trying to go beyond individual interests including your own.* Participant 10

Participant 6 reflected on the deviation from their mission and vision which was caused by the success of a movie they launched. The deviation occurred rapidly, and Participant 6 admitted to being enticed by the prospect of new opportunities and growth, however, in this case, Participant 6 credited a wise chair with steering the NPO back towards their mission and averting the risk of complete deviation.

*I think by literally practising what we preach, uhm, staying very, very true to our mission, vision and purpose, which we revisit uhm, we actually need to revisit it again. But we, we visited quite frequently. And as an organisation, that's, sort of, catapulted out of obscurity in quite a short space of time just because of xxx movie. There was a massive need for, sort of, for growth and to really understand what it is that we do because you can get almost enticed by opportunity but actually realise that it's not your story. It's not your journey and that's taken a little while to actually kind of realise to be able to manage it or to manage other people expectations. And we're still learning; actually, it's quite a massive growth point for us but we have, we thankfully have the benefit of a very experienced chair. That was an important move for our organisation that was kind of this collective and we, sort of, went around from project to project but none of us really had the experience to really know where we were going so we've got that incredible benefit of having somebody who's got a non-profit background that really understands the need for the different kinds of structures and the disciplines and, sort of, instilling some of the, sort of, ground rules for us, which is actually, I think, kept us, kept us together because you almost need the rules in order to have the freedom. You kind of know where you stand and what those parameters are and then you can just go out there.* Participant 6

This theme was closely related to the leadership and culture theme. It was found that NPOs may be tempted to deviate for the sake of funding to alleviate existential concerns. As mentioned by Participant 10, this can be seen as an organisational or individual value and can assist NPOs to steer clear of turbulent times. It was found that NPOs' resilience can be accredited to their clear mission, enabling them to be focused on their cause and limit potential deviations.

#### **4.3.14 Theme 14 – Differentiation: alignment with the sustainable development goals and reporting**

The theme of alignment with the SDGs could provide an NPO with differentiation. NPOs can be found to work across most, if not, all of the 17 United Nations' SDGs (Fowler 2016). This theme is related to the collaboration and stakeholder engagement themes. It is also strongly related to the project management, monitoring and evaluation theme.

Participant 1 reflected on the role that the government plays in the NPO sector and felt that NPOs should improve their relations with the government; Participant 1 mentioned that it may be traumatising but necessary for achieving their goals. As found in the literature reviewed, NPOs and the government share several social aims which enable frequent partnering between the NPO sector and the government (Guo 2007; Seo 2016; Witesman and Heiss 2017). Furthermore, SDG implementation challenges occur when NPOs do not work with the government resulting in inadequate access to skills and governing authority that the NPO and government cluster would have brought to such partnerships (Haywood et al. 2019). The limited interaction between NPOs and the government can be seen as a further threat to successful SDG implementation.

*So, in the conservation sector, we've got so many of these things that we can report against, which I think are really important because so many, so much of the conservation sector funding flows from the ability to achieve specific goals. So, you know, so we just, everybody is just sitting on the edge of their seats waiting for, you know, the next COP meeting for the world to agree on the sticky 30 by 30 target and once that happens, there's going to be a huge amount of money that's going to flow because people are now needing to achieve those targets. So, I 100% agree, you know. If all, sort of, organisations are doing reporting in a similar manner, then suddenly the picture looks very different and, you know, that could be quite useful for a better engagement and integration with like DFE, you know, if they had to coordinate that and request organisations to put annual reports together on their contributions to the SDGs. Then, you know, they could combine that into a fantastic report on the country's deliverable against those, I mean, it would be incredible. It really would. Participant 1*

Interestingly, the majority of references to SDGs were found in the project management, monitoring and evaluation adaptive capacity. Participant 2 felt that it was necessary to align to SDGs and referenced the reports required from international donors that include sections on the SDGs and felt that this could be achieved by thinking of the advanced application of SDGs. Participant 2 mentioned the importance of the SDGs to governments and corporates and felt that this should be reported on and required a collaborative effort. Participant 1 felt that there were several aspects of the environmental sector's work that they could report against the SDGs and that their funding flowed from their ability to achieve those goals.

*Yeah, I think we have to. Hey, if you look at all the reports now for international funding, there's always like two sections, like what SDGs do you address? How? And by actually practically thinking about that before and not waiting for a donor to ask us that, or a potential donor. To ask that probably would be very good. It just makes it, it's so simple. You know, it's like these simple 15 points and just figure out how you fit in there; it makes it simple for people. Yeah, I think if they see that just makes sense, you know, and so many corporate organisations have signed up to that. Governments have signed up to that so I think it is definitely something we should put up right up front. Sure, they're almost there. So, you to come, sort of, report on what we've achieved. A lot of it requires collaboration. Participant 2*

Participant 10 felt that although they did a lot of work towards achieving the SDGs, they did not report on it effectively. Participant 10 provided an example of the type of work related to species preservation and discussed the work they did towards SDG 14 for another NPO. Participant 10 determined that aligning with the SDGs and reporting more of the work they do on the ground could assist in unlocking funding.

*Uh, but because we're, you know, we do in theory put it that way and we do pay lip service to these entities or these concepts because they're, you know, they play out on a global level and we, when I say we pay lip service, we deeply believe in them but there's not too much that we can really say that we're doing. That you can, sort of, difficult to explain. You know a lot of the work that we do is so practical. It's so on the ground; it's so real like our plover programme that xxx runs, you know. Now she's increased the breeding percentages on our beach of the white-fronted plovers by 36% in the last three years. And that's because we put in place a whole dog control programme and they've work with every single nest. So, you know, we in that way you could say, well, we deliver on just about all of them. Uhm, we don't deliver on SDG 14 because that's under, undersea. But at another NPO I chair, it's going to be a big focus for us. In fact, I'm just working now with a new planning group that's been set up. Well, this conference in Lisbon have asked me to help them craft that history on the SDG 14 around their work, so I think that by aligning to the SDGs and reporting more of the work we do on the ground, under those sorts of headings, could help us unlock funding.*

*... Of our country, it is more important now than it's ever been because it fills a gap where governments have failed. It often fills a gap where corporates don't want to go or don't have the capacity and the non-profits in many of our communities actually act as the glue; they're actually holding together these communities. And I would say that they're, their role almost needs to be elevated to, uh, there needs to be some, sort of, a national coordination, coordinating council of non-profits or something without killing them through bureaucracy and legislation Uhm, but if you look at the non-profit sector can have a massive catalytic impact for good and but the main reason why these provides not reaching its full potential is predominantly, I think, because, uhm, because there's all this noise in the system and that really quite noble people don't always know who's good and who's bad and who's, you know, whatever. Participant 10*

Participant 8 felt that clearly defined SDG reporting metrics were valuable and would provide a competitive edge for the NPO. Participant 9 felt that the SDGs would assist in bridging the gap

between the corporates and the NPO sector, however, Participant 9 felt strongly that the ecosystem is complex and interconnected and, therefore, did not support placing it into boxes. Although they were not currently reporting or aligning their work to the SDGs, Participant 9 conceded the value in this to also unlock funding.

*So, yeah, I think a lot of donors are asking for that. And I think the level of the donors know what they're actually asking for. So, I do think if we can be, sort of, I think that competitive edge would be to come in and say, well, we already have all of this in place, this is what we do and here's how we report against it and I think that also, you know, in terms of engaging with corporates with the local or international for those corporates it's very important, those, sort of, metrics to report against CSR to report against SDG. Those are, that's where metrics are going to be more valuable and I think that that's, sort of, very clearly defined. Participant 8*

*And definitely, there is a space to align what we're doing with those strategies and to be deliberate about highlighting that on the website and in our report. We've never done it before; we, you won't even notice SDGs on our websites. You know? Uh, but if I want but that's the Babel stone, I guess for the environmentalists to be able to speak to the corporates. That's the kind of Rosetta Stone. Of how we say well, listen the food gardens, the water erosion controls, the alien weed removal. That's how that speaks to that and, therefore, you can tie your corporate objectives to that so. I understand that I have to speak in log frame and so we'll get there. Uhm, you know, if I want to start attracting, which I do, uhm, hundreds of thousands of Euros per annum into these watersheds and not just to look at watershed management but to establish this network of resilient open-pollinated heirloom seeds. Communities and with proper grazing plans and end, you know, then I'm gonna have to tie it all in and a put 22 years into a one-page block. So, you know, that's why the fireside chats are more important than trying to jam everything into a box. The ecosystem is not simple; it is all interconnected. It is all; it speaks to itself. It speaks to each other. But the Europeans want it in a box, so we'll give it to them in a bloody box. But by the same token, we will also start defining this narrative around the conservation economy. That's our major focus for the next 30 years. Participant 9*

Lee et al. (2013) identified five indicators for the planning element of the organisational resilience model: “planning strategies, participation in exercises, proactive posture, external resources, and recovery priorities” (Lee et al. 2013, p. 34). The NPO’s contribution to the SDGs could become a key aspect of the planning element as the NPO sector has become progressively reliant on projects to accomplish its tactical goals and conventional project management practices could indicate to stakeholders that an NPO is working towards improving performance (Anderson and Lannon 2018).

To some extent in response to donor funding and commissioning obligations, the NPO sector is under growing compulsion to account for its accomplishments (Harlock and Metcalf 2016; Moxham 2014). However, NPOs themselves also seek to ascertain the best methods for

administering their own project activities (Gugerty 2009). Stakeholders pressure NPOs to become transparent and responsible, reporting on how they add value and influence society; the result is the need for several approaches, means and measurement tools (Neesham et al. 2017; Nielsen, Lueg and Van Liempd 2021).

In the framework of the SDGs, NPOs in South Africa function in diverse ways and have connections to and work in partnership with local and international agencies, regimes and businesses (Haywood et al. 2019). It was found that NPO leaders felt that the work of the NPO sector was critical. NPOs fill the gap where governments have failed and hold corporates responsible while serving their communities with limited resources. The sentiment of these leaders was that the good work of NPOs is often lost and the role of the NPO sector needed to be enhanced with heightened awareness.

In summation, the majority of funding proposals require an explanation of the monitoring and assessment of the intended project, including the data collection methods, frequency, analysis and interpretation of the funding impact on donors and other stakeholders (Ssekamatte 2018). It was found that several participants felt that it was necessary to align their work and, consequently, their monitoring and assessment reports to the SDGs. Importantly, when NPOs begin to talk about and report on their work from an SDG perspective, it will turn the spotlight on the contribution of NPOs to the SDGs. Therefore, this could be a means of promoting the awareness of the NPOs that the NPO leaders felt was lacking in the NPO sector. It was also found that there was general agreement that this approach could assist with unlocking funding from key stakeholders such as governments and corporates. However, none of the participants was currently implementing this approach but most felt that it was something that they needed to do. Therefore, this is deemed a new adaptive capacity, and the SDG aspect could also be applied to the financial practices theme.

#### **4.3.15 Theme 15 – Recognition and awareness of non-profit organisation sector role and contribution**

This theme came about from a few participants reflecting on the efforts of the NPO sector, and the lack of awareness that contributes to reduced access to resources. Participant 5 felt that good work occurs within the NPO sector, however, it does not receive enough exposure and, therefore, general awareness is lacking. Participant 10 reflected on the role of the NPO sector in South Africa and felt strongly about its value and how this needs to be elevated.

*But I think overall there are so many wonderful NGOs in South Africa and I only know about them because of what the work I do and so friends who want to support the sender or that NGO or this type of thing, I don't think they see enough of what's going on and all the amazing work that's happening and so they feel. It's like that book Blessed Unrest. There's this massive movement of good happening in South Africa and*

*the world but it's hard to know about it. Yeah, 'cause like media and marketing are like flooded by algorithms and paid stuff. Participant 5*

*Of our country, it is more important now than it's ever been because it fills a gap. Where governments have failed. It often fills a gap where corporates don't want to go or don't have the capacity and the non-profits in many of our communities actually act as the glue, they're actually holding together these communities. And I would say that they're, their role almost needs to be elevated to, uh, there needs to be some, sort of, a national coordination, coordinating council of non-profits or something without killing them through bureaucracy and legislation Uhm, but if you look at the non-profit sector can have a massive catalytic impact for good and, but the main reason why these provides not reaching its full potential is predominantly, I think, because, uhm, because there's all this noise in the system and that really quite noble people don't always know who's good and who's bad and who's, you know, whatever. Participant 10*

Participant 1 reflected on the role that the government plays in the NPO sector and felt that NPOs should improve their relations with the government; Participant 1 mentioned that it may be traumatising but necessary for achieving their goals. As found in the literature reviewed, NPOs and the government share several social aims which enable frequent partnering between the NPO sector and the government (Guo 2007; Seo 2016; Witesman and Heiss 2017). Participant 8 felt that NPOs could adopt a cross-sectoral approach to achieving their goals in cognisance of the significant national challenges that South Africa faces.

*So, this is quite an interesting one and for me. I think one of the biggest things, uhm, which, you know, I don't think too many people are great fan of but I, you know, in our work in all of the NPOs work, we work so much with government. There's quite a poor working relationship just because of the entities are so different between government and NPO and what I try, and I try and encourage the whole time and I this is by no means easy and it's very traumatic for everybody. But I just fundamentally believe that the NPO sector needs to push stronger to become better allies and partners with government. And when I said actually formal, you know, partners because like, so we go around and we've got formal MOUs with Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency with Cape Nature, with SANParks, you know. So, we want to formalise our relationships because we cannot do our work without government. We can, you know, there's certain parts of the conservation, sort of, NPO work that can be done without government. But the work that we do relies on, you know, legislative processes that government enables and if we don't have a good working relationship with government. Participant 1*

The theme of recognition and awareness of the non-profit organisation sector's role and contribution may be connected to the alignment with the SDGs theme. It was found that to promote the work that the environmental NPO sector undertakes more effort needs to be placed on its central role from a stakeholder's perspective. It was also found that the elevation and importance of the NPO sector, in general, was imperative to the above-listed participants. Therefore, for policymakers in South Africa at both national and local levels, this observation

may be considered critical when engaging with the sector. Raising awareness of the work of the sector may also benefit its key stakeholders such as poor rural communities and the natural environment. It was found that in general, the raising of awareness was a need that could enhance an NPO's ability to secure much-needed resources and, thereby, enhance its organisational resilience.

#### **4.3.16 Theme 16 – Research stance and academic alignment**

This theme was identified during the analysis of the participant responses. It was observed that there were several references to students as well as some academic institutions that assisted NPOs.

Participant 8 described their approach to monitoring and assessment. Participant 8 mentioned a cohort of students who were working on postgraduate qualifications. Participant 8 explained that they had built relationships with local universities to have research interests available for students who approach them. The research undertaken by the students then assisted them in underwriting some of their organisational goals in terms of measuring impact and reporting on the monitoring and assessment of their project work. There was a general approach to developing and sharing scientific knowledge with the conservation fraternity.

*So, I think the big thing from us, you know, we collect a lot of data. We have a lot of data and a lot of stats. It's about now having the other end of the organisation that can take those stats and or put it into something that can be, they communicate and so there's two sort of things that we're looking at, currently is firstly to have a sort of, a cohort of students. So, we have a number of students studying master's or PhDs or whatever, every year that approach us and we, sort of, always don't have the capacity to, sort of, really engage properly with them, so we often just give them stats in their data and then they run off and do something. So, part of what we're doing is to actually have to build with our, sort of, partners and reserve partners is to build on this stuff. From a management perspective, crucial conservation questions that we want answered so a little bit more preparation there that when student does approach us, we can say, ok, well, this is what, these are the questions we need on, so this is the research we need then, are you interested? And so, part of that is building relationships with local universities and also part of that is building capacity within our team to have time to be able to engage with those students, engage with the universities, engage with the reserve managers or, sort of, conservation managers to really make sure we're answering the right questions. So, that's the sort of, one aspect. The other aspect is being purely a marketing and comms piece within the organisation and how do we take what we're doing and show that background and communicate that to or to the conservation fraternity. Yeah, so the one is more, sort of, science-based and that could be more the actual impact of the conservation and, sort of, objectives and work being done. The other one is more public facing to show who we are as an organisation and what we achieve.*

Participant 8

Participant 10 referred to their link with local and international universities in Europe and Canada. Participant 10 explained that they had built a structured programme for students who come from these universities and complete their postgraduate studies as volunteers at their NPO. Participant 10 can attract funding for research-focused projects involving the hosting of these students. They reinforce their educational programmes with the research findings and also share their research with local environmental stakeholders, similar to the programme of Participant 8. Participant 4 explained how their NPO was working on developing a resource hub that would assist NPOs with monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning. They are working with a local university to develop the toolkit that is intended to assist the general NPO sector.

*And we also get international volunteers but they're more PhD students or master students that are doing their final year practical and they come through us through universities that we have a, uh, a link to in Europe and Canada and also locally. And those volunteers come, uh, have a fairly structured programme; they have their field work. They've got days where they write up their stuff. They've got also fun days where they can go out to the various other NGOs in the area and go and see what they're doing. Uhm, so we built quite a structured programme for them, and I must say they have an incredibly interesting time and the feedback that we get that's all over our website as well. It's just extraordinary. We very seldom, if we had real duds, we've had one or two but mostly they've just been amazing. And then we get project funding for the research projects that we do and the projects that we do incorporate nature, sort of, conservation education, which is a major cornerstone of the work that we do. And there we do get funding from some of the, um, bigger funding agencies to do that. At work and then we also get and then the research work that we do the various ecosystems. A lot of that is then used to reinforce our educational programmes but also, we then share a lot of that research with SANParks and with Cape Nature and with other conservation bodies. Participant 10*

*It's all about stability of none of the catchment and impact in the catchment through a strategic, collaborative way of working and one of those things that this resource hub that we are trying to set up is around neural, so monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning and being a hub that creates resources and tools and system for different non-profits to be able to use so that we don't have to keep trying to develop them in-house. But instead, we can take from the toolbox and apply them, adapt them to our own environment. So, I'm hoping that that would really help. We are doing at the moment where we are involved with research commissioners involved in Rhodes University and we're trying to develop these tools and resources around one of the things around monitoring action so that we can have a better system for everybody to use. OK. Participant 4*

In each of the cases, these NPOs have developed relationships with local universities to conduct scientific research. This research is often conducted by postgraduate students and their research focus underwrites the interests of the NPO in collaboration with the universities. The knowledge gathered from the research is shared with NPO stakeholders. In Participant 10's case, they can

attract donor funding specifically for a structured research programme where students are hosted by international and local universities.

This theme was identified from the data analysed. It was observed that the largest NPO that participated in the study did not mention any involvement with universities. On a follow-up engagement with this participant, it was confirmed that they also regularly engage with several universities to develop solutions to environmental problems and were a key stakeholder underwriting the capacity of employees while providing a space to attract volunteers.

In the resilience management framework developed by McManus et al. (2008), constructing situation alertness comprises the present and predictable future operational environment, the resources that the institute has access to and the suppositions and restrictions of internal and external stakeholders. It was found that several cases utilised an affiliation with local universities and other academic institutions to provide legitimacy for their project work to key stakeholders such as donors and local communities in which they work. Furthermore, it was found that the academic institutions often provided a pool of interested volunteers. Therefore, gearing the NPO towards a research stance could provide the NPO with funding opportunities while underwriting the NPO's research interests. It can therefore be inferred that an alignment with academic institutions may be an adaptive capacity underwriting legitimacy for the NPO and promoting organisational resilience.

#### **4.3.17 Theme 17 – Transformation agenda**

This theme addresses the promotion of diversity and transformation within the case studies. Participant 4 alluded to the legacy set-up of their board, describing the efforts to transform the board by including two black women who had grown up in the area but had relocated to other areas. These women, therefore, are representative of the communities that this NPO serves and would be cognisant of their local needs.

*Yes so. I did bring in two board members when I first joined and two women, sort of, my age and black, powerful woman, yeah. And because we need to shift the dynamic of the board being a very old white male board. And unfortunately, because they are not located here, it's been hard for them to really get because there isn't a relationship with the board and the board, their existing, the other members all know each other, and they've known each other for 20 years. It's very difficult to really have influence in the board. They literally were a bunch of water enthusiasts who got together and started the organisation and they're still there 12 years later. Both or two women that have grown up in this catchment. But then ended up working elsewhere and in the broader water sector but really have had very little ability to influence. Although one of them was really provocative, just. Yeah, it's disappointing 'cause they really have not, had been able to influence as I wanted them to. Participant 4*

A positive correlation between the number of women and men serving on a board should exist (Gazzola et al. 2020; Ward and Forker 2017). Following this finding from the literature reviewed, only Participant 4 reflected on the gender representation of the board members. The challenges experienced in achieving a shift in gender representation towards a more diverse board in terms of both gender and race are evident and are related to the diversity and transformation dynamics of South Africa's apartheid legacy backdrop. Participant 8 mentioned the importance of diversity from an innovation perspective and was also one of the few participants who valued this trait to stimulate new ideas and creativity.

*That often leads to the, sort of, innovative angles or elements from it so a lot of time I think we all are all, sort of, we have our own solutions, sort of, predefined in our head and we, sort of, work with the net space and then you bring someone from a different department or bring someone from the outside in and they can just, sort of, why we are doing things like that what about this, sort of, as a function so I think it's probably that, sort of, diversity of thought in that space. Yes, yeah, it's actually very important concept is that diversity.* Participant 8

Participant 2 mentioned the pressure they experienced to ensure a transformation candidate was appointed and had advertised to recruit a black or African person into their executive structure from a succession planning perspective. Participant 2 also mentioned that they had been unsuccessful in previous attempts to include black managers in their succession plans. NPOs tend to consider their human resources key to novel individual and organisational capabilities being advanced. They focus on adding value to the NPO, thereby necessitating their upkeep and management (Gile et al. 2018; Oliveira et al. 2021).

Participant 2 also referred to a transformation agenda when discussing the exploration of merging with another NPO that specialised in building the capacity of younger black environmentalists. In Participant 2's case, they had the largest number of staff at 237 and the highest funds raised in comparison to the other cases. With Case 4, they have 23 staff and were over the R10 million threshold.

*I think we've got the pressure in terms of succession to have transformation and that's very real. There aren't people that are sitting on our executive that are like currently running around in the conservation fields of terms of colour. Uhm, we've tried that in the past with two black managers. I mean to an extent they were, sort of, tipped in the company. So, we, sort of, having now this forced succession plan and that's why we advertise to bring in an executive of high calibre that is hopefully, you know, black person and I mean African person, you know. Just I see a lot in when we in meetings and stuff, you know, the other organisations pop up and we pop up and it doesn't look so good.*

*... If I look, if I think of when I'm using historical xxx; they seem very old and stubborn. You know, like set in the ways of how things were done 100 years ago. Also completely untransformed, you know, was like so*

*it would have to be a relevant South African organisation. It would have to be an innovative organisation like ourselves. And there must be benefit for both organisations. So, it can't just be that that organisation is falling apart and we're taking it over, 'cause then there's. Yeah, it doesn't. It doesn't stand a chance, you know. So, it has to be benefit for both. It must be making more sense to go together than to stay set. So, I think that's where we need to like consider a merger or something because we don't want to see them fall apart. Happy that they may be not doing it but the work they do. It's so critical for, for young and upcoming environmentalists and especially for young black environmentalists, you know, so they've got this amazing way in which and bring those guys through a programme and then put them out into the sector. And if no one, if they're not doing it, no one else is going to do it. Participant 2*

Although this theme was found to be discussed by only a few participants it is still considered a worthwhile theme considering the history of South Africa. Participants 2 and 4 provided examples of challenges experienced concerning a transformation agenda from a board, executive leadership and management perspective. It was found that an awareness of the need to develop young black environmentalists' capacity is present in certain NPOs and is also alluded to in Participant 2's response to exploring a merger.

Moreover, from a cross-case analysis perspective, it was found that all participants were white and held senior positions, therefore, the absence of transformation in the NPO cases studied is also evident. A significant number of leaders in the NPO sector are ageing alongside a lack of qualified leaders (Do Adro and Leitão 2020). Therefore, it is inferred from this need and the literature review findings that a transformation agenda addressing race, age and gender is an adaptive capacity that assists NPOs in better managing disturbances.

#### **4.3.18 Theme 18 – Barriers to entry to the non-profit organisation sector and increased accountability**

In close relation to the previous theme, raising awareness of the environmental NPO sector, this theme of barriers to entry and increased accountability is discussed next. Again, on reflection of the work that the NPO sector performs by several participants, this new theme was identified.

Participant 9 felt that it is easy to form an NPO and that passionate individuals should first engage to see if an entity was already working on the same cause. Participants 3 and 10 had similar sentiments and both suggested that there should be improved regulations to increase the barriers to entry from a national governance perspective. They felt there was a need to increase accountability, promote transparency and expand trust in the overall NPO sector. Some mechanisms suggested to achieve this were stricter reporting controls and an ombudsman or coordinating council situation to police the sector.

*NPOs are too quickly formed by driven and passionate individuals, without asking if other entities are around that can do that same thing. NPOs struggle to survive daily and in the current climate, securing legacy funding is nearly unheard of. Only a few entities in SA have a massive endowment fund; the rest are operating hand to mouth. They do not work together often enough but operate within selfish parameters and narrow visions. Having said this, the larger NPOs in SA tend to overshadow and absorb all funding that could enable a smaller NPO to survive and operate at a business level that smaller NPOs cannot compete with. And the language that NPOs speak is not understood by the corporate sector and there is a disconnect between the reality of implementing a project and the real costs thereof and the marketing requirements of the entity funding the intervention. Participant 9*

*I think there's a perception out there from the donor that the NPOs waste donor money. I think that's one of the big issues that and I know for a fact that there are employers that have huge admin costs. Yeah, like and I think another one is that a lot of NPOs are not completely transparent about where the money goes 'cause and I think a lot of projects or money is reported on but has gone to another one. It's not, I think to keep money ring-fenced for project specific. And to be able to show that is very important because I've come across a negative, uhm, response about NPOs in the public domain and that's one of them. You know people will say to me, you NGOs, all you do is you; you know, you spend money on fancy hotels and flights, travel business class and all of that and that was I continue now. So that's sadly, that's a lot of the perception out there. Uhm, yeah, that's that. Maybe stricter controls. There's not a lot of reporting requirements like from an organisation. So easy to set up an NPO. Yeah, I think that, and I think there are a lot of scheming peers out there that are raising money for false campaigns. Uhm, and that's one of my biggest concerns and I know some of them. And a lot of these investigative reporters who've reported on them and expose them. But they just throw money out and fight back and start litigation and all of that, sort of, thing. So that, yeah, so I think there should be some kind of ombudsman to actually police the sector. But, yeah, I think, there's, I think, there's certainly room for cleaning up the sector. Participant 3*

*Well, I think you've probably heard this from other people as well. I mean there are lot of fly-by-nights in the system that detract from that take up cash money and energy from the community that they actually, uhm, you know, these, sort of, all, sort of, self-serving entities that are poorly run, poorly governed, often crooked corrupt. Uh, they a problem in the system and I think there should be a closer regulatory, uhm, system that doesn't allows people to just form these entities, uhm, so easily. You know the barriers to entry are virtually zero. And so, I think that, you know, there's a government, you know, national governance issue there that I'm, I don't know there is. I don't know how many NGOs there are inside every thousands. The last time I heard there were like 200 000 or something, yeah. They take up 60 billion rand a year in funding in total, uhm, and that's a lot of money and I think 30 billion of that just goes nowhere. It's just salaries. Yeah, it's the little employment entities or they don't really have an impact. They say they do but they don't really, and they don't ever get tested, and they don't even ask themselves the question sometimes. Yeah, somebody, sort of, passion project and then there's another issue and that is, I think, so that's more, sort of, from the bottom up but top down. Participant 10*

Participant 9 reflected on the quantum of funding that large NPOs can attract when compared to smaller NPOs. This was found in the literature that was reviewed where the size of NPOs is also a key factor to be considered and larger NPOs can successfully reduce their administrative expenses during a financial shock (De Andrés-Alonso et al. 2015). The sentiments of these NPO leaders are strongly related to the backdrop of the rapid growth of the NPO sector which has occurred in a turbulent environment characterised by technological disruptions, an increase in natural and man-made disasters, the rise of non-traditional competitors, regulatory disorders and geopolitical upheavals (Lv et al. 2019; Reith 2010; Scearce and Wang 2020). The for-profit and non-profit segments have also been impacted by an increase in scandals engendered by the onset of social media where citizens demand transparency and more accountability (Omura and Forster 2014; Visser 2020). Participant 3 reflected on the scandals they have encountered from other entities who are within their networks. Although these entities were exposed, they continued to operate while engaging in litigation.

It was found that there is a concern raised by the cases studied, whereby it is far too easy to establish a new NPO, thus, diluting the pool of limited and constrained resources available to the NPO sector even further. Similar to the previous theme, NPO policymakers could benefit from these findings to establish efficient rules for the set-up of new NPOs and reduce the barriers to entry. Furthermore, it was found that there is a need for greater accountability within the sector, and this could contribute to improved trust from several stakeholders and importantly as a consequence promote donors' willingness to support environmental causes. Policymakers have an opportunity to review the existing rules and enhance the sector's accountability, reporting requirements and legitimacy.

#### **4.4 Cross-case analysis**

Interestingly, during the discussion on the theme of leadership, it was found that in the case of both Participants 2 and 10, both NPOs were 18 years old, and the participants had 19 and 21 years of experience in the NPO sector, respectively. Their combined years of experience and the fact that these two NPOs are among the older NPOs could be the reasons for their open-mindedness on failure and learning from mistakes. Participant 2, representing Case 2, also had the highest revenue (over R100 million) of all the cases and this could additionally be the reason for accepting failure as the related costs are probably more affordable from a financial perspective. Furthermore, Participant 2 shares the value of the inclusivity of the team with Participant 10, their combined years of experience and the fact that these 2 NPOs are among the older NPOs could be the reason for their values aligning in terms of inclusivity for their teams.

Additionally, although Participant 5 has only 12 years' experience in the NPO sector, which is the second least years of experience, the leadership traits related to both an authentic leadership style and a translational leadership style are present in Participant 5's comments which indicate that several leadership styles are adopted. Furthermore, Participant 5's awareness that change is occurring fast underwrites an overall culture of organisational resilience and is evident in Participant 5's response: "*We must use the better way; we mustn't stick to the old way because life is changing so fast.*"

When reviewing the theme of succession planning, Participant 1 admitted that this was the next step in professionalising as they were seven years old. In the case of Participant 8, they were twice the age of Participant 1 and still had not implemented a succession plan for their top management. Both Cases 1 and 8 were based in KwaZulu-Natal and were below and above the R10 million threshold, respectively. Similarly, Case 2, which had the largest revenue and was also one of the older NPOs based in KwaZulu-Natal, also admitted to not having a succession plan in place for their executive team. Thus, it was found that despite the age, the common location and the revenue of the NPO, succession planning was not well conducted in these cases.

While reflecting on the brand and ICT themes, Participant 11 confessed that the challenges and negative outlook on the use of technology were attributable to the participants' age. The NPO was 12 years old, based in the Eastern Cape and still below the R1 million threshold; the slow uptake of technology was to blame. On the other hand, it was found that despite the setbacks of inadequate resources to secure the necessary ICT resources and the resistance from some NPOs to develop a brand, NPOs, such as Case 5, have unlocked these challenges and are doing very well from both these perspectives. The NPO in Case 5 is seven years old and its leadership has largely driven the brand and ICT aspects, which could be the reason for its success in this regard.

Within the collaboration and stakeholder engagement theme, high competition seems to be a negative factor affecting effective collaboration between NPOs – as clearly described by Participants 1, 6 and 9. Yet, once again, we find that the NPO in Case 5 has worked out how to collaborate effectively; Case 5 is 7 years old and Cases 1, 6 and 9 are seven, ten and twenty-two years old, respectively. Thus, it seems that the age of the NPO is not a factor in unlocking effective collaboration. Several cases, however, recognised the need for collaboration between the environmental NPOs as the long-term external collaborative efforts yield improved results for the sector's broader environmental goals.

When exploring the financial practices, Participant 5 was the only NPO leader who considered cryptocurrencies and was open to exploring the possibilities of accepting donations in a cryptocurrency format. Participant 10, however, considered this too risky and was not open to

exploring this opportunity. Participant 5, on the other hand, had an awareness of this potential alternative means of enabling funding from tech-savvy individuals and was keen to get it implemented in the short term. Case 5 is seven years old, and Case 10 is 18 years old; therefore, despite the age of an NPO, its leaders' perspectives on new financial practices are a determining factor in their uptake. Both participants are based in the Western Cape so, geographically, this was not deemed a factor.

Lastly, all the cases studied had white NPO leaders; this was discussed in the transformation agenda theme. The age of the NPO, its revenue and location, as well as the number of years of experience of the NPO leader, did not seem to be a factor in the race representation of the participants of the NPOs studied.

In closing, one case stood out on several occasions and that was Case 5. Participant 5 has 12 years of experience and the NPO – based in the Western Cape – was below the R10 million threshold. From managing large volumes of volunteers to attracting multiple donors with its well-established brand and being able to unlock collaboration with external stakeholders, this case seems to have transcended several of the challenges discussed. An open-minded perspective to exploring new technologies and, importantly, demonstrating accountability is also present in many of Participant 5's comments. Therefore, it was concluded that Case 5 demonstrates several positive traits that enable this NPO to stand out and gain a competitive advantage while underwriting its organisational resilience.

On the other hand, Participants 1 and 6 both mentioned that they were challenged by insufficient financial security in that they may either run out of funds soon or that they only had three months' worth of salaries available before they needed to close. Cases 1 and 6 were based in KZN and the Western Cape and were 7 and 10 years old respectively. Despite both cases being below the R10mil income threshold, the age and location of these entities did not seem to be factors affecting their ability to raise funds. The need for this study is apparent in these cases were despite being operational for a relatively medium term, they still face ongoing existential challenges.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

Following the thematic analysis of the data collated from the semi-structured interviews a total of 18 themes were identified. Some of the themes correlated well with the initial 11 adaptive capacities discussed in Chapter 2, while others referred to challenges experienced or resilience factors. The thematic analysis generated a rich data set and the participants' responses were presented within each of the 18 themes identified. Findings were summarised at the end of each of the themes discussed.

A cross-case analysis was undertaken to further reflect on the data collated and to add to the richness of the findings. Regarding the first research objective, the adaptive capacities were interconnected and often interdependent. For example, the adaptive capacity of innovation was dependent on human resources such as managers, employees and volunteers. Project management, monitoring and evaluation connected to the ICT adaptive capacity which was also interrelated to the brand and stakeholder engagement adaptive capacities.

For the second research objective, ten pitfalls related to developing adaptive capacities were established. It was found that the participants' awareness of these pitfalls mostly correlated with the findings of the reviewed literature. To establish how NPOs could build organisational resilience, nine resilience factors cited by the participants were identified. These also mostly correlated with the findings of the reviewed literature. For the last objective, the initial theoretical framework was expanded and discussed. The next chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations arising from this study and concludes the thesis.

## **Chapter 5 – Summary, conclusion and recommendations**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, a summary of the findings concerning each of the research questions is discussed beginning with the adaptive capacity framework presented and discussed to answer the final research question of this study. Recommendations for NPOs and further studies are suggested. A conclusion to the thesis closes this chapter.

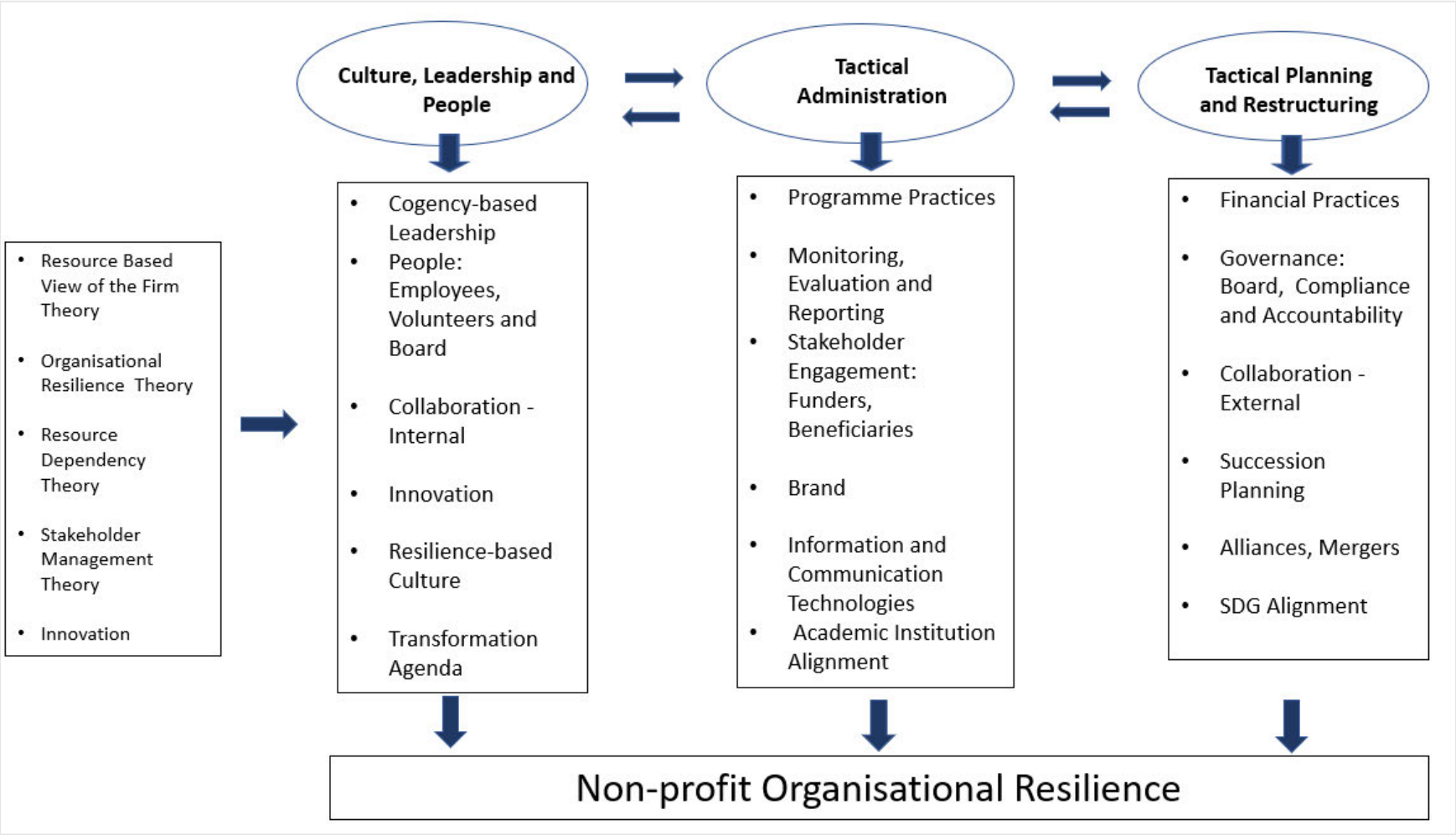
### **5.2 Research Question 4**

**What adaptive capacity framework can be developed to promote the organisational resilience of South African environmental non-profit organisations?**

In order to highlight the contribution to the body of knowledge arising from this thesis which lies in the answer to Research Question 4 and having achieved research objective four. Therefore, a slight rearrangement is made to the sequential order in which the research questions are summarised and concluded. The last research objective was to develop an adaptive capacity framework for South African NPOs to promote organisational resilience. To achieve this objective, a literature review was undertaken, and 11 adaptive capacities were discussed in Chapter 2. Following a thematic analysis of the data collated, 18 themes were discussed under the findings in the previous chapter.

Following the initial theoretical framework where the adaptive capacities that augment organisational resilience were listed in three broad categories of People, Planning and Practices, these were accordingly expanded following the findings of the thematic analysis to three interrelated detailed groupings, i.e., Culture, Leadership and People, Tactical Administration and Tactical Planning and Restructuring. A summary of the adaptive capacities including the resilience factors and the pitfalls related to each capacity is presented within several tables aligning to the three interrelated detailed groupings mentioned above and these will be discussed later within sections 5.2 and 5.3 in relation to the research questions. It was found that these detailed groupings more aptly described the adaptive capacities that each contained. Figure 5-1 sets out the expansion of the initial theoretical framework into the final adaptive capacity framework.

Figure 5-1 NPO adaptive capacity framework



Source: Author’s own work

The NPO adaptive capacity framework presented in figure 5.1 above proposes that NPO resilience may be achieved by developing the interconnected adaptive capacities identified within the three broad categories. The first is Culture, Leadership and People. This broad category includes six adaptive capacities: Cogency-based Leadership; People: Employees, Volunteers and Board; Collaboration – Internal; Innovation; Resilience-based Culture; and a Transformation Agenda. Each of these adaptive capacities is largely people-centric. Table 5-1 presents the adaptive capacities summary that is cogency-based leadership and people: employees, volunteers and board members and includes a summary of the resilience factors and the pitfalls related to the adaptive capacities following the discussion of the findings in the previous Chapter. Table 5-2 next presents the adaptive capacities summary: resilience-based culture and a transformation agenda. Lastly Table 5-3 presents the adaptive capacities summary: collaboration – internal and innovation. Initially each of the adaptive capacities summarised in Tables 5-1 to 5-3 were conceptualised and included under the broad category heading namely: People in Chapter 2.

The second broad category is Tactical Administration and includes six adaptive capacities: Programme Practices; Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting; Stakeholder Engagement: Funders and Beneficiaries; Brand; Information and Communication Technologies; and Academic Institution Alignment. Each of these adaptive capacities is largely related to the administration of the projects or daily operations of the NPO. Table 5-4 presents the adaptive capacities summary: programme practices and monitoring, evaluation and reporting and includes a summary of the resilience factors and the pitfalls related to the adaptive capacities following the discussion of the findings in the previous Chapter. Table 5-5 presents the adaptive capacities summary: stakeholder engagement: funders and beneficiaries and brand. Lastly within this broad category Table 5-6 presents adaptive capacities summary: information and communication technologies and academic institution alignment. Initially these adaptive capacities summarised in Tables 5-4 to 5-6 were conceptualised and included under the broad category heading namely: Practises in Chapter 2.

The Tactical Planning and Restructuring broad category include six adaptive capacities: Financial Practices; Governance: Board Compliance and Accountability; Collaboration – External; Succession Planning; Alliances and Mergers; and SDG Alignment. Each of these adaptive capacities is largely related to the planning and legitimacy of NPOs. Table 5-7 presents the adaptive capacities summary: financial practices and governance: board, compliance and accountability. Table 5-8 presents adaptive capacities summary: collaboration - external and succession planning. Table 5-9 presents the adaptive capacities summary: alliances and mergers and SDG alignment. Initially these adaptive capacities summarised in Tables 5-7 to 5-9 were

conceptualised and included under the broad category heading namely: Planning in Chapter 2. Tables 5-1 to 5-9 are placed in the pages that follow.

Table 5-2 Adaptive capacities summary: Cogency based leadership and People: Employees, volunteers and board members

<b>Adaptive capacity category: Culture, Leadership and People</b>	
<b>Resilience Factors</b>	<b>Pitfalls to developing adaptive capacities</b>
<b>Cogency-based Leadership</b>	
<p>Several leadership approaches can be utilised by NPO leaders and staff, funders and other stakeholders demand and expect more from NPO leaders (Moore, 2019). A cogency-based leadership approach underwrites aspects of being convincing, clear and logical while enabling a flexible approach between various leadership styles. The quality of NPO leadership can shape the opportunities and experiences of entire communities (Howieson and Hodges 2014). Effective NPO leaders share the prospects of tactical thinking and are involved in enlisting volunteers who are well-matched to the NPO and level of service (Sneath 2021). NPO leader characteristics required are the ability to empower and motivate staff for improved decision-making, thereby promoting accountability between the different levels of the NPO and uniting staff for a common purpose (Cilliers and Greyvenstein 2012; De Waal et al. 2019; Gardner 2016; Pittinsky 2010).</p>	<p>NPO leadership is challenged with bolstering the legitimacy of the NPO sector, consequently, the NPO sector must convince a discerning community of their worth to ensure continued support as the sector boundaries become indistinct (Hodges and Howieson 2017). Challenges confronting leadership in NPOs concern managing the fragile balance between the productivity, efficiency, purpose, and enthusiasm that drive NPOs, whilst adapting proven management techniques from the business world into the NPO environment (McMurray et al. 2010).</p>
<b>People: Employees, Volunteers and Board members</b>	
<p>NPOs tend to consider their human resources key to novel individual and organisational capabilities being advanced and adding value to the NPO, thereby necessitating their upkeep and management (Gile, Buljac-Samardzic and Van De Klundert, 2018; Oliveira, Sousa, Silva and Santos, 2021). Efficient human resource designs, along with robust environmental and organisational policies that are uniformly supporting and consistent to the NPO mission, can inspire, attract and retain worthwhile personnel (Kellner et al., 2017). Participant 10 reiterates this need “People, they’re the ones that build the character of an organisation for what it is. And that’s why you gotta get the right people”. When volunteers leave an NPO, turnover rates increase, and this has a negative impact on the NPO’s productivity (Lee, 2016). A volunteer’s relationship with an NPO and its employees or leaders is central to the length of time the volunteer remains engaged with the NPO (Crotty and Ljubownikow, 2020). Efficient NPO leaders communicate their tactical reasoning with staff and are engaged in signing up volunteers that are compatible with their unique NPO offerings (Sneath, 2021). The main functions of NPO board members, whom are also volunteers are to facilitate interactions, reduce resource dependencies, improve the flow and variety of resources through their networks and exemplify the NPO to outer constituencies (Callen et al. 2010). Experience, proficiency, and social relations are the foremost required competences in NPO board members. When the most capable board members are appointed, these competences impact NPOs positively, underwriting NPO synergy (Roshayani et al. 2018). When the most capable board members are appointed, NPOs are impacted positively by underwriting NPO synergy, therefore, and the appointment, recruitment and selection of board members is imperative (Murray and Thomas 2019; Van Zyl and Mans-Kemp 2020; Wells 2012).</p>	<p>Some downsides to volunteers working in local communities include the needs and pursuits of locals being neglected and substandard work output. Volunteers’ continuous engagement can also cause the reinforcement of reliance and justifications for poverty (Guttentag 2009). The use of volunteers to deliver on the NPO’s mission could also create tension with trade unions and accountability challenges when refunding volunteer endeavours (Malinen and Harju 2017). When high unemployment rates occur, volunteer expectations of employment would need to be sensitively managed. Attracting the appropriate financial resources to attract and retain talented human resources remains an ongoing challenge. Furthermore, NPO employees could also be concerned about job security as they harbour worries about being replaced by volunteers (Manetti et al. 2015). An NPO’s risk increases when its board and management are powerless to participate in strategic preparation and delivery and, according to Murray and Thomas (2019), NPOs, such as animal shelters, have not been able to progress beyond daily challenges. Often the required level of skills for board committees may not be available in volunteers and, as such, strategic planning for turbulent times may be compromised (Ahmed, Bahoo and Ayub 2019; Chelliah, Boersma and Klettner 2016; Murray and Thomas 2019). A practical challenge for NPOs is the facilitation of upskilling board members, which may be complex considering constrained resources. This results in a conflicting scenario between the demand for expertise and stakeholder representation on board committees.</p>

Source: Author’s own work

Table 5-3 Adaptive capacities summary: Resilience based culture and Transformation agenda

<b>Adaptive capacity category: Culture, Leadership and People</b>	
<b>Resilience Factors</b>	<b>Pitfalls to developing adaptive capacities</b>
<b>Resilience-based Culture</b>	
<p>Without a paramount profit target, the tactics, purposes and conduct of NPOs are multi-layered and fluid when responding to community, economic and governmental changes while attempting to stay relevant and efficient (Wells 2012). The strategy of an NPO may change during turbulent times, for example, the distribution of relief packages in local communities where an NPO might have a footprint, albeit this may not be the NPO’s focal area (McDermont 2007; Wells 2012). Strategic flexibility includes a set of competences related to the reconfiguration of an entity’s purpose and vision. Furthermore, an understanding of the environment is necessary when an entity faces turbulence that could have a significant impact requiring timely responses (Alexiou 2015). An organisational culture that promotes resilience and innovation recognises that an adverse event is unpredictable from a timing perspective, therefore, a risk-consciousness culture based on long-term survival is proactively nurtured (Vakilzadeh and Haase 2020). According to Pryce (2021), organisational culture offers a means for producing transformative change and provides continuous organisational resilience that can confront the unanticipated. Pryce (2021) purported a holistic method to organisational culture to develop organisational resilience. This is realised when organisational resilience becomes rooted in fundamental organisational values and operations are merged in the diverseness of the entity to relate to turbulent incidents. “It’s like the reason for being resilient is resilience or grit”, Participant 2 attributed their NPO’s resilience to a resilience culture that was inculcated at the board level.</p>	<p>Barriers to organisational resilience are connected to managers’ beliefs that no benefit is gained from a resilience outlook as it involves unnecessary administrative measures (Vakilzadeh and Haase 2020). Trust can be lost quickly and needs to be formed or rebuilt in deliberate and systematic steps. Leading teams from a culture of mistrust requires the creation of opportunities for teamwork and collaboration and relies on vigilant and constant execution and reiteration (Cilliers and Greyvenstein 2012; De Waal et al. 2019; Gardner 2016; Pittinsky 2010). Leadership agility and adaptableness in employing various strategies during turbulent times are required critical skills (Hollingworth 2016; Hutchinson et al. 2021; Jackson and Dunn-Jensen 2021). The study by Moore (2019) finds self-knowledge, conduct, connectedness and interpersonal openness to be substantial factors of an authentic leadership approach, to underwrite a resilience-based culture, however as found in several cases often such leadership traits are lacking both at the NPO board and NPO leader level.</p>
<b>Transformation agenda</b>	
<p>A positive correlation between the number of womenfolk serving on a board should exist (Gazzola et al. 2020; Ward and Forker 2017). Following this finding from the literature reviewed, only one participant reflected on the gender representation of their board members. NPOs tend to consider their human resources key to novel individual and organisational capabilities being advanced, where they focus on adding value to the NPO, thereby necessitating their upkeep and management (Gile et al. 2018; Oliveira et al. 2021). An awareness of the need to develop young black environmentalists’ capacity is also alluded to. Furthermore, it was noted that all participants participating in the study were white and held senior positions, therefore, the absence of transformation in the NPO cases studied is also evident. Additionally, a significant number of leaders in the NPO sector are ageing alongside a lack of qualified leaders (Do Adro and Leitão 2020). Therefore, this Transformation Agenda adaptive capacity would enable NPOs to address the challenges related to ensuring that they are representative of age, gender and race from an employee, management, and board member perspective. The promotion of diversity and transformation can underwrite a resilience culture, furthermore diversity with the NPO may also promote innovation.</p>	<p>The challenges experienced in achieving a shift in gender representation towards a more diverse board in terms of both gender and race were also evident in Participant 4’s reflections and are related to the diversity and transformation dynamics of South Africa’s apartheid legacy backdrop. Furthermore, a significant number of leaders in the NPO sector are ageing alongside a lack of qualified leaders (Do Adro and Leitão 2020).</p>

Source: Author’s own work

Table 5-4 Adaptive capacities summary: Collaboration – internal and Innovation

<b>Adaptive capacity category: Culture, Leadership and People</b>	
<b>Resilience Factors</b>	<b>Pitfalls to developing adaptive capacities</b>
<b>Collaboration - internal</b>	
<p>Endorsing internal collaboration is most feasible when it becomes a strategic value of the entity, however, it is also imperative to reward and recognise individuals who demonstrate collaborative behaviour (De Waal et al. 2019). The quality and results of effective internal and external collaboration can strengthen an organisation’s overall ability to more effectively deliver its purpose (De Waal et al. 2019; Gardner 2016; Pittinsky 2010; Shaw and Frost 2015). Moving from a silo culture to a collaborative culture necessitates prudent forethought, conscientious management and devoted upkeep. Some of the practical steps required to achieve this are assigning responsibility and accountability, sharing an understanding of the purpose and confronting mistrust systematically (Pittinsky 2010). To promote collaboration and communication among staff, leaders may also involve co-workers in retreats to engage in decisive planning for an NPO’s future (Sneath 2021).</p>	<p>Silos can also cause individuals to be less efficient when engaging with people from other units and less inclined to make an effort to work well with other teams (Pittinsky 2010). Promoting teamwork and collaboration internally can be costly and the related coordination exertions, risks and start-up expenses may not yield a return if the reason for collaboration is unclear (Gardner 2016). As the complexity of tasks increases along with uncertainty in the environment, it is evident that individuals working on their own cannot solve issues faced by their organisations. Instead, there is a need for individuals from multiple disciplines to combine their expertise to address issues from an organisational resilience perspective (De Waal et al. 2019; Gardner 2016).</p>
<b>Innovation</b>	
<p>Certain facets present in the NPO set-up, such as being self-regulating, private and voluntary, make NPOs well-positioned to stimulate new ideas and launch new practices (Adro and Fernandes 2021; Mulgan et al. 2007). The process of innovation can be facilitated by the inclusion of stakeholder participation (Wehnert et al. 2018). An environment that encourages innovation, individual creativity and emotional well-being can improve an entity’s innovative abilities (Do Adro and Leitão 2020). The process of NPO innovation is reliant on factors such as culture, leadership, internal properties, such as control and formalisation, external turbulence and general aspects, such as the size or age of the NPO (Bernstein et al. 2016; Do Adro and Leitão 2020; Jaskyte 2015; Shin and Choi 2019). Studies have revealed that an organisation’s capability to innovate during periods of adversity is crucial for organisational resilience (Vakilzadeh and Haase 2020). During a crisis, innovation by employees could become an appropriate strategy to use to overcome adversity (Senbeto and Hon 2020).</p>	<p>NPOs are regularly encouraged to make investments in innovation as an organisational tenet (Adro and Fernandes 2021; Dover and Lawrence 2012). However, this remains a key challenge facing NPOs as it is not clear how to achieve this (Adro and Fernandes 2021). Firms should engage with NPOs and communities in various ways, availing their core proficiencies to support innovation and, thereby, improving NPO capacities and ultimately assisting NPOs in accomplishing their social objectives (Sanzo et al. 2015). Certain NPO actors initiate innovation while others reproduce existing social arrangements and practices. A downside of innovation practices is possible when, according to Coule and Patmore (2013), the incentive to disrupt social practices seems to be led by the degree to which existing standards serve NPO interests.</p>

Source: Author’s own work

Table 5-5 Adaptive capacities summary: Programme Practices and Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

<b>Adaptive capacity category: Tactical Administration</b>	
<b>Resilience Factors</b>	<b>Pitfalls to developing adaptive capacities</b>
<b>Programme Practices</b>	
<p>NPO activities from a project management study perspective are not only a financial, technological and scientific subject but also a moral subject (Cicmil and O'Laocha 2016). Cost administration of projects is enhanced when entities efficiently employ leadership activities related to knowledge management such as assurances to manage knowledge gleaned from programmes at an organisational level, implementation of performance metrics tracking developments and rewarding teams for the distribution of project knowledge (Oun et al. 2016). Developing efficiencies in programme activities is considered a vital NPO requirement. The realisation of improved project outcomes is feasible with the implementation of innovation and aptitude training programmes and opportunities for staff to build their competencies (Al-Nabae and Sammani 2021; Wisdom et al. 2014).</p>	<p>Conventional project management practices suited to well-defined and measured projects may not constantly suit the requirements of the communities meant to be assisted by the NPOs' social goals via the projects. From a practical perspective, project management can present overheads which are perceived as profligate of constrained resources. Furthermore, it can produce conflicts in cooperative spaces where entities working to shape societal transformation adopt diverse methods (Lannon and Walsh 2016).</p>
<b>Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting</b>	
<p>The capability to adapt and progressively cultivate improved upshots is connected to efficient monitoring and evaluation methods (Lindamood et al. 2021). Key enabling components required to implement efficient monitoring and assessments are securing the proper support, an ethos that advocates assessment and the desire to be answerable to parties that hold a stake (Bach-Mortensen and Montgomery 2018). In the NPO world, there is often pressure and expectation from corporate donors and governments for NPOs to improve their management and overall systems (Balduck, Lucidarme, Marlier and Willem, 2015; Singh and Mthuli, 2021). Yet, often the funds required to develop and improve systems and reporting efficiencies are not underwritten by donors (Adro and Fernandes, 2021). This is evident in the comments on donor funding from Participant 10, "<i>Funders need to fund operational capabilities of non-profits, not just their projects and delivery. Uhm, successful non-profits need to attract good people and they need to be able to pay them</i>". The effective management of socially oriented programmes is an essential prerequisite for accomplishing the best performance outcomes possible and effective administrative tools should be adopted (De Camargo et al. 2019). Projects, including social orientation, should include stakeholder management theory.</p>	<p>While most NPOs are keen to comply with project or organisational monitoring and assessments, NPOs can also refrain by choosing what to assess, how to evaluate and what to include in reports (Arvidson and Lyon 2014). A central challenge for NPOs is to design systems of measurement that support the attainment of clear mission objectives. Furthermore, assessment and evaluation efforts that extend outside this frame of reference could become a distraction for the NPO's project activities (Ebrahim and Rangan 2014).</p>

Source: Author's own work

Table 5-6 Adaptive capacities summary: Stakeholder Engagement: Funders and Beneficiaries and Brand

<b>Adaptive capacity category: Tactical Administration</b>	
<b>Resilience Factors</b>	<b>Pitfalls to developing adaptive capacities</b>
<b>Stakeholder Engagement: Funders and Beneficiaries</b>	
<p>NPOs generally operate in multifaceted environments with multiple stakeholders such as donors, government officials, volunteers, communities, participants etc Compliance and stringent reporting prerequisites for government funding can cause mission drift. Furthermore, boards and employees may be expected to professionalise in a manner that is not representative of communities and local needs (Witesman and Heiss 2017). In the resilience management framework developed by McManus et al. (2008), this is referred to as constructing situation alertness and comprises the present and predictable future operational environment, the resources to which the institute has access and the suppositions and restrictions of internal and external stakeholders. Embedding social media into NPO strategy is an opportunity to achieve improved effectiveness for stakeholder management. This is mostly beneficial for smaller to average-sized NPOs where resources are limited and they cannot invest in advertising or stakeholder management (Schipper and Latham 2019). Serving all stakeholders results in positive returns for both stockholders and stakeholders; stakeholders are a key component of increasing an entity’s value (Rajablu et al. 2015). Lately, stakeholder theory has been the central theoretical provision that enables the understanding of these relations from numerous viewpoints and has become progressively significant. It was found that NPOs’ resilience can be accredited to their clear mission, enabling them to be focused on their cause and limit potential deviations.</p>	<p>NPOs usually require resources and validity from their stakeholders and that creates a source of uncertainty for NPOs as these are practically not predictable or controllable, necessitating improved management of these stakeholders (Balsler and McClusky 2005). Mindfulness about the effect of corporate decisions on society and the environment is evident in stakeholders to the extent that stakeholders can reward or penalise corporations (Uribe et al. 2018) It was found that NPOs may be tempted to deviate from their mission, negatively impacting their beneficiaries for the sake of funding to alleviate existential concerns. It was found that NPO overheads in relation to donor education were a vital component that should be improved as donors should be funding NPO overheads and operational capacities. “Starve the organisation by under-investing in core organisational functions and you sacrifice productivity and undermine the grantee’s long-term stability (Sussman 2003, p. 3)”. Educating donors on the need for administrative funding is recommended to change the mindset of traditional philanthropists and to ensure that NPOs remain resilient during turbulent times (Scearce and Wang 2020).</p>
<b>Brand</b>	
<p>Financial accomplishments are not the principal aim of NPOs and financial instruments alone are inadequate to measure performance (Balsler and McClusky 2005). Instead, NPOs typically acquire resources and acceptability from stakeholders, therefore, a stakeholder management positioning is more pertinent (Leipnitz 2014). In an increasingly competitive space, standing out from the crowd is important not only to attract funding but also donors who are aligned with the NPO’s cause. The advancements and sophistication of marketing tools facilitate their utilisation in combination with proficiency related to enticing and retaining current and potential donors (Fonseca et al. 2021). Increased competition to acquire and retain donors has forced NPOs to strengthen their marketing efforts (Naskrent and Siebelt 2011). Studies have found that social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, positively influences philanthropic contributions (Guo and Saxton 2014; Li and McDougale 2017). For NPOs, social media presents benefits such as minimal cost, enabling dialogic communication and boosting engagements, all resulting in increased brand awareness (Belenioti and Vassiliadis 2017; Nah and Saxton 2013). Therefore, a strong brand is an adaptive capacity that requires some effort to inculcate from a board and leadership perspective. It was found that the process of building a brand could also assist NPOs in identifying their niche space, supporting NPO leaders in preventing deviation from their mission objectives.</p>	<p>A challenge identified in several studies was the lack of appropriate leadership skills and the prioritisation of marketing efforts by NPO boards (Lin et al. 2009; Liu and Ko 2011; Pope et al. 2009). Specifically, Pope et al. (2009) propose that marketing skills become a prerequisite for board members. Including other means, this will address brand promotion and weaknesses in the marketing sphere, such as fundraising and efficiently reaching volunteers or beneficiaries. Several NPOs do not buy into the concept of a brand and feel that they are not selling a product. The NPO sector, specifically concerning relations of vested parties holding a stake and branding, is academically under-researched (Andreassen 2012; Mitchell and Clark 2019).</p>

Source: Author’s own work

Table 5-7 Adaptive capacities summary: Information and Communication Technologies and Academic Institution Alignment

<b>Adaptive capacity category: Tactical Administration</b>	
<b>Resilience Factors</b>	<b>Pitfalls to developing adaptive capacities</b>
<b>Information and Communication Technologies</b>	
<p>Broadly, the implementation of information technologies can be a compelling driver of institutional change. Wide-ranging use of automated networking technologies can stimulate the transformation of an entity’s composition, values, operations and stakeholders (Hackler and Saxton 2007). ICT has become a contemporary social catalyst for improving the lives of communities and, for NPOs, technology has presented a transformative power (Nicholson et al. 2016). Access to the internet and cellular devices has enabled movements via social media which were significant developments in the NPO sphere (Raman 2016). Active users of social media are attracted to this medium for their contributions, disclosure and dissemination of material, enabling the spread of awareness (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). Telecommunications has progressively supported the merging of technology to underwrite improved reach; the field of analytics provides meaning to data and cloud processing has enabled real-time access (Raman 2016). Research has established a positive correlation between a firm’s increase in status on social media and trades and other routine indicators of a business. Social media measures, such as the volume of followers and positive sentiments, are important gauges of a firm’s worth (Lee 2021; Moon et al. 2015). Social media has a superior proclivity to serve if it is combined with upward mobility, enterprise analytics and cloud processing and can assist NPOs in achieving their social missions (Raman 2016). Information technologies can be leveraged by NPOs to improve project and fundraising activities, stakeholder information access, raise cognisance of social issues and establish legitimacy (Levine and Zahradnik 2012; Richardson et al. 2011). New technologies, coupled with the stakeholder acuity of being more engaged with the NPOs that they support, place pressure on NPOs to include such stakeholders in a meaningful manner. Effectively this is propelling NPOs towards an adaptive learning progression, disseminating stakeholder information for strategic decision-making (Ebrahim 2010; Levine and Zahradnik 2012).</p>	<p>A vast digital gap exists between established and developing nations and information technologies are key to bridging this gap (Ayanso et al. 2010). A distinction was found where countries in the Global South relied less on direct mail, advertising and Facebook and instead relied on ‘word-of-mouth’ communication channels (Proust et al. 2013). ICT implementation barriers in rural areas are physical access to applications and low levels of ICT awareness (Nicholson et al. 2016; Raman 2016). Sun and Asencio (2019) named four barriers to the use of social platforms in NPOs: constrained resources, lack of ICT expertise, ineffective leadership commitment and a lack of ICT comprehension in NPO constituents. Regarding information system development within NPOs, software production and project administration practices that are effective in corporate entities may be insufficient due to the various stakeholders involved having fragmented perspectives compared to the corporate world (Sun and Asencio 2019). NPO fundraisers anticipate potential donor fatigue as the number and intensity of shocks increase in a turbulent environment (Searce and Wang 2020). Therefore, to promote transparency within the sector, NPOs will need to convince donors of the need to fund their organisations and move away from a project-specific funding model, where the transformative power of ICT would be invaluable.</p>
<b>Academic Institution Alignment</b>	
<p>In three of the NPO cases studied, it was found that relationships with local universities to conduct scientific research were developed. This research is often conducted by postgraduate students and their research focus underwrites the interests of the NPO in collaboration with the universities. The knowledge gathered from the research is shared with key NPO stakeholders such as donors and beneficiaries. Therefore, gearing NPOs towards an academic research stance could provide NPOs with funding opportunities while underwriting their research interests and attracting volunteers. Effectively, the NPO sector provides an ideal opportunity for academics to develop new scientific knowledge. Furthermore, an opportunity exists for the academic world to promote the good work undertaken by the NPO sector thereby assisting with raising awareness and bolstering the legitimacy of such institutions. Academic institutions also provide the NPOs with access to experts and knowledge of highly scientific fields such as environmental degradation and water insecurities.</p>	<p>NPO leadership is challenged with bolstering the legitimacy of the NPO sector, consequently, the NPO sector must convince a discerning community of their worth to ensure continued support as the sector boundaries become indistinct (Hodges and Howieson 2017). The general sentiment was that NPOs could adopt a cross-sectoral approach to achieving their goals in cognisance of the significant national challenges that South Africa faces. Furthermore, good work occurs within the NPO sector, however, it does not receive enough exposure and, therefore, general awareness is lacking. If the academic institution with which the NPO aligns itself is upright and representative of local stakeholders that would alleviate any negative impacts from any unexpected or untoward events linked to the association with the academic institution.</p>

Source: Author’s own work

Table 5-8 Adaptive capacities summary: Financial Practices and Governance: Board, Compliance and Accountability

<b>Adaptive capacity category: Tactical Planning and Restructuring</b>	
<b>Resilience Factors</b>	<b>Pitfalls to developing adaptive capacities</b>
<b>Financial Practices</b>	
<p>A steady income is vital for NPOs to guarantee their budget plans, including the significant costs related to existing activities and staff compensation, underwriting financial activities in the fulfilment of its mission (Polyakov 2021). Generally, NPOs rely on three types of funding streams: donations from individuals, funding from businesses and income from the government, however The Green et al. (2021) study agreed with the general findings of Chikoto and Neely (2014) and Suykens et al. (2019) concerning the optimistic effects of revenue diversification on NPO financial resilience. According to Battilana and Lee (2014), improved NPO managerialism skills that can blend both commercial and social goals could mitigate potential mission drift. Intensified monitoring of cashflows was practised by NPOs during financial crunches as a critical element of their responses to shocks (Searing et al. 2021). NPOs funded by governments are mindful of cash flows, particularly when government funding is received after programme service delivery as a reimbursement. NPOs also accessed reserves accumulated to supplement cash shortfalls to continue delivering on programme objectives (Searing et al. 2021). Increasing expenditure on management costs could improve an NPO's financial steadiness and NPO boards could reconsider keeping overhead costs to a minimum (Tevel et al. 2015). NPOs are exploring 'crypto-giving' platforms as a potential solution to possible mismanagement scandals (Trotter et al. 2020). NPO fundraisers anticipate potential donor fatigue as the number and intensity of shocks increase. Younger individuals are conventionally unlikely to contribute to NPOs consistently and are more prone to using cryptocurrencies as a donation means (Howson 2021; Searce and Wang 2020). To attract such a group of younger and discerning individuals, fundraising efforts must be innovative and occur across numerous means, including the blockchain, to promote trust and transparency (Christie 2020). NPOs should make constructive investments in fundraising efforts and administrative provisions to enhance the growth of financial capacities (Chikoto and Neely 2014).</p>	<p>In the wake of the global financial crisis of 2008, NPOs met unparalleled trials related to survival (Hu and Kapucu 2017). Reliance on unpredictable donation funding from the general public can compromise an NPO's realisation of its goals (Su et al. 2014). When donations decrease, NPOs develop alternate self-sustaining income tactics involving more reliance on earned revenue and could form their own entities (Moldavanova and Goerdel 2018). Academic studies into this phenomenon refer to the 'commercialisation' of NPOs (Suykens et al. 2019; Vacek et al. 2017; Vaceková and Svidroňová 2014). Commercial income is produced from trades of supplies and services that an NPO provides and entails the objective of making a profit (Dart 2004). This route of making a profit or NPO commercialisation can be risky. Studies have highlighted that this can lead to mission drift where resources are used to make a profit rather than to serve their beneficiaries and often involves short-term versus survival decisions (Jones 2007; Ma, Jing et al. 2018). Risk-taking is another requirement for commercial behaviour in NPOs. Taking analysed and practicable risks reveals an inclination to commit substantial resources in the interest of saleable opportunities, notwithstanding that this could also fail during turbulent times (Lacerda et al. 2020). A turbulent financial environment shaped by competition from other entities notably impacts the clarity and alterations in NPO goals (Seo 2016).</p>
<b>Governance: Board, Compliance and Accountability</b>	
<p>Governance is central to managing internal activities and stakeholder engagement (Zollo et al. 2019). An entity's governance is shaped and often structured by key external relationships which have substantial importance on the developing role of NGOs in the public sector (Kuruppu and Lodhia 2019). However, Yasmin and Ghafran (2021) found that regulatory compliance is a key feature that aids NPOs in increasing societal trust in their programme activities. According to the King IV Report, some of the benefits of good corporate governance for an NPO are enhanced trustworthiness and reputation, access to funding on improved terms, better deterrence of fraud and the ability to withstand and recover from turbulent situations (Institute of Directors of Southern Africa 2016). Corporate governance impacts the productivity of NPOs and their capacity to obtain financing resources (Gazzola et al. 2020). Experience, proficiency and social relations are the foremost required competencies in NPO board members. When the most capable board members are appointed, these competencies impact NPOs positively and underwrite NPO synergy (Roshayani et al. 2018). Furthermore, a positive correlation between the number of womenfolk serving on a board should exist (Gazzola et al. 2020; Ward and Forker 2017). In the NPO sector, culpability is regarded as a stakeholder prerequisite to gain access to and secure resources and can be proved with suitable governance practices and efficient resource use. This is often deemed a measure of control and justification, however, this can also be an opportunity for NPOs to demonstrate proactively their legitimacy, withstand claims and gain further legitimacy (Egholm et al. 2020; O'Leary 2017).</p>	<p>The COVID-19 pandemic is augmenting fundraising uncertainties related to traceability and governance scandals, promoting distrust and donor indifference (Prakash 2019). Financial mismanagement scandals and the exploitation of beneficiaries related to NPOs have diluted public trust and negatively affected the legitimacy of NPOs (Kuruppu and Lodhia 2019; Visser 2020). This has increased calls for the accountability and transparency of NPOs. A challenge to implementing good governance is that a board member often plays dual roles on the board committee due to the lack of appropriate skills, which is not ideal for the prevention of unethical practices; the actual efficiency of the board may be questioned (Murray and Thomas 2019; Van Zyl and Mans-Kemp 2020; Wells 2012). NPO executives regularly deal with disengaged, power-hungry and manipulative board members (Do Adro and Leitão 2020). Moreover, NPOs also deal with excessively compliant committee members. The pressure to be compliant has led NPOs to adopt a business-like stance (Dart 2004) and the evaluation frameworks developed have often diluted the abilities of NPOs to deliver on their projects (Carman and Fredericks 2008; Neesham et al. 2017).</p>

Source: Author's own work

Table 5-9 Adaptive capacities summary: Collaboration - External and Succession Planning

<b>Adaptive capacity category: Tactical Planning and Restructuring</b>	
<b>Resilience Factors</b>	<b>Pitfalls to developing adaptive capacities</b>
<b>Collaboration - External</b>	
<p>As the NPO sector expands, competition accelerates causing reason for inter-organisational alliances and collaboration. NPO funders have increasingly required collaboration among the NPOs they support (Shumate et al. 2018; Witesman and Heiss 2017). Obtaining knowledge via collaboration enables operative partnerships to develop which results in enhanced organisational capability (Urban and Gaffurini 2017).</p> <p>NPO leaders often need to work with limited resources and, according to McManus et al. (2007), resources are vital to the resilience of an organisation and provide a strategic advantage to organisations when they are used to their full potential. The RDT emphasises the interdependency of different establishments and their environments and deriving resources from the outer environment is a precondition for survival (Moldavanova and Goerdel 2018). The United Nations is endorsing the enactment of the SDGs via multi-stakeholder undertakings and the ability of NPOs to participate in these multifaceted partner relations is expected to be a routine prerequisite for gaining access to resources (Daniels and Valdés 2021; Fowler 2016). NPOs will be required to coherently articulate a convincing value proposition in relation to their mission when engaging in multi-partner relationships (Maboya and McKay 2019).</p> <p>Partnering with NPOs is a conduit for corporates to achieve their social accountability goals, simultaneously assisting NPOs to fulfil their missions. Such partnerships are perceived as a strategic collaboration among companies and NPOs whereby risks, assets and skills are shared within projects benefiting each partner and community (Eid and Sabella 2014). A recent study into the motives for NPO and corporate collaborations found that NPOs and corporate managers are firmly motivated to participate in partnerships from a moral motive of resolving a societal or environmental matter (Spitz et al. 2021). Furthermore, Paarlberg and Hwang (2017) found that increased competition often results in increased access to new resources not previously present within the sector. Therefore, increased competition could have positive effects and is dependent on the NPO's adaptability (Paarlberg and Hwang 2017; Curley et al. 2021).</p>	<p>While there are several obvious benefits to collaboration, it still comes at a cost. Collaboration is viewed by many key NPO actors as a necessity and a fundamental value of NPOs (Guo 2007; Witesman and Heiss 2017). Sustaining good collaborations necessitates investments of time and resources. Cooperating in various collaborations that do not serve as actual partnerships becomes a strain on NPO resources and could result in reduced organisational capacity (Witesman and Heiss 2017; Zeimers et al. 2019). The lack of collaboration between NPOs was listed as the element most lacking and that required improvement in the NPO sector with a need to increase accountability, promote transparency and expand trust in the NPO sector as a whole by the participants. A lack of trust and a desire to protect and promote only individual NPO interests rather than working towards the greater good or common causes, were pitfalls to external collaboration. It was found that fear of funding constraints related to the COVID-19 pandemic was one of the reasons that made it difficult to collaborate. It is easy to form an NPO, but passionate individuals should first engage to see if there were already entities working towards the same cause. It was suggested that there should be improved regulations to increase the barriers to entry from a national governance perspective. These are strongly related to the backdrop of the rapid growth of the NPO sector which has occurred in a turbulent environment characterised by technological disruptions, an increase in natural and man-made disasters, a rise in non-traditional competitors, regulatory disorders and geopolitical upheavals (Lv et al. 2019; Reith 2010; Scearce and Wang 2020).</p>
<b>Succession Planning</b>	
<p>According to Pfeffer and Salancik (2003), an executive's succession is viewed by the RDT as an internal tactical response to environmental qualms and dependencies. An effective succession plan can reduce environmental reliance and increase organisational performance (Hillman et al. 2009). The planned replacement of executives is imperative for all types of entities and could be necessary at any stage of an entity's life cycle (Li 2019). An uneventful and successful executive changeover underwrites organisational performance; an unsuccessful effort could result in resource shortfalls, identity calamities and power struggles (Kavadis et al. 2020; Li 2019; Farah et al. 2020). An NPO must be well prepared for a successful leadership transition for both a planned and unforeseen departure (Do Adro and Leitão 2020). Therefore, planning successors to an NPO's leadership is an adaptive capacity that could also present an opportunity to address the issue of ageing NPO leaders. Furthermore, a transformation agenda may also be beneficial while planning for successors.</p>	<p>A study by Jules (2021) found that not all NPOs appreciated the need for a leadership succession plan and relied on alternative mechanisms such as purchasing the services of an interim leader within budget constraints. Furthermore, engaging in actual planning activities for a successor is dependent on several factors, such as NPO capacity, accessibility of resources, investments and organisational culture and these could present as barriers to planning for successors. Studies on leadership succession planning in the NPO sector have been sporadic over the past three decades but have seen an uptake in recent years (Boykins 2019; Li 2019; Yawson 2019). A significant number of leaders in the NPO sector are ageing alongside a lack of qualified leaders (Do Adro and Leitão 2020).</p>

Source: Author's own work

Table 5-10 Adaptive capacities summary: Alliances and Mergers and SDG Alignment

<b>Adaptive capacity category: Tactical Planning and Restructuring</b>	
<b>Resilience Factors</b>	<b>Pitfalls to developing adaptive capacities</b>
<b>Alliances and Mergers</b>	
<p>Sometimes, the resources needed by one entity to safeguard survival are carried by other entities and actors. Consequently, even officially independent entities may rely on each other for access to key resources, creating strong motivations to form alliances and mergers and explore alternate forms of collaboration among institutions (Moldavanova and Goerdel 2018; Sowa 2009). In the NPO sector, mergers arise as a tactic for development and expansion, especially when environmental uncertainty and resource shortages exist (Pietroburgo and Wernet 2010). Motivating factors for mergers in the NPO sector relate to possibilities of stable funding and improved operational efficiencies. Other motivating factors are developing political strength, expansion of the service offering and improved service value (Malatesta and Smith 2014; Pietroburgo and Wernet 2010). The merger practice of NPOs is similar to that of the corporate sector. Similarities relate to actionable steps and components to be reviewed, such as commonalities, cost savings and other benefits (Gabriel and Marian 2017). According to Malatesta and Smith (2014), the foremost reason to consider a merger between NPOs is capacity development and improved delivery of the mission. Some benefits of a merger between entities are the stimulation of innovation, enhancement of competences and diluting of the risk of new projects undertaken (Malatesta and Smith 2014). Tactical restructuring is one of the approaches that NPOs can consider to achieve continuity, however, this is often ignored until no further possibilities exist (Krige et al. 2019; MacIndoe and Sullivan 2014). Tactical restructuring in the form of alliances or mergers is therefore a key adaptive capacity for NPOs to engage at opportunistic times to reduce existential concerns, particularly when competition is high, and funding is constrained.</p>	<p>Mergers and acquisitions in the NPO sector require consistent scanning of the external environment to anticipate changes and adapt to the funding landscape in line with the RDT and organisational resilience theories. The quantum of funding that the large NPOs can attract in relation to the smaller NPOs was also identified. The size of NPOs is also a key factor to be considered because larger NPOs can successfully reduce their administrative expenses during a financial shock (De Andrés-Alonso et al. 2015). Donors play numerous roles, such as mediators, NPO matchmakers and financial benefactors, in the quest for restructuring NPOs. However, some donors view this role with reservation, as it may infringe on the leadership role of NPO boards. Evidence of both positive mergers, including donor involvement, and negative outcomes, regarding merger failures where NPOs were forced to terminate, have been documented (Fischer, Vadapalli and Coulton 2017). A downside to a merger occurs when one NPO is in a stronger resource and negotiating position than the other NPO. To avoid this downside, NPOs should consider merging and restructuring when they are in a strong position and seek opportunities before existential threats occur (Fischer et al. 2017). During a merger of two distinct entities conflict can be created at the operational and individual levels as entities with varied goals contend with complexities in accepting mutual philosophies. If an organisation does not attend to issues related to philosophy and values, the merger may eventually fail (Gabriel and Marian 2017).</p>
<b>SDG Alignment</b>	
<p>Alignment with the SDGs could provide an NPO with differentiation. Importantly, when NPOs begin to talk about and report on their work from an SDG perspective, a spotlight will be turned on the contribution of the NPOs to the SDGs. Therefore, this was found to be a means of promoting the awareness of the NPOs that the NPO leaders felt was lacking in the NPO sector. There was also general agreement that this approach could assist with unlocking funding from key stakeholders such as governments and corporates. However, none of the participants was currently implementing this approach but felt that it was something they needed to do. NPOs can be found to work across most, if not, all of the 17 United Nations SDGs (Fowler 2016). The opportunity for NPOs to understand and augment their contributions to the SDGs is great. Alignment of project deliverables and reporting to the SDGs could highlight their contributions to the SDGs. This could, consequently, enable improved communication with key donors such as corporate and government agencies that have a vested interest in collaborating with and funding NPOs that contribute to the achievement of South Africa's SDGs. Furthermore, the NPO's contribution to the SDGs is also an opportunity to differentiate themselves from other NPOs working in a similar space. This is related to the collaboration and stakeholder engagement aspects. It is also strongly related to the project management, monitoring and evaluation adaptive capacities. The conservation of ecosystems, a culture that respects life in water and on land, as mentioned in the SDGs can avoid future pandemics but this cannot be achieved without institutions such as environmental NPOs that operate across business and government sectors in service of communities and the environment (Nemţeanu and Dabija 2020; Ng 2020; O'Connell 2020).</p>	<p>NPOs occupy a central position in delivering on the SDGs and other global environmental and social commitments to which South Africa has prescribed and such time-sensitive targets may incur setbacks or not be achieved at all (Naidoo and Fisher 2020). Economic disturbances resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic have decreased the financial and human resources of conservation and environmentally focused entities. Difficulties include funding losses for conservation generated from activities such as ecotourism and government funding that are transferred to social relief efforts (e.g., grants for unemployed citizens); funder urgencies have shifted to pandemic relief efforts and decreased funding from corporates and high-wealth individuals (Sandbrook et al. 2019). Together these adverse effects could outweigh the brief gains for biodiversity resulting from the pandemic (Sandbrook, Gómez-Baggethun and Adams 2020). Recently, the vast majority of funding proposals and applications require an explanation of the monitoring and assessment of the intended project, including the data collection methods, frequency, analysis and interpretation of the funding impact on donors and other stakeholders. There is a general dearth of NPO information available and reporting on SDG achievements could improve an NPO's status and bolster NPO legitimacy (Ssekamatte 2018).</p>

Source: Author's own work

The adaptive capacity groups are not standalone groupings and often information related to one aspect can be related to another grouping. Each of the groupings is interconnected. For example, studies have found a positive correlation between an NPO's online fame and its financial upshots, therefore, enhancing online prominence should become part of an NPO's tactical plan to improve its financial accomplishments (Campbell and Lambright 2019; Lee 2021). A strong brand can assist NPOs in raising funds during turbulent times and ensure that it can influence other resources such as manpower and rally masses into action when required (Mitchell and Clark 2019).

Social media has enabled NPOs to reach a large number of individuals and the opportunities to raise awareness are both simultaneously seamless and challenging (Lee 2021; Moon et al. 2015). Enhancing NPO leadership impact and employee or volunteer performance are also related to the ICT adaptive capacity. Financial resources were found to be a key determinant for NPOs in relation to long-term survival (Maboya and McKay 2019). The literature review also revealed that innovative fundraising mechanisms could be explored following the turbulent impact of COVID-19 (Yoganathan et al. 2021). Combined with financial resources used effectively, human resources could also prevent excessive reliance on external funding (Kicová 2020).

The first new adaptive capacity identified from the data analysis was the NPO transformation agenda. The absence of transformation in the NPO cases studied was evident and, with a growing number of ageing NPO leaders, it is important to build the capacity of black environmentalists who could step into leadership positions. The second new adaptive capacity discussed was NPOs' contribution to the SDGs. When NPOs begin to talk about and report on their work from an SDG perspective, the spotlight will be turned on the contribution of the NPOs to the SDGs. Therefore, this could be a means of promoting the awareness of the NPOs that the NPO leaders felt was lacking in the NPO sector. There was also general agreement that this approach could assist with unlocking funding from key stakeholders such as governments and corporates. Therefore, the SDG aspect could also be applied to the financial practices' adaptive capacity.

The alignment of NPOs with academic institutions was the final new adaptive capacity discussed. Effectively, the NPO sector provides an ideal opportunity for academics to develop new scientific knowledge and this academic space could be an opportunity for NPOs to attract funding and develop key stakeholder relationships while enhancing the legitimacy of their NPOs with existing and potential donors.

The common link among the RDT, RBV, stakeholder management and organisational resilience theories is the focus on resources. Furthermore, these theories entail a broad spectrum of strategic management aspects that can be applied to different organisations in varying degrees in a turbulent environment. NPOs need to manage a balance of sourcing resources from the external

environment while also reducing their dependence on certain resources, with due regard to how they access and utilise resources in turbulent times.

Barriers to organisational resilience are connected to managers' beliefs that no benefit is gained from a resilience outlook as it involves unnecessary administrative measures (Vakilzadeh and Haase 2020). Consequently, this conceptual framework could assist in reducing this organisational resilience barrier by demonstrating the interconnectedness and importance of tactical administration to the NPO.

This NPO adaptive capacity framework will also contribute to the academic literature on organisational resilience theory which is in the nascent phase (Ma, Xiao et al. 2018). NPOs differ immensely in terms of size, competences, impact and purpose; nonetheless, at its core, each NPO has the distinct purpose of benefiting its constituencies (Skhosana 2020). Hence, this framework is intended to provide diverse and unique NPOs with a holistic view of their organisations and is a means of promoting organisational resilience within the historical background. It is not intended to be generalisable to the NPO sector.

The contemporary view of the pitfalls and resilience factors of the NPO sector in general in the currently lacking overall governance of the NPO sector in South Africa will be valuable in supporting policymakers at a national and local level. This framework will further assist leaders and managers of NPOs to deepen their understanding of the adaptive capacities of NPOs and the efficient use of limited resources, while helping them to understand how to navigate their NPOs through increased competition and other environmental turbulence, thus reducing managerial barriers on a case-by-case basis.

### **5.3 Research Question 1**

#### **What are the adaptive capacities of South African environmental non-profit organisations considering a turbulent environment from an organisational resilience construct viewpoint?**

The first research objective was to explore the adaptive capacities of South African NPOs considering a turbulent environment. This objective was achieved through the initial discussion of adaptive capacities in the literature review and the discussion of the data analysis from the participant interviews concerning the five theoretical frameworks discussed in Chapter 1. The discussion of the findings was presented in the previous chapter. The interconnected adaptive capacities identified and grouped within three broad categories are Culture, Leadership and People, Tactical Administration and Tactical Planning and Restructuring. Within each of these three broad categories, six adaptive capacities are included and discussed.

### 5.3.1 Culture, Leadership and People

As depicted in Chapter 2, the first broad adaptive capacity identified was People, and later following the analysis and findings of the data collated and as depicted in Chapter 4 this broad heading was expanded to Culture, Leadership and People to describe this adaptive capacity grouping more aptly. In the first broad category of Culture, Leadership and People, Cogency-based Leadership, was the first adaptive capacity identified. Although several leadership approaches can be utilised by NPO leaders and staff, funders and other stakeholders demand and expect more from NPO leaders (Moore 2019). The quality of NPO leadership can shape the opportunities and experiences of entire communities (Howieson and Hodges 2014). Effective NPO leaders share the prospects of tactical thinking and are involved in enlisting volunteers who are well-matched to the NPO and level of service (Sneath 2021). Furthermore, an evolving culture of shared leadership in NPOs requires broad engagement and participation in dialogues about leadership and requires the promotion of trust across all levels (Routhieaux 2015).

The general theme across the leadership attributes explored was the ability to empower and motivate staff for improved decision-making, thereby promoting accountability between the different levels of the NPO and uniting staff under a common purpose. The most cited leadership value among the participants was trust. Trust can be lost quickly and needs to be formed or rebuilt in deliberate and systematic steps. Leading teams from a culture of mistrust requires the creation of opportunities for teamwork and collaboration and relies on vigilant and constant execution and reiteration (Cilliers and Greyvenstein 2012; De Waal et al. 2019; Gardner 2016; Pittinsky 2010).

Gibson and Tarrant's (2010) resilience triangle model depict leadership, people and knowledge as competences that are all equally crucial to organisational resilience. The model developed by (Lee et al. 2013) also included the element of leadership as an adaptive capacity. Hence, leadership is an adaptive capacity that affects several other capacities of an entity (Pittinsky 2010). A cogency-based leadership approach underwrites aspects of being convincing, clear and logical while enabling a flexible approach between various leadership styles.

The engagement of Employees, Volunteers and Board members is the second adaptive capacity. NPO executives regularly deal with disengaged, depleted, power-hungry and manipulative board members (Do Adro and Leitão 2020). Moreover, NPOs also deal with excessively compliant committee members who provide limited direction to the entity. Further challenges related to NPO governance include the board's interference with the executive's role which increases executive stress levels and results in burnout, undermining the leader's performance and consequently the NPO's as well (Olinske and Hellman 2017). Certain experiments found that the board frequently has misgivings about an NPO leader's capacity to fulfil the essential requisites

of performing activities due to the board's self-confidence in its governance skills (Bernstein et al. 2016).

The behaviour of both an NPO board and the executive leader regularly underwrites uncertainties, confusion and conflict and is justified by the recurrent lack of role elucidation (Bernstein et al. 2016). An example of such board and executive engagement challenges experienced was provided by one participant during the account of the board members' input during a board meeting. An example of the blurring of the roles between the executives and the board was evident in an example from another participant and also alludes to the pressure experienced in fundraising expectations. This finding aligns with the findings of the reviewed literature.

An employee's aptitude for organisational resilience is an individual's belief in their ability to execute activities with expertise and understanding when performing to the specifications required in turbulent conditions (Kim 2021). Efficacy is a crucial dimension of resilience which refers to an employee's belief that their employer can deal with a turbulent situation (Kim 2021). During a crisis, staff levels of concern increase. Lower productivity, decreased staff morale, higher absenteeism rates and employee unrest are consequences of this, thereby negatively impacting the NPO (Spillan 2003).

Employees are vital assets and when employees believe that decisions are made to maintain stability, they are more inclined to participate and meet the strategic goals of the entity responsibly. Equally, when stakeholders know that an organisation's response to a crisis is speedy, truthful and considers all involved, their trust in the integrity of the organisation increases (De Waal et al. 2019; Gardner 2016; Kaltenbrunner and Reichel 2018; Spillan 2003). In an atmosphere of trust, turbulent events can be reviewed explicitly across different organisational levels, including several stakeholders (Broekema et al. 2017).

Volunteers provide an equally valuable resource to NPOs as do employees (Marquis and Raynard 2015). Volunteers can reduce the costs of project implementation but require investment in enrolment, teaching and management costs (Manetti et al. 2015). Volunteers as a key resource to NPOs offer their time, expertise and labour that NPOs could not ordinarily afford to leverage (Erks et al. 2020). Unlike the corporate world, NPOs rely on volunteers to work both at the director level, e.g., board trustees, and at the operative level, e.g., administering daily tasks or serving on committees etc. Consequently, managing unpaid workers at different levels has its own challenges (Sneath 2021). There, therefore, exists a complex yet central relationship between the employees of an NPO and the volunteers who work across different levels (Guttentag 2009; Malinen and Harju 2017; Sneath 2021).

When volunteers leave an NPO, turnover rates increase and this has a negative impact on the NPO's productivity (Lee 2016). A volunteer's intent to continue contributing at a particular NPO is dependent on their satisfaction with the NPO meeting their expectations. Volunteer expectations could be met by an NPO manager who satisfies the volunteers' reasons for volunteering. A volunteer's relationship with an NPO and its employees or leaders is central to the length of time the volunteer remains engaged with the NPO (Crotty and Ljubownikow 2020). Supportive communication from management or supervisors in relation to volunteers will increase positive engagements, subsequently increasing their volunteer experiences and intent to remain with the NPO. This will reduce NPO expenditure on attracting and training new volunteers. Satisfied volunteers are also more likely to assist with recruiting other volunteers to join the NPO (Lee 2016; Usadolo and Usadolo 2019).

NPO underwriting of human resources is below standard in comparison to other segments, however, the outcomes in relation to staff performance are encouraging and significant for the realisation of NPO missions (Ariza-Montes and Lucia-Casademunt 2016). NPOs tend to consider their human resources key to novel individual and organisational capabilities being advanced. They focus on adding value to the NPO, thereby necessitating their upkeep and management (Gile et al. 2018; Oliveira et al. 2021). Both employees and volunteers are considered key stakeholders and, in an adaptive capacity, are key to NPOs achieving their objectives. However, this adaptive capacity would need to be managed well to avoid pitfalls such as unemployed volunteer expectations and appointing staff that do not buy into the mission and vision of the NPO.

Internal Collaboration is the third adaptive capacity. The organisational resilience model developed by Lee et al. (2013) included within the adaptive capacity element the detraction of silos. Internally, in for-profit entities and NPOs, silos can develop both from a hierarchical perspective and horizontally across teams and departments (Cilliers and Greyvenstein 2012). Silos do fulfil a purpose and when individuals feel strongly connected to their units, they can feel contented, work more efficiently and carry more responsibilities. However, silos can also cause individuals to be less efficient when engaging with people from other units and less inclined to make an effort to work well with other teams (Pittinsky 2010).

Promoting teamwork and collaboration internally can be costly and the related coordination exertions, risks and start-up expenses may not yield a return if the reason for collaboration is unclear (Gardner 2016). As the complexity of tasks increases along with uncertainty in the environment, it is evident that individuals working on their own cannot solve issues faced by their organisations. Instead, there is a need for individuals from multiple disciplines to combine their expertise to address issues from an organisational resilience perspective (De Waal et al. 2019; Gardner 2016).

Moving from a silo culture to a collaborative culture necessitates prudent forethought, conscientious management and devoted upkeep. Some of the practical steps required to achieve this are assigning responsibility and accountability, sharing an understanding of the purpose and confronting mistrust systematically (Pittinsky 2010). To promote collaboration and communication among staff, leaders may also involve co-workers in retreats to engage in decisive planning for an NPO's future (Sneath 2021).

Endorsing internal collaboration is most feasible when it becomes a strategic value of the entity, however, it is also imperative to reward and recognise individuals who demonstrate collaborative behaviour (De Waal et al. 2019). The quality and results of effective internal and external collaboration can strengthen an organisation's overall ability to more effectively deliver its purpose (De Waal et al. 2019; Gardner 2016; Pittinsky 2010; Shaw and Frost 2015).

Innovation is the fourth adaptive capacity. The process of innovation can be facilitated by the inclusion of stakeholder participation (Wehnert et al. 2018). Three groups of stakeholders related to societal influence are policy creators, professional consumers, such as corporates and NPOs, and end consumers, such as communities. Each of the stakeholders plays diverse roles, for instance as initiators or beneficiaries, in the process of innovation (Spaapen et al. 2007). Respectively, each category of stakeholder will have different incentives founded on what they believe to be of value (Adams et al. 2016).

In the NPO world, there is often pressure and expectation from corporate donors and governments for NPOs to improve their management and overall systems (Balduck et al. 2015; Singh and Mthuli 2021). Yet, often the funds required to develop and improve systems and report efficiencies are not underwritten by donors (Adro and Fernandes 2021). Systems that are better geared towards introducing novelty are more resilient (Cahill 2010). In turn, it enables better able systems, to survive and acclimatise to shocks (Cahill 2010; Mehmood 2016). According to the RDT, pressure on resources will prompt a search for alternate resources (Balduck et al. 2015). NPOs implement innovative tactics to diversify income streams to avoid dependency on resources mentioned in the RDT (Margiono et al. 2018). In differentiating income streams, NPOs are forced to adopt an entrepreneurial approach and transform into social innovation enterprises (Peng and Liang 2019).

Certain facets present in the NPO set-up, such as being self-regulating, private and voluntary, make NPOs well-positioned to stimulate new ideas and launch new practices (Adro and Fernandes 2021; Mulgan et al. 2007). NPOs are regularly encouraged to make investments in innovation as an organisational tenet (Adro and Fernandes 2021; Dover and Lawrence 2012). However, this

remains a key challenge facing NPOs as it is not clear how to achieve this (Adro and Fernandes 2021).

A solution to this may lie with NPO employees. NPO employees often engage on the front lines with low-income earners and local communities where they will have the ability to create pathways for social innovation. In addition to the employees within the sector, the large number of volunteers who hail from diverse economic sectors are also able to listen to the unmet needs of society in general (TEPSIE 2014). This unique interface that the NPO sector holds enables possible social innovators to be mindful of the untouched assets and capabilities within local communities that can be exploited to design solutions, engage communities and generate expert knowledge (Altuna et al. 2015; TEPSIE 2014). Engaging employees at all levels could influence an NPO's culture to become more amenable to innovative habits.

An environment that encourages innovation, individual creativity and emotional well-being can improve an entity's innovative abilities (Do Adro and Leitão 2020). The process of NPO innovation is reliant on factors such as culture, leadership, internal properties, such as control and formalisation, external turbulence and general aspects, such as the size or age of the NPO (Bernstein et al. 2016; Do Adro and Leitão 2020; Jaskyte 2015; Shin and Choi 2019).

Studies have revealed that an organisation's capability to innovate during periods of adversity is crucial for organisational resilience (Vakilzadeh and Haase 2020). During a crisis, innovation by employees could become an appropriate strategy to use to overcome adversity (Senbeto and Hon 2020). As the process of NPO innovation is reliant on factors such as organisational culture and leadership, innovation is an adaptive capacity that is strongly linked to the broad category of Culture, Leadership and People.

A Resilience-based Culture is the fifth adaptive capacity. Several aspects influence organisational resilience concurrently and in diverse and often competing approaches (Andersson et al. 2019). Organisational culture is described as "the values, beliefs, and assumptions that are held by members of an organisation and which guide behaviour and facilitate shared meaning" (Nieminen et al. 2019, p. 5). An organisational culture that promotes resilience and innovation recognises that an adverse event is unpredictable from a timing perspective, therefore, a risk-consciousness culture based on long-term survival is proactively nurtured (Vakilzadeh and Haase 2020). According to Pryce (2021), organisational culture offers a means for producing transformative change and provides continuous organisational resilience that can confront the unanticipated.

Organisational culture is regularly cited in studies relating to organisational resilience but has often been discussed with a focus on specific factors, for example, a culture of innovation (Westley 2013), risk (Vakilzadeh and Haase 2020), collaboration (Pittinsky 2010) and monitoring

and evaluation (Bach-Mortensen and Montgomery 2018). However, Pryce (2021) proposed a holistic approach to organisational culture to build organisational resilience. This is possible when organisational resilience is entrenched in underlying values and principles and operations are incorporated within the multiplicities of the entity to address turbulent events.

Pryce (2021) recognises that the human rudiments of an entity, e.g., leadership, staff inspiration governance etc., are as indispensable as material resources which are key to enacting organisational resilience. Adaptive capacity is a crucial aspect of organisational resilience, underwriting the need for contemplation and learning to stimulate new behaviour patterns (Pryce 2021; Rahi 2019). Furthermore, the interplay between organisational resilience and culture can promote an environment that integrates the entity holistically in the pursuit of dealing with the unexpected. Therefore, a culture of resilience is important to underwriting organisational resilience.

This sixth adaptive capacity, called Transformation Agenda, was identified as a new adaptive capacity during the data analysis phase of the study. A positive correlation between the number of womenfolk serving on a board should exist (Gazzola et al. 2020; Ward and Forker 2017). Following this finding from the literature reviewed, only one participant reflected on the gender representation of their board members. The challenges experienced in achieving a shift in gender representation towards a more diverse board in terms of both gender and race were also evident in Participant 4's reflections and are related to the diversity and transformation dynamics of South Africa's apartheid legacy backdrop.

NPOs tend to consider their human resources key to novel individual and organisational capabilities being advanced, where they focus on adding value to the NPO, thereby necessitating their upkeep and management (Gile et al. 2018; Oliveira et al. 2021). An awareness of the need to develop young black environmentalists' capacity is also alluded to. Furthermore, it was noted that all participants participating in the study were white and held senior positions, therefore, the absence of transformation in the NPO cases studied is also evident. Additionally, a significant number of leaders in the NPO sector are ageing alongside a lack of qualified leaders (Do Adro and Leitão 2020). Therefore, this Transformation Agenda adaptive capacity would enable NPOs to address the challenges related to ensuring that they are representative of age, gender and race from an employee, management and board member perspective.

### **5.3.2 Tactical Administration**

As depicted in Chapter 2, the second broad adaptive capacity identified was Practices, and later following the analysis and findings of the data collated and as depicted in Chapter 4 this broad heading was expanded to Tactical Administration to describe this adaptive capacity grouping

more aptly. The next broad category is Tactical Administration and the first adaptive capacity within this group is Programme Practices. NPO activities from a project management study perspective are not only a financial, technological and scientific subject but also a moral subject (Cicmil and O'Laocha 2016). From studies conducted in the NPO project management realm, the bulk has focused on international progress (Lannon and Walsh 2016). Conventional project management practices suited to well-defined and measured projects may not constantly suit the requirements of the communities meant to be assisted by the NPOs' social goals via the projects. From a practical perspective, project management can present overheads which are perceived as profligate of constrained resources. Furthermore, it can produce conflicts in cooperative spaces where entities working to shape societal transformation adopt diverse methods (Lannon and Walsh 2016).

As NPOs address the issue of constrained resources to accomplish bold objectives, they explore using managerial practices from the corporate world to build efficiency. Project management is preferred as it enables the application of knowledge, procedures, talent and practices that improve the probability of accomplishment over a broad array of projects (Anderson and Lannon 2018). The central significance of relations and agency should be positioned with the outcomes-based priorities of project management that are progressively viewed as success factors (Moya-Coronado et al. 2021).

Globalisation, increased competition and technological advancements have boosted knowledge as a valued asset within entities (Anantatmula 2005). Knowledge administration is subsequently significant as certain projects rely on the production of new knowledge incorporated into managerial practice. The transmission and assimilation of knowledge among projects avoid the duplication of past errors from both a project and institutional perspective (Javernick-Will and Levitt 2010).

A study based on the four pillars knowledge management framework found that employee resource administration and stakeholder administration had the clearest connection with organisation-wide knowledge management (Oun et al. 2016). Oun et al. (2016) found that the administration of projects progresses as knowledge management practices across the entity are progressively used. According to Rugenyi and Bwisa (2016), project achievements and project administration can both be ascertained by the degree to which constraints are surpassed to realise the project objectives.

Collaboration between different entities facilitates the interchange of resources and expertise (Rugenyi and Bwisa 2016). Leveraging the benefits of knowledge assimilation and evolution positively impacts innovation execution, resulting in improved organisational performance (Cho

et al. 2017). The realisation of improved project outcomes is feasible with the implementation of innovation and aptitude training programmes and opportunities for staff to build their competencies (Al-Nabae and Sammani 2021; Wisdom et al. 2014). This was also corroborated in the study by Oun et al. (2016).

Cost administration of projects is enhanced when entities efficiently employ leadership activities related to knowledge management such as assurances to manage knowledge gleaned from programmes at an organisational level, implementation of performance metrics tracking developments and rewarding teams for the distribution of project knowledge (Oun et al. 2016). Therefore, developing efficiencies in programme activities is considered an important NPO adaptive capacity.

The second adaptive capacity of the Tactical Administration category is Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting. A central challenge for NPOs is to design systems of measurement that support the attainment of clear mission objectives. Furthermore, assessment and evaluation efforts that extend outside this frame of reference could become a distraction for the NPO's project activities (Ebrahim and Rangan 2014). The effective management of socially oriented programmes is an essential prerequisite for accomplishing the best performance outcomes possible and effective administrative tools should be adopted (De Camargo et al. 2019). Projects, including social orientation, should include stakeholder management theory. This could be achieved by engaging stakeholders and including their input in project management processes advocated by the NPO, thus, including stakeholders' views in assessing the project impact (De Camargo et al. 2019; Moya-Colorado et al. 2021).

While most NPOs are keen to comply with project or organisational monitoring and assessments, NPOs can also refrain by choosing what to assess, how to evaluate and what to include in reports (Arvidson and Lyon 2014). NPOs can also actively and willingly use social influence measures for educational and publicity purposes and as a means of applying control to their environments (Arvidson and Lyon 2014). The capability to adapt and progressively cultivate improved upshots is connected to efficient monitoring and evaluation methods (Lindamood et al. 2021). Key enabling components required to implement efficient monitoring and assessments are securing the proper support, an ethos that advocates assessment and the desire to be answerable to parties that hold a stake (Bach-Mortensen and Montgomery 2018). The NPO sector and the philanthropic community have been promoting monitoring and assessment, however, considering their advantages, the for-profit sector is progressively adopting monitoring and assessment practices (Ssekamate 2018).

The third adaptive capacity is Stakeholder Engagement: Funders and Beneficiaries. NPOs generally operate in multifaceted environments with multiple stakeholders such as donors, government officials, volunteers, communities, participants etc. For internal stakeholders, such as senior management and employees, the board may be construed as an additional stakeholder (Balser and McClusky 2005). The natural environment is considered a key, but silent, stakeholder in the non-profit segment and business world (Jastrzębska 2016).

NPOs usually require resources and validity from their stakeholders and that creates a source of uncertainty for NPOs as these are practically not predictable or controllable, necessitating improved management of these stakeholders (Balser and McClusky 2005). Embedding social media into NPO strategy is an opportunity to achieve improved effectiveness for stakeholder management. This is mostly beneficial for smaller to average-sized NPOs where resources are limited and they cannot invest in advertising or stakeholder management (Schipper and Latham 2019).

Serving all stakeholders results in positive returns for both stockholders and stakeholders; stakeholders are a key component of increasing an entity's value (Rajablu et al. 2015). A study undertaken by Uribe et al. (2018) found that the sustainability construct regards stakeholders as an important characteristic. Lately, stakeholder theory has been the central theoretical provision that enables the understanding of these relations from numerous viewpoints and has become progressively significant. Ramachandran (2019) explains that no entity can exist in a vacuum and that recently CSR has become synonymous with stakeholder management. Mindfulness about the effect of corporate decisions on society and the environment is evident in stakeholders to the extent that stakeholders can reward or penalise corporations (Uribe et al. 2018).

To ensure effective resilience management, an entity is required to have a concise comprehension of the problems that underwrite its resilience, from a daily operational perspective to a potential disaster scenario (McManus et al. 2008). In the resilience management framework developed by McManus et al. (2008), this is referred to as constructing situation alertness and comprises the present and predictable future operational environment, the resources to which the institute has access and the suppositions and restrictions of internal and external stakeholders.

The findings from studies by Ramachandran (2019), Rajablu et al. (2015) and Uribe et al. (2018) on stakeholder management all relate to common themes such as organisational sustainability or organisational resilience and this can be correlated to the NPO sector as well. It is important to note that the NPO sector, similarly, is a key stakeholder in businesses and often plays an advocacy role for the general well-being of the environment and society (Novy et al. 2019). Similar to corporates, NPO stakeholders often provide valuable resources without which NPOs may perish

(Verbeke and Tung 2013). This, therefore, requires the efficient management of key NPO stakeholders.

The fourth adaptive capacity in the Tactical Administration category is Brand. Financial accomplishments are not the principal aim of NPOs and financial instruments alone are inadequate to measure performance (Balsler and McClusky 2005). Instead, NPOs typically acquire resources and acceptability from stakeholders, therefore, a stakeholder management positioning is more pertinent (Leipnitz 2014). The NPO sector, specifically concerning relations of vested parties holding a stake and branding, is academically under-researched (Andreasen 2012; Mitchell and Clark 2019).

The advancements and sophistication of marketing tools facilitate their utilisation in combination with proficiency related to enticing and retaining current and potential donors (Fonseca et al. 2021). Increased competition to acquire and retain donors has forced NPOs to strengthen their marketing efforts (Naskrent and Siebelt 2011). A challenge identified in several studies was the lack of appropriate leadership skills and the prioritisation of marketing efforts by NPO boards (Lin et al. 2009; Liu and Ko 2011; Pope et al. 2009). Specifically, Pope et al. (2009) propose that marketing skills become a prerequisite for board members. Including other means, this will address brand promotion and weaknesses in the marketing sphere, such as fundraising and efficiently reaching volunteers or beneficiaries.

Several NPOs do not buy into the concept of a brand and feel that they are not selling a product. In an increasingly competitive space, standing out from the crowd is important not only to attract funding but also donors who are aligned with the NPO's cause. It was found that the process of building a brand could also assist NPOs in identifying their niche space, supporting NPO leaders in preventing deviation from their mission objectives.

The current rapid expansion of the NPO sector requires NPO leaders to reassess their approaches to their missions and project offerings and to explore innovative means of providing services, particularly during times of financial predicaments (Göttlichová and Soukalova 2015). Studies have found that social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, positively influences philanthropic contributions (Guo and Saxton 2014; Li and McDougale 2017). For NPOs, social media presents benefits such as minimal cost, enabling dialogic communication and boosting engagements, all resulting in increased brand awareness (Belenioti and Vassiliadis 2017; Nah and Saxton 2013). Therefore, a strong brand is an adaptive capacity that requires some effort to inculcate from a board and leadership perspective.

The fifth adaptive capacity in the Tactical Administration grouping is Information and Communication Technologies. A vast digital gap exists between established and developing

nations and information technologies are key to bridging this gap (Ayanso et al. 2010). ICT can be interpreted as “technologies used by people and organisations for their information processing and communication purposes” (Zhang et al. 2008, p. 628). Broadly, the implementation of information technologies can be a compelling driver of institutional change. Wide-ranging use of automated networking technologies can stimulate the transformation of an entity’s composition, values, operations and stakeholders (Hackler and Saxton 2007). Similar to the corporate sector, the NPO sector can gain considerably from utilising emergent information technologies (Huang and Karthikeyan 2015).

ICT has become a contemporary social catalyst for improving the lives of communities and, for NPOs, technology has presented a transformative power (Nicholson et al. 2016). Access to the internet and cellular devices has enabled movements via social media which were significant developments in the NPO sphere (Raman 2016). Active users of social media are attracted to this medium for their contributions, disclosure and dissemination of material, enabling the spread of awareness (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). Telecommunications has progressively supported the merging of technology to underwrite improved reach; the field of analytics provides meaning to data and cloud processing has enabled real-time access (Raman 2016).

Research has established a positive correlation between a firm’s increase in status on social media and trades and other routine indicators of a business. Social media measures, such as the volume of followers and positive sentiments, are important gauges of a firm’s worth (Lee 2021; Moon et al. 2015). Social media has a superior proclivity to serve if it is combined with upward mobility, enterprise analytics and cloud processing and can assist NPOs in achieving their social missions (Raman 2016). Information technologies can be leveraged by NPOs to improve project and fundraising activities, stakeholder information access, raise cognisance of social issues and establish legitimacy (Levine and Zahradnik 2012; Richardson et al. 2011). A distinction was found where countries in the Global South relied less on direct mail, advertising and Facebook and instead relied on ‘word-of-mouth’ communication channels (Proust et al. 2013).

ICT implementation barriers in rural areas are physical access to applications and low levels of ICT awareness (Nicholson et al. 2016; Raman 2016). Sun and Asencio (2019) named four barriers to the use of social platforms in NPOs: constrained resources, lack of ICT expertise, ineffective leadership commitment and a lack of ICT comprehension in NPO constituents. Regarding information system development within NPOs, software production and project administration practices that are effective in corporate entities may be insufficient due to the various stakeholders involved having fragmented perspectives compared to the corporate world (Sun and Asencio 2019). New technologies, coupled with the stakeholder acuity of being more engaged with the NPOs that they support, place pressure on NPOs to include such stakeholders in a meaningful

manner. Effectively this is propelling NPOs towards an adaptive learning progression, disseminating stakeholder information for strategic decision-making (Ebrahim 2010; Levine and Zahradnik 2012).

The final adaptive capacity within the Tactical Administration group is Academic Institution Alignment. In three NPO cases, relationships with local universities to conduct scientific research were developed. This research is often conducted by postgraduate students and their research focus underwrites the interests of the NPO in collaboration with the universities. The knowledge gathered from the research is shared with key NPO stakeholders such as donors and beneficiaries. Therefore, gearing NPOs towards an academic research stance could provide NPOs with funding opportunities while underwriting their research interests and attracting volunteers.

NPO leadership is challenged with bolstering the legitimacy of the NPO sector, consequently, the NPO sector must convince a discerning community of their worth to ensure continued support as the sector boundaries become indistinct (Hodges and Howieson 2017). Effectively, the NPO sector provides an ideal opportunity for academics to develop new scientific knowledge. Academic institutions also provide the NPOs with access to experts and knowledge of highly scientific fields such as environmental degradation and water insecurities etc. If the academic institution with which the NPO aligns itself is upright and representative of local stakeholders that would alleviate any negative impacts from any unexpected or untoward events linked to the association with the academic institution. This adaptive capacity can be related to the Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement adaptive capacities as well as the Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation adaptive capacities.

### **5.3.3 Tactical Planning and Restructuring**

As depicted in Chapter 2, the third broad adaptive capacity identified was Planning, and later following the analysis and findings of the data collated and as depicted in Chapter 4 this broad heading was expanded to Tactical Planning and Restructuring to describe this adaptive capacity grouping more aptly. The last grouping is Tactical Planning and Restructuring and the first adaptive capacity within this group is Financial Practices. A steady income is vital for NPOs to guarantee their budget plans, including the significant costs related to existing activities and staff compensation, underwriting financial activities in the fulfilment of its mission (Polyakov 2021). Generally, NPOs rely on three types of funding streams: donations from individuals, funding from businesses and income from the government. Other forms of income such as funding generated from endowment funds, revenue produced from the selling of supplies or services for a charitable cause and income from foundations are also feasible for NPOs (Bowman 2011; Hodge and Piccolo 2005). In the wake of the global financial crisis of 2008, NPOs met unparalleled trials

related to survival (Hu and Kapucu 2017). Reliance on unpredictable donation funding from the general public can compromise an NPO's realisation of its goals (Su et al. 2014).

The RDT describes how entities deal with resource inadequacies resulting from economic recessions by utilising strategic options enabling entities to efficiently administer their resource reliance and eventually increase their self-sufficiency. For instance, when donations decrease, NPOs develop alternate self-sustaining income tactics involving more reliance on earned revenue and could form their own entities (Moldavanova and Goerdel 2018).

Academic studies into this phenomenon refer to the 'commercialisation' of NPOs (Suykens et al. 2019; Vacekov et al. 2017; Vaceková and Svidroňová 2014). Commercial income is produced from trades of supplies and services that an NPO provides and entails the objective of making a profit (Dart 2004). This route of making a profit or NPO commercialisation can be risky. Studies have highlighted that this can lead to mission drift where resources are used to make a profit rather than to serve their beneficiaries and often involves short-term versus survival decisions (Jones 2007; Ma, Jing et al. 2018). However, according to Battilana and Lee (2014), improved NPO managerialism skills that can blend both commercial and social goals could mitigate potential mission drift. These findings were later corroborated by Hersberger-Langloh et al. (2021) who confirmed that a middle ground exists between the two extreme research camps on managerialism (Hersberger-Langloh et al. 2021; Ma, Jing et al. 2018).

In the cases studied, the participants described instances of developing alternative commercial funding options, as mentioned in the literature reviewed, to reduce reliance on traditional donation income. Risk-taking is another requirement for commercial behaviour in NPOs. Taking analysed and practicable risks reveals an inclination to commit substantial resources in the interest of saleable opportunities, notwithstanding that this could also fail during turbulent times (Lacerda et al. 2020). A turbulent financial environment shaped by competition from other entities notably impacts the clarity and alterations in NPO goals (Seo 2016).

Intensified monitoring of cashflows was practised by NPOs during financial crunches as a critical element of their responses to shocks (Searing et al. 2021). NPOs funded by governments are mindful of cash flows, particularly when government funding is received after programme service delivery as a reimbursement. NPOs also accessed reserves accumulated to supplement cash shortfalls to continue delivering on programme objectives (Searing et al. 2021). Increasing expenditure on management costs could improve an NPO's financial steadiness and NPO boards could reconsider keeping overhead costs to a minimum (Tevel et al. 2015). NPOs should make constructive investments in fundraising efforts and administrative provisions to enhance the growth of financial capacities (Chikoto and Neely 2014). Educating donors on the need for

administrative funding is also recommended to change the mindset of traditional philanthropists and to ensure that NPOs remain resilient during turbulent times.

Furthermore, NPO leaders will need to be open-minded to find the means of incorporating such new pressures into governance (Dumont 2013). The COVID-19 pandemic is augmenting fundraising uncertainties related to traceability and governance scandals, promoting distrust and donor indifference (Prakash 2019). NPOs are exploring 'crypto-giving' platforms as a potential solution to possible mismanagement scandals (Trotter et al. 2020). NPO fundraisers anticipate potential donor fatigue as the number and intensity of shocks increase. Slower occurrences such as a technically savvy generational shift also generate both turbulence and new opportunities (Searce and Wang 2020). Younger individuals are conventionally unlikely to contribute to NPOs consistently and are more prone to using cryptocurrencies as a donation means (Howson 2021; Searce and Wang 2020). To attract such a group of younger and discerning individuals, fundraising efforts must be innovative and occur across numerous means, including the blockchain, to promote trust and transparency (Christie 2020).

The next adaptive capacity within the Tactical Planning and Restructuring grouping is Governance: Board Compliance and Accountability. Governance is central to managing internal activities and stakeholder engagement (Zollo et al. 2019). An entity's governance is shaped and often structured by key external relationships which have substantial importance on the developing role of NGOs in the public sector (Kuruppu and Lodhia 2019). Financial mismanagement scandals and the exploitation of beneficiaries related to NPOs have diluted public trust and negatively affected the legitimacy of NPOs (Kuruppu and Lodhia 2019; Visser 2020). This has increased calls for the accountability and transparency of NPOs. As NPOs hold the government and the corporate sector to greater transparency and accountability, NPOs should then also reciprocate this expectation of themselves (Dhanani and Connolly 2015).

At NPOs, boards entrust the management to officials responsible for operations, similar to the corporate sector. Executives are responsible to the board for operational goals and the board is responsible to donors and other stakeholders (Callen et al. 2010; Viader and Espina 2014). A challenge to implementing good governance is that a board member often plays dual roles on the board committee due to the lack of appropriate skills, which is not ideal for the prevention of unethical practices; the actual efficiency of the board may be questioned (Murray and Thomas 2019; Van Zyl and Mans-Kemp 2020; Wells 2012). In line with this finding from the literature reviewed, one participant had strong feelings about the efficiency of NPO board members and reflected on why this was possibly not being achieved in terms of recruitment and remuneration practices for NPO board members.

NPO board associates are not rewarded according to time committed and make a voluntary contribution to the NPO, which influences the recruitment and selection process of board members (Viader and Espina 2014). The RDT highlights that the acquisition and maintenance of resources necessary for survival are relevant to organisational performance. Accordingly, the main functions of the NPO board are to facilitate interactions, reduce resource dependencies, improve the flow and variety of resources through their networks and exemplify the NPO to outer constituencies (Callen et al. 2010).

The pressure to be compliant has led NPOs to adopt a business-like stance (Dart 2004) and the evaluation frameworks developed have often diluted the abilities of NPOs to deliver on their projects (Carman and Fredericks 2008; Neesham et al. 2017). Discoveries of the effects of managerialism and the justification of evaluation results and processes in NPOs indicated that increased compliance standardisation is obtained at the cost of experimentation, this being an NPOs' distinctive ability to engage in social innovation (Hwang and Powell 2009; Neesham et al. 2017). However, Yasmin and Ghafran (2021) find that regulatory compliance is a key feature that aids NPOs in increasing societal trust in their programme activities.

According to the King IV Report, some of the benefits of good corporate governance for an NPO are enhanced trustworthiness and reputation, access to funding on improved terms, better deterrence of fraud and the ability to withstand and recover from turbulent situations (Institute of Directors of Southern Africa 2016). Corporate governance impacts the productivity of NPOs and their capacity to obtain financing resources (Gazzola et al. 2020). Experience, proficiency and social relations are the foremost required competencies in NPO board members. When the most capable board members are appointed, these competencies impact NPOs positively and underwrite NPO synergy (Roshayani et al. 2018). Furthermore, a positive correlation between the number of womenfolk serving on a board should exist (Gazzola et al. 2020; Ward and Forker 2017).

In the NPO sector, culpability is regarded as a stakeholder prerequisite to gain access to and secure resources and can be proved with suitable governance practices and efficient resource use. This is often deemed a measure of control and justification, however, this can also be an opportunity for NPOs to demonstrate proactively their legitimacy, withstand claims and gain further legitimacy (Egholm et al. 2020; O'Leary 2017). Therefore, NPOs adopting the adaptive capacity of strong governance can address the challenges of limited resources and increased competition by enabling legitimacy; however, several challenges would need to be addressed by the NPO.

The third adaptive capacity within the Tactical Planning and Restructuring group is External Collaboration. As the NPO sector expands, competition accelerates causing reason for inter-

organisational alliances and collaboration. NPO funders have increasingly required collaboration among the NPOs they support (Shumate et al. 2018; Witesman and Heiss 2017). Obtaining knowledge via collaboration enables operative partnerships to develop which results in enhanced organisational capability (Urban and Gaffurini 2017). While there are several obvious benefits to collaboration, it still comes at a cost. Collaboration is viewed by many key NPO actors as a necessity and a fundamental value of NPOs (Guo 2007; Witesman and Heiss 2017). Sustaining good collaborations necessitates investments of time and resources. Cooperating in various collaborations that do not serve as actual partnerships becomes a strain on NPO resources and could result in reduced organisational capacity (Witesman and Heiss 2017; Zeimers et al. 2019).

The lack of collaboration between NPOs was listed as the element most lacking and that required improvement in the NPO sector. One participant felt that collaboration could lead to improved financial resources for this sector in general. The access to and sharing of resources mentioned by the participants alludes to the findings of the literature reviewed where, according to Kraaijenbrink et al. (2010), RBV insufficiently acknowledges the importance of combining resources. NPO leaders often need to work with limited resources and, according to McManus et al. (2007), resources are vital to the resilience of an organisation and provide a strategic advantage to organisations when they are used to their full potential.

The RDT emphasises the interdependency of different establishments and their environments and deriving resources from the outer environment is a precondition for survival (Moldavanova and Goerdel 2018). The United Nations is endorsing the enactment of the SDGs via multi-stakeholder undertakings and the ability of NPOs to participate in these multifaceted partner relations is expected to be a routine prerequisite for gaining access to resources (Daniels and Valdés 2021; Fowler 2016). NPOs will be required to coherently articulate a convincing value proposition in relation to their mission when engaging in multi-partner relationships (Maboya and McKay 2019).

Partnering with NPOs is a conduit for corporates to achieve their social accountability goals, simultaneously assisting NPOs to fulfil their missions. Such partnerships are perceived as a strategic collaboration among companies and NPOs whereby risks, assets and skills are shared within projects benefiting each partner and community (Eid and Sabella 2014). A recent study into the motives for NPO and corporate collaborations found that NPOs and corporate managers are firmly motivated to participate in partnerships from a moral motive of resolving a societal or environmental matter (Spitz et al. 2021). Furthermore, Paarlberg and Hwang (2017) found that increased competition often results in increased access to new resources not previously present within the sector. Therefore, increased competition could have positive effects and is dependent on the NPO's adaptability (Paarlberg and Hwang 2017; Curley et al. 2021). Thus, External

Collaboration is an adaptive capacity that could present opportunities to address the challenge of limited resources.

The fourth adaptive capacity within the Tactical Planning and Restructuring grouping is Succession Planning. A study by Jules (2021) found that not all NPOs appreciated the need for a leadership succession plan and relied on alternative mechanisms such as purchasing the services of an interim leader within budget constraints. Furthermore, engaging in actual planning activities for a successor is dependent on several factors, such as NPO capacity, accessibility of resources, investments and organisational culture and these could present as barriers to planning for successors.

According to Pfeffer and Salancik (2003), an executive's succession is viewed by the RDT as an internal tactical response to environmental qualms and dependencies. An effective succession plan can reduce environmental reliance and increase organisational performance (Hillman et al. 2009). The planned replacement of executives is imperative for all types of entities and could be necessary at any stage of an entity's life cycle (Li 2019). An uneventful and successful executive changeover underwrites organisational performance; an unsuccessful effort could result in resource shortfalls, identity calamities and power struggles (Kavadis et al. 2020; Li 2019; Farah et al. 2020).

Studies on leadership succession planning in the NPO sector have been sporadic over the past three decades but have seen an uptake in recent years (Boykins 2019; Li 2019; Yawson 2019). A significant number of leaders in the NPO sector are ageing alongside a lack of qualified leaders (Do Adro and Leitão 2020). An NPO must be well prepared for a successful leadership transition for both a planned and unforeseen departure (Do Adro and Leitão 2020). Therefore, planning successors to an NPO's leadership is an adaptive capacity that could also present an opportunity to address the issue of ageing NPO leaders. Furthermore, a transformation agenda may also be beneficial while planning for successors.

The fifth adaptive capacity in the Tactical Planning and Restructuring category is Alliances and Mergers. In the NPO sector, mergers arise as a tactic for development and expansion, especially when environmental uncertainty and resource shortages exist (Pietroburgo and Wernet 2010). Motivating factors for mergers in the NPO sector relate to possibilities of stable funding and improved operational efficiencies. Other motivating factors are developing political strength, expansion of the service offering and improved service value (Malatesta and Smith 2014; Pietroburgo and Wernet 2010).

The merger practice of NPOs is similar to that of the corporate sector. Similarities relate to actionable steps and components to be reviewed, such as commonalities, cost savings and other

benefits (Gabriel and Marian 2017). According to Malatesta and Smith (2014), the foremost reason to consider a merger between NPOs is capacity development and improved delivery of the mission.

Several reasons for contemplating a merger with another entity should be considered according to the RDT: first, by assimilating an important opponent to diminish competition; second, by managing interdependency with supplier resources or product buyers by assimilating them; and finally, to diversify productions subsequently diminishing reliance on businesses with which it interacts (Haleblian et al. 2009; Hillman et al. 2009). However, of the reasons cited in the literature reviewed, the elimination of competition is not explicitly expressed and there were no records of NPOs merging for the sole purpose of eliminating other NPOs. This was corroborated in the data analysis.

Tactical restructuring is one of the approaches that NPOs can consider to achieve continuity, however, this is often ignored until no further possibilities exist (Krige et al. 2019; MacIndoe and Sullivan 2014). Duchek (2020, p. 220) defines organisational resilience as “an organisation’s ability to anticipate potential threats, to cope effectively with adverse events, and to adapt to changing conditions”. Mergers and acquisitions in the NPO sector would also require consistent scanning of the external environment to anticipate changes and adapt to the funding landscape in line with the RDT and organisational resilience theories. Tactical restructuring in the form of alliances or mergers is therefore a key adaptive capacity for NPOs to engage at opportunistic times to reduce existential concerns.

The final adaptive capacity within the Tactical Planning and Restructuring grouping is SDG Alignment. The majority of funding proposals require an explanation of the monitoring and assessment of the intended project, including the data collection methods, frequency, analysis and interpretation of the funding impact on donors and other stakeholders (Ssekamatte 2018). Importantly, when NPOs begin to talk about and report on their work from an SDG perspective, a spotlight will be turned on the contribution of the NPOs to the SDGs. Therefore, this was found to be a means of promoting the awareness of the NPOs that the NPO leaders felt was lacking in the NPO sector. There was also general agreement that this approach could assist with unlocking funding from key stakeholders such as governments and corporates. However, none of the participants was currently implementing this approach but felt that it was something they needed to do.

NPOs can be found to work across most, if not, all of the 17 United Nations SDGs (Fowler 2016). The opportunity for NPOs to understand and augment their contributions to the SDGs is great. Alignment of project deliverables and reporting to the SDGs could highlight their contributions

to the SDGs. This could, consequently, enable improved communication with key donors such as corporates and government agencies that have a vested interest in collaborating with and funding NPOs that contribute to the achievement of South Africa's SDGs. Furthermore, the NPO's contribution to the SDGs is also an opportunity to differentiate themselves from other NPOs working in a similar space. There is a general dearth of NPO information available and reporting on SDG achievements could improve an NPO's status and bolster NPO legitimacy.

#### **5.4 Research Question 2**

##### **What are the pitfalls to developing the adaptive capacities of South African environmental non-profit organisations considering increased competition and limited resources?**

The second research objective was to ascertain the pitfalls of developing the adaptive capacities of South African environmental NPOs considering increased competition and limited resources. This objective was achieved by identifying the pitfalls from the review of the literature. Additionally, data were analysed using specific questions related to challenges and pitfalls. It was found that most of the pitfalls identified correlated to the findings in the reviewed literature.

The first pitfall was the recognition and awareness of the NPO sector's role and contribution. As found in the literature reviewed, NPOs and the government share several social aims which enable frequent partnering between the NPO sector and the government (Guo 2007; Seo 2016; Witesman and Heiss 2017). The general sentiment was that NPOs could adopt a cross-sectoral approach to achieving their goals in cognisance of the significant national challenges that South Africa faces. Furthermore, good work occurs within the NPO sector, however, it does not receive enough exposure and, therefore, general awareness is lacking. NPO actors demonstrate their value as mediators, trendsetters and innovators, along with service provision and activism, while the private sector plays a progressively noticeable and active role in confronting social challenges (Nicholas and Farrell 2013).

The second pitfall discussed was the barriers to entry to the NPO sector and increased accountability. The sentiment here was that it was easy to form an NPO, but passionate individuals should first engage to see if there were already entities working towards the same cause. It was suggested that there should be improved regulations to increase the barriers to entry from a national governance perspective. Stricter reporting controls and an ombudsman or coordinating council situation to police the sector was suggested. Furthermore, there was a need to increase accountability, promote transparency and expand trust in the NPO sector as a whole.

The sentiments of these NPO leaders are strongly related to the backdrop of the rapid growth of the NPO sector which has occurred in a turbulent environment characterised by technological

disruptions, an increase in natural and man-made disasters, a rise in non-traditional competitors, regulatory disorders and geopolitical upheavals (Lv et al. 2019; Reith 2010; Scarce and Wang 2020). The for-profit and non-profit segments have also been impacted by an increase in scandals engendered by the onset of social media where citizens demand transparency and more accountability (Omura and Forster 2014; Visser 2020). The quantum of funding that the large NPOs can attract in relation to the smaller NPOs was also identified. This was also found in the literature review. The size of NPOs is also a key factor to be considered because larger NPOs can successfully reduce their administrative expenses during a financial shock (De Andrés-Alonso et al. 2015).

Another pitfall identified was the NPO overheads and donor education. It was found that NPO overheads in relation to donor education were a vital component that should be improved as donors should be funding NPO overheads and operational capacities. “Starve the organisation by under-investing in core organisational functions and you sacrifice productivity and undermine the grantee’s long-term stability (Sussman 2003, p. 3)”. This aligns with the finding in the literature reviewed where educating donors on the need for administrative funding is recommended to change the mindset of traditional philanthropists and to ensure that NPOs remain resilient during turbulent times (Scarce and Wang 2020).

Donors and assessors may not routinely value NPO profits, suggesting that NPOs are incentivised to boost programme expenditure or outputs annually, thereby decreasing possible gains to attract donor funding (Calabrese 2012). Furthermore, as found in the literature reviewed, NPO fundraisers anticipate potential donor fatigue as the number and intensity of shocks increase in a turbulent environment (Scarce and Wang 2020). Therefore, to promote transparency within the sector, NPOs will need to convince donors of the need to fund their organisations and move away from a project-specific funding model.

The NPO underwriting of human resources is below standard in comparison to other segments, however, the outcomes in relation to staff performance are encouraging and significant for the realisation of NPO missions (Ariza-Montes and Lucia-Casademunt 2016). This was evident in the poor employee turnover rate. Accentuating an NPO’s mission and values through human resource practices, such as recruitment, induction and training, attracts interested candidates and assists with the orientation of new employees (Kellner et al. 2017). An effective human resource system, as well as a strong environment and organisational strategy that is equally reinforcing and consistent with the NPO’s mission, can motivate, appeal to and, therefore, retain quality employees (Kellner et al. 2017).

Another challenge related to human resources was a capacity issue. Attracting the appropriate financial resources to attract and retain talented human resources remains an ongoing challenge. When volunteers leave an NPO, turnover rates increase and this has a negative impact on the NPO's productivity (Lee 2016). A volunteer's intent to continue contributing to a particular NPO is dependent on their satisfaction with the NPO meeting their expectations. Volunteer expectations could be met by an NPO manager who satisfies the volunteer's reasons for volunteering. A volunteer's relationship with an NPO and its employees or leaders is central to the length of time the volunteer remains engaged with the NPO (Crotty and Ljubownikow 2020).

Supportive communication from management or supervisors in relation to volunteers will increase positive engagements, subsequently increasing volunteer experiences and their intent to remain with the NPO. This will reduce NPO expenditure on attracting and training new volunteers. Satisfied volunteers are also more likely to assist with recruiting other volunteers to join the NPO (Lee 2016; Usadolo and Usadolo 2019). An important challenge related to volunteers was the expectations of unemployed volunteers. Where there is a high unemployment rate, expectations of employment would need to be managed and this may be deemed a pitfall related to volunteerism which was not well documented in the literature review.

Board engagement and governance were other pitfalls discussed. NPO board associates are not rewarded according to time committed and make a voluntary contribution to NPOs, which influences the recruitment and selection process of board members (Viader and Espina 2014). A further challenge to implementing good governance is that a board member often plays dual roles on the board committee due to the lack of appropriate skills, which is not ideal for the prevention of unethical practices; the actual efficiency of the board may be questioned (Murray and Thomas 2019; Van Zyl and Mans-Kemp 2020; Wells 2012).

The efficiency of NPO board members was highlighted and it was suggested that the recruitment and remuneration practices for NPO board members be reviewed. This suggestion in changing the way that NPO board members should be recruited and remunerated could be explored in further studies as it was not evident in the literature review. This can be related to the findings of Olinske and Hellman (2017) who found that although academic studies focusing on NPO organisational management had increased recently, relationships and engagements between the NPO board and its executive leaders remain understudied.

NPO executives regularly deal with disengaged, depleted, power-hungry and manipulative board members (Do Adro and Leitão 2020). Moreover, NPOs also deal with excessively compliant committee members who provide limited direction to the entity. Furthermore, some board committees serve as socialising opportunities, do not address challenging issues involved in the

management of NPOs and meetings are frequently misdirected (Marx and Davis 2012). This was corroborated in the data analysis.

A further challenge related to NPO governance is the board's interference with the executive's role which increases executive stress levels and results in burnout, undermining the leader's performance and consequently the NPO's as well (Olinske and Hellman 2017). Certain experiments have found that a board frequently has misgivings about an NPO leader's capacity to fulfil the essential requisites of performing activities due to the board's self-confidence in its governance skills (Bernstein et al. 2016). Therefore, the behaviour of both the NPO board and the executive leader regularly underwrites uncertainties, confusion and conflict and is justified by the recurrent lack of role elucidation (Bernstein et al. 2016). The blurring of the roles between executives and boards was evident from the data analysed and also alludes to the pressure experienced in fundraising expectations. This finding aligns with the findings of the literature reviewed.

Funding was the most cited challenge. Furthermore, a reliance on government funding to build the financial sustainability of projects forces a blended finance model approach. The challenge of relying only on project funding while operating in a competitive landscape and needing to compete against global entities was highlighted and this also related to the donors' reluctance to fund NPOs' overheads. This pitfall is also connected to donor education challenges.

NPOs and the government share several social aims which enable frequent partnering between the NPO sector and the government. This government funding of NPOs may cause resource reliance, mission deviation and possibly even threaten civil society's liberty (Guo 2007; Seo 2016; Witesman and Heiss 2017). Funding received from the government can be limiting and bind NPO flexibility. Compliance and stringent reporting prerequisites for government funding can cause mission drift. Furthermore, boards and employees may be expected to professionalise in a manner that is not representative of communities and local needs (Witesman and Heiss 2017).

The seventh pitfall was related to project management, monitoring and evaluation. A central challenge for NPOs is to design systems of measurement that support the attainment of clear mission objectives. Furthermore, assessment and evaluation efforts that extend outside this frame of reference could become a distraction for the NPO's project activities (Ebrahim and Rangan 2014). The effective management of socially oriented programmes is an essential prerequisite for accomplishing the best performance outcomes possible and effective administrative tools should be adopted (De Camargo et al. 2019).

Projects, including social orientation, should include stakeholder management theory. This could be achieved by engaging stakeholders and including their input in project management processes

advocated by the NPO, thus including stakeholders' views in assessing the project impact (De Camargo et al. 2019; Moya-Colorado et al. 2021). It was found that NPOs try to develop monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning tools in-house which is challenging because of the limited resources available for this aspect. Furthermore, different donors require different reports, therefore, requiring more resources to produce varying reports and this function is often unfunded by donors.

A study by Jules (2021) found that not all NPOs appreciated the need for a leadership succession plan and relied on alternative mechanisms such as purchasing the services of an interim leader within budget constraints. Furthermore, engaging in actual planning activities for a successor is dependent on several factors, such as NPO capacity, accessibility of resources, investments and organisational culture, and these could present as barriers to planning for successors. It was found that NPOs are limited in terms of resources and some NPOs felt that they would recruit an individual into the role at some future point but did not see a need for a succession plan.

A key challenge facing NPOs is how to achieve innovation (Adro and Fernandes 2021). A solution to this may lie with NPO employees who often engage on the front lines with low-income earners and local communities where they can create pathways for social innovation. In addition to the employees within the sector, the large number of volunteers who hail from diverse economic sectors are also able to listen to the unmet needs of society in general (TEPSIE 2014). This unique interface that the NPO sector holds enables possible social innovators to be mindful of the untouched assets and capabilities within local communities that can be exploited to design solutions, engage communities and generate expert knowledge (Altuna et al. 2015; TEPSIE 2014). Innovation is a multidisciplinary pursuit and the positive outcomes resulting from good quality relationships between divisions and firms on knowledge generation and interchange impact innovation accomplishments (Sanzo et al. 2015). It was recognised that dialogue around innovation is lacking and is a shortfall in some NPOs.

The advancements and sophistication of marketing tools facilitate their utilisation in combination with proficiency and relate to enticing and retaining current and potential donors (Fonseca et al. 2021). Increased competition to acquire and retain donors has forced NPOs to strengthen their marketing efforts (Naskrent and Siebelt 2011). An NPO's inability to communicate proficiently about their social work remains a problematic focal point that is related to funding constraints and the limited number of skilled employees dedicated to marketing (Göttlichová and Soukalova 2015). Further challenges to effective brand build are a lack of budget from an organisational perspective, a dearth of buy-in from leadership and a general dearth of understanding of the need for a brand from NPO stakeholders (Chapleo 2015).

Another challenge identified in several studies was the lack of appropriate leadership skills and the prioritisation of marketing efforts by the board (Lin et al. 2009; Liu and Ko 2011; Pope et al. 2009). Specifically, Pope et al. (2009) propose that marketing skills become a prerequisite for board members; including other means, this will address brand promotion and weaknesses in the marketing sphere, such as fundraising and efficiently reaching volunteers or beneficiaries. This was corroborated by the findings from the data analysis. Sun and Asencio (2019) named four barriers to the use of social platforms in NPOs: constrained resources, lack of ICT expertise, ineffective leadership commitment and a lack of ICT comprehension in NPO constituents. The barriers of ineffective leadership commitment and a lack of ICT comprehension and resources were evident from the data analysis.

The lack of collaboration between NPOs was the most lacking element that required improvement in the NPO sector. Collaboration could lead to improved financial resources for this sector in general. NPO leaders often need to work with limited resources and, according to McManus et al. (2007), resources are vital to the resilience of an organisation because they provide a strategic advantage to organisations when they are used to their full potential. Karman (2020) and Burnard and Bhamra (2011) note the significance of a resource-based management style in the identification of risks where resources are arranged to respond effectively during a crisis but can also provide the best possible return to normalcy after a crisis. One of the key enablers of the transformation and adaptability of NPOs is the availability and ability to access and use resources (Mutongwizo 2018).

Further downsides related to collaboration with other NPOs identified from the data analysis were a lack of trust and a desire to protect and promote only individual NPO interests rather than working towards the greater good or common causes. It was found that fear of funding constraints related to the COVID-19 pandemic was one of the reasons that made it difficult to collaborate.

### **5.5 Research Question 3**

#### **How can South African environmental non-profit organisations build organisational resilience in a turbulent environment?**

The third research objective was to establish how NPOs in South Africa can build organisational resilience in a turbulent environment. This objective was achieved by reviewing the literature and focusing on the resilience factors that participants identified as key to the resilience of their NPOs over their NPOs' lifespans. These resilience factors mostly correlated with the findings of the literature reviewed.

An organisational culture that promotes resilience and innovation recognises that an adverse event is unpredictable from a timing perspective, therefore, a risk-consciousness culture based on long-term survival must be proactively nurtured (Vakilzadeh and Haase 2020). According to Pryce (2021), organisational culture offers the means of producing transformative change and provides continuous organisational resilience that can confront the unanticipated. Organisational culture is regularly cited in studies relating to organisational resilience but has often been discussed with a focus on specific factors. It was found that NPOs considered the board as a key factor in their resilience and credited their resilience to a long-serving and stable board.

NPOs and the government share several social aims which enable frequent partnering between the NPO sector and the government. This government funding of NPOs may cause resource reliance, mission deviation and possibly even threaten civil society's liberty (Guo 2007; Seo 2016; Witesman and Heiss 2017). Funding received from the government can be limiting and bind NPO flexibility. Compliance and stringent reporting prerequisites for government funding can cause mission drift. Furthermore, boards and employees may be expected to professionalise in a manner that is not representative of communities and local needs (Witesman and Heiss 2017). It was found that NPOs' resilience can be accredited to their clear mission, enabling them to be focused on their cause and limit potential deviations.

NPOs' resilience over the years was also linked to building strong relationships with key stakeholders such as funders or partners. Their ability to reach out to a network during a crisis period, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, is viewed as an important resilience factor. While some NPOs preferred to build their brand by word-of-mouth, other NPOs were able to effectively leverage their brand presence via social media networks to raise funds.

Tactical restructuring is one of the approaches that NPOs can consider to achieve continuity, however, this is often ignored until no further possibilities exist (Krige et al. 2019; MacIndoe and Sullivan 2014). This was corroborated by the findings of the data analysis. Tactical restructuring is, therefore, a key adaptive capacity for NPOs to act at opportunistic times, particularly when competition is high, and funding is constrained. Duchek (2020, p. 220) defines organisational resilience "as an organisation's ability to anticipate potential threats, to cope effectively with adverse events, and to adapt to changing conditions". Mergers and acquisitions in the NPO sector require consistent scanning of the external environment to anticipate changes and adapt to the funding landscape in line with the RDT and organisational resilience.

The NPO sector is under growing compulsion to account for its accomplishments, to some extent in response to donor funding and commissioning obligations (Harlock and Metcalf 2016; Moxham 2014). However, NPOs themselves also seek to ascertain the best methods for

administering their own project activities (Gugerty 2009). Stakeholders pressure NPOs to become transparent and responsible by reporting on how they add value and influence society, resulting in several approaches, means and measurement tools (Neesham et al. 2017; Nielsen et al. 2021). The majority of funding proposals require an explanation of the monitoring and assessment of the intended project, including the data collection methods, frequency, analysis and interpretation of the funding impact on donors and other stakeholders (Ssekamatte 2018).

The opportunity for NPOs to understand and augment their contributions to the SDGs is great. The alignment of project deliverables differentiates them from other NPOs working in a similar space. There is a general dearth of NPO information available and reporting on SDG achievements could improve an NPO's status and bolster NPO legitimacy. The findings from the thematic analysis of the data collated from the semi-structured interviews will also be useful in supporting policymakers at a national and local level with a contemporary view of challenges and opportunities from NPO leaders for the improvement of the lacking overall governance of the NPO sector in South Africa.

The process of NPO innovation is reliant on factors such as culture, leadership, internal properties, such as control and formalisation, external turbulence and general aspects, such as the size or age of the NPO (Bernstein et al. 2016; Do Adro and Leitão 2020; Jaskyte 2015; Shin and Choi 2019). Studies have revealed that an organisation's capability to innovate during periods of adversity is crucial for organisational resilience (Vakilzadeh and Haase 2020). During a crisis, innovation by employees could become an appropriate strategy to use to overcome adversity (Senbeto and Hon 2020). Turbulent environments often breed opportunities for social innovation and frequently occur when there is a liberation of resources via cultural shift, political change or fiscal crisis (Westley 2013).

Society's capacity to generate a stable stream of social innovations, especially ones that contribute to vulnerable populations, is vital for overall societal and environmental resilience (Cahill 2010). This was corroborated by the findings of the data analysed. It alluded to the insights of leaders who need to know when to step back and let their teams be unencumbered to realise innovation. Therefore, while innovation by employees could become an appropriate strategy to use to overcome adversity (Senbeto and Hon 2020), this would need to be tempered by the limitations of staff and the leader's awareness of such limitations.

In exploring what triggers an NPO's failure, Green et al. (2021) found that a diversified income portfolio increases NPO financial resilience and specifically found that reliance on grant income – fixed amounts to accomplish a particular outcome – was distinctly related to an elevated risk of failure. The Green et al. (2021) study agreed with the general findings of Chikoto and Neely

(2014) and Suykens et al. (2019) concerning the optimistic effects of revenue diversification on NPO financial resilience. Participants 2 and 11 both described an awareness of the need to have a diversified funding stream to provide different funding options to interested donors. Their awareness aligns with the general findings of Chikoto and Neely (2014) and Suykens et al. (2019) concerning the optimistic effects of revenue diversification on NPO financial resilience.

NPO fundraisers anticipate potential donor fatigue as the number and intensity of shocks increase. Slower occurrences such as a technically savvy generational shift also generate both turbulence and new opportunities (Searce and Wang 2020). Younger individuals are conventionally unlikely to contribute consistently to NPOs and are more prone to using cryptocurrencies as a donation means (Howson 2021; Searce and Wang 2020). To appeal to this group, fundraising methods must be innovative and occur across numerous means, including the blockchain (Christie 2020). It was found that only one NPO was open to considering cryptocurrencies and exploring the possibilities of accepting donations in a cryptocurrency format.

According to the Global NGO's (2019) Technology Report, ten years ago, European NPOs that implemented a website and Facebook platform were considered to be the vanguard of technology. However, those technologies have now become common practice, according to the Global NGO's (2019) Technology Report, and this is corroborated by the study by Huang and Karthikeyan (2015), who found that NPOs chose to use steady and proven information technologies instead of emergent technologies. Therefore, early-adopter NPOs can consider exploring cryptocurrency platforms and an explorative outlook to finance practices to underwrite their fundraising strategies and expand funding streams to navigate a turbulent environment.

Studies have found that social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, positively influences philanthropic contributions (Guo and Saxton 2014; Li and McDougale 2017). For NPOs, social media presents benefits such as minimal cost, enabling dialogic communication and boosting engagements, all resulting in increased brand awareness (Belenioti and Vassiliadis 2017; Nah and Saxton 2013).

During a crisis, a decent business reputation is perceived as an elusive asset, serving as a safeguard to diminish institutional harm (Kim and Woo 2019). An NPO's brand reputation is also considered an asset, with the additional advantages of NPO resource influence and surviving adversities (Lefroy and Tsarenko 2013). Through the tactical utilisation of social media and the quantification and qualitative portrayal of its brand value, an NPO can effectively articulate its brand uniqueness and convey clear paths for varying stakeholders to collaborate (Liang et al. 2021).

Similar to the corporate sector, the NPO sector can gain considerably from utilising emergent information technologies (Huang and Karthikeyan 2015). Access to the internet and cellular devices has enabled movements via social media which are significant developments in the NPO sphere (Raman 2016). ICT abilities are closely linked to the brand promotion of NPOs, and it was found that during the COVID-19 pandemic, NPOs relied on ICT abilities to raise funds and deliver on mission objectives while learning to adapt to remote working.

As the NPO sector expands, competition accelerates causing reason for inter-organisational alliances and collaboration. NPO funders increasingly require collaboration among the NPOs they support (Shumate et al. 2018; Witesman and Heiss 2017). While there are several obvious benefits to collaboration, it still comes at a cost. Collaboration is viewed by many key NPO actors as a necessity and a fundamental value of NPOs (Guo 2007; Witesman and Heiss 2017).

It was found that while some donors forced collaboration between other NPOs, there is value in this process as, eventually, it can assist the NPO to clarify its role in contributing to a joint cause and also identify its unique offering in collaborative partnerships. This aligns with the finding that obtaining knowledge via collaboration enables operative partnerships to develop which results in an enhanced organisational capability (Urban and Gaffurini 2017).

## **5.6 Recommendations for non-profit organisations**

### **5.6.1 Building a resilience-based culture**

Pryce (2021) proposed a holistic approach to organisational culture to build organisational resilience. This is possible when organisational resilience is entrenched in underlying values and principles and operations are incorporated within the multiplicities of the entity to address turbulent events. Furthermore, the interplay between organisational resilience and culture can promote an environment that integrates the entity holistically in the pursuit of dealing with the unexpected. Therefore, a culture of resilience is important to underwriting organisational resilience.

### **5.6.2 Maintaining a progressive stance to financial practices**

It was found that the NPOs studied were not open to exploring potential alternative means of fundraising such as cryptocurrencies. Younger individuals are conventionally unlikely to consistently contribute to NPOs and are more prone to using cryptocurrencies as a donation means. Furthermore, this group is unlikely to trust NPOs or contribute as a result of direct donation petitions (Gregory 2014; Howson 2021). To appeal to this group, fundraising methods should be innovative and must occur across numerous means, including the blockchain (Christie

2020). Therefore, an awareness of what giving channels are preferred by different groups of existing and potential donors can assist fundraising prospects.

Another emergent fundraising avenue is the advent of charitable contributions from spectators of live-streamed gaming such as the Twitch platform (Yoganathan et al. 2021). Twitch has become a prevalent game-streaming application and regularly attracts millions of broadcasters and spectators (Jia et al. 2016). More than 80 million dollars was raised for charity via Twitch during 2020, which was a trying year for traditional fundraising due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Partin 2020). However, fundraising is only one of the encouraging outcomes of engaging on this platform; raising awareness of social issues and promoting social causes are also substantial upshots and are another means of attracting youth to charitable causes while gaining organisational legitimacy (Yoganathan et al. 2021). Exploring such fundraising platforms from a South African perspective could stimulate innovation and result in improved collaboration for the NPO sector.

### **5.6.3 Adopting a transformation agenda**

Challenges experienced in achieving a shift in gender representation towards a more diverse board as well as in succession planning in terms of both gender and race were evident from the cases studied. The inclusion of women and generally under-represented clusters at the leadership level remains an ongoing challenge for many entities. Diversification of the organisational culture could improve interpersonal relations and bring about cohesion while broadening the talent within an organisation (Williams 2016).

To address this challenge against the diversity and transformation dynamics of South Africa's apartheid backdrop, it is recommended that NPOs adopt a transformation agenda. Furthermore, a significant number of leaders in the NPO sector are ageing alongside a lack of qualified leaders (Do Adro and Leitão 2020). Therefore, the transformation agenda could address race, age and gender from all levels within the NPO. This would improve succession planning capabilities for their leadership and assist NPOs with a holistic view underwriting improved planning and building awareness, thereby improving the NPOs' preparedness to navigate turbulence.

### **5.6.4 Accentuating non-profit organisation projects within the sustainable development goals framework**

It was found that while all NPO leaders agreed that NPOs could improve funding prospects by accentuating their work within the framework of the SDGs, none of the participants had, however, actioned this. It is therefore recommended that this is a great opportunity for NPOs to understand and augment their contributions to the SDGs. Alignment of project deliverables and reporting to

the SDGs could highlight their unique contributions to the SDGs. Consequently, this could enable improved communication with key donors such as corporates and government agencies that have a vested interest in collaborating with and funding NPOs that contribute to the achievement of South Africa's SDGs.

Furthermore, an NPO's contribution to the SDGs is also an opportunity to differentiate themselves from other NPOs working in a similar space. There is a general dearth of NPO information available and reporting on SDG achievements could improve the status of NPOs and bolster the legitimacy of the NPO sector.

#### **5.6.5 Building a brand**

Several NPOs did not buy into the concept of a brand and felt that they were not selling a product. In an increasingly competitive space, standing out from the crowd is important to attract not only funding but also donors who are aligned with the NPO's cause. It was found that the process of building a brand could also assist NPOs in identifying their niche space, supporting NPO leaders to prevent deviation from their mission objectives. Therefore, it is recommended that NPOs should explore how they can develop a strong brand and escalate its importance to internal stakeholders as the benefits in alleviating existential concerns may outweigh the costs.

#### **5.6.6 Fostering a research stance**

While a strong brand can provide legitimacy to NPOs, it was also found that NPOs with a scientific or academic research stance that aligned with academic institutions could also provide legitimacy. Therefore, it is recommended that NPOs foster a learning environment grounded on research in alignment with academic institutions. Collaborating with academic institutions enables access to resources such as expert knowledge and attracts volunteers. This could also provide an NPO with funding opportunities directly from academic institutions while underwriting the NPO's research interests.

Furthermore, many NPO leaders felt that the good work of NPOs is often lost and the role of the NPO sector needed to be enhanced with heightened awareness. Along with framing its work within the SDGs, heightened awareness could also be achieved by sharing the NPO's project impacts in an academic space with stakeholders, thus, bolstering the legitimacy of the NPO sector.

### **5.7 Recommendations for further studies**

A recommendation is that a survey with the NPO leaders could be conducted to further corroborate and promote the findings of this study. This study was limited to NPOs with an environmental focus. It is recommended that similar studies be conducted with NPOs with other

focuses, e.g., the culture and recreation, education, health, social services or development and housing NPOs registered with the DSD. Furthermore, this study also excluded big international NPOs operating in South Africa and focused only on locally established environmental organisations. It is recommended that a similar study be conducted with a focus on environmental NPOs including big international NPOs to get a cross-cultural or Global South perspective of the adaptive capacities that promote organisational resilience.

In understanding the contribution of NPO board members to the overall achievement of the NPO mission, it was suggested that changing the way that NPO board members are recruited and remunerated could make a difference in the inefficiencies present in NPO boards. Furthermore, Olinske and Hellman (2017) find that although academic studies focused on NPO organisational management had increased recently, relationships and engagements between the NPO board and its executive leaders remained understudied. It is therefore recommended that further studies explore the mechanisms related to the selection, recruitment and remuneration of NPO board members as well as the engagement between NPO board members and their executive team. The representation of NPO board members in terms of gender and race could also be explored to determine if transformation and diversity are being achieved.

The NPO sector, specifically concerning branding and relations of vested parties holding a stake in the NPO, is academically under-researched (Andreasen 2012; Mitchell and Clark 2019). It is recommended that branding and stakeholder engagement be further studied as key success factors in relation to organisational resilience. Limited academic studies are focused on the NPO sector in South Africa (Choto, Iwu and Tengeh 2020); therefore, studies focusing on South Africa's NPO sector and its contribution to the SDGs are also recommended.

## **5.8 Conclusion**

NPOs are forced to adapt to augmented competition and the unending demand for additional accountability (Pape et al. 2020). From the brief theoretical arguments, it became evident that enhancing organisational resilience is important for NPOs and that clarity in this regard is vital to address existential concerns. Organisational resilience is often the outcome of various exchanges and relations between variables (Burnard and Bhamra 2019).

This study aimed to ascertain the adaptive capacities of environmental South African NPOs related to limited resources and increased competition in a turbulent environment from an organisational resilience construct perspective. This qualitative study applied an interpretivist philosophy with an inductive research approach, a case study strategy and multiple data collection techniques over a period of time.

It was found that the literature alludes to the interconnectedness of each of the adaptive capacities identified, however, no organisational resilience adaptive capacity framework for NPOs was noted. Therefore, to fill this gap, the NPO adaptive capacity framework depicted in Figure 5-1 was developed and includes 18 adaptive capacities grouped into three broad adaptive capacities. This framework was developed based on a comprehensive literature review and the data collated and analysed from the 11 NPO cases studied.

The common link among the RDT, RBV, stakeholder management and organisational resilience theories is the focus on resources. Furthermore, these theories entail a broad spectrum of strategic management aspects that can be applied to different organisations in varying degrees in a turbulent environment. NPOs need to manage a balance of sourcing resources from the external environment while also reducing their dependence on certain resources with due regard to how they access and utilise resources in turbulent times.

The NPO adaptive capacity framework proposes that NPO resilience may be achieved by developing the 18 interconnected adaptive capacities identified within the three broad categories of Culture, Leadership and People, Tactical Administration and Tactical Planning and Restructuring. This study contributes to the understudied NPO sector in South Africa as well as to the organisational resilience literature that is in the nascent phase (Ma, Xiao et al. 2018). This study also contributes to the strategic management aspect of the organisational resilience construct that is also understudied. NPOs differ immensely in terms of size, competences, impact and purpose; nonetheless, at its core, each NPO has a distinct purpose to benefit its constituencies (Skhosana 2020). Hence, the NPO adaptive capacity framework developed is intended to provide diverse and unique NPOs with a holistic view of their organisations and is a means of enhancing organisational resilience within the historical background. It is not intended to be generalisable to the NPO sector.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1 – Interview protocol

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS - S Singh\_PhD Study - April 2022

1. What values are most important to you as a leader and how would you describe your leadership style?
2. How do you encourage creative thinking or innovation within your organisation?
3. How would you describe the culture of your organisation?
4. How do you attract, manage and retain volunteers and employees that resonate with or champion your NPO mission?
5. What are the major issues facing your organisation at this time?
6. What do you think sets your organisation apart from other NPOs in terms of attracting new donor funding and maintaining ongoing funding? (Donor fatigue and fundraising strategies e.g. diversification)
7. What plans or processes do you currently have in place to manage a crisis situation (e.g. pandemics/rioting) (manage risks)
8. What leadership succession plans does the NPO have in place for its top management?
9. What can your Board of Trustees/Directors do to improve the overall achievement of your organisation's mission and vision?
10. What can be done to improve the measurement and reporting related to the impact of your organisation's projects or programmes (social/financial/environmental)?
11. How is your NPO adapting to new technologies to reduce expenditure or improve your brand and communication capabilities?
12. In your opinion what are some of the pitfalls related to collaboration with other NPOs working on similar causes?
13. Under what conditions and when would you consider merging your organisation with another NPO?
14. What in your opinion has been the major contributing factors to your organisations resilience over the years considering the volatility and uncertainty of the environment?
15. Where do you think the NPO sector as a whole is lacking and what could be done to mitigate existential concerns?

## Appendix 2 – Ethical clearance



07 February 2022

Shanitha Singh (218081511)  
Grad School Of Bus & Leadership  
Westville Campus

Dear S Singh,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00003782/2022

Project title: Non-profit organisational resilience: An adaptive capacities framework in a turbulent environment

Degree: PhD

### Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 12 January 2022 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted FULL APPROVAL with the following condition:

Data collection may only commence at research sites where gatekeeper permission was secured. For additional sites, please request an amendment (Tab10)

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 07 February 2023.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

### Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

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