



**PSYCHOLOGICAL STRENGTHS OF SPIRITUALITY AND TRANSCENDENCE  
AND WELLBEING OF MANAGERS IN THE AUTOMOTIVE SECTOR**

**By**

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**Submitted in accordance with the requirement for the degree of**

**DOCTOR OF LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY**

**in the subject**

**INDUSTRIAL PSYCHOLOGY**

**at the**

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

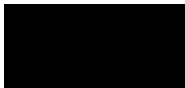
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**JANUARY 2024**

## DECLARATION

I Jasmé Singh-Modi, Student Number 217045016, hereby declare that **PSYCHOLOGICAL STRENGTHS OF SPIRITUALITY AND TRANSCENDENCE AND WELLBEING OF MANAGERS IN THE AUTOMOTIVE SECTOR** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been acknowledged by means of complete references.



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Signature

25 January 2024

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Date

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to express my gratitude to the following people for their invaluable assistance in this research project:

Firstly, I thank my Creator for giving me the ability, insight and knowledge to fulfil my potential and to complete this dissertation.

To my parents: Surendra Singh and Shano Singh. Thank you for your love, endless support and encouragement to strive to be all that I can be. I love you immensely.

To my husband: Sunil Modi. Thank you for your love, support, patience, reassurance, constant motivation and confidence in me. I have deep gratitude and love for you..

To my family and friends: I express my sincere appreciation to all of you who assisted me on this journey. Thank you for your prayers, thoughts and well-wishes.

To my supervisors: Prof. Johanna Buitendach and Dr Shanya Reuben. Thank you! Without your advice, patience, support, guidance, time and assurance, I would not have been able to complete this study.

I would like to acknowledge Mr Crispin Hemson for assuming the role of editing and proofreading of this document.

To the organisations at which this study was undertaken and to all the participants of this study, thank you for the insights gained through our conversations and your invaluable contributions.

I would also like to thank UKZN for the opportunity to further my qualifications.

## ACRONYMS

ABE	Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence
EI	Emotional Intelligence
EQ	Emotional Quotient
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
JSE	Johannesburg Stock Exchange
LS	Life Satisfaction
PERMA	Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment/Achievement
P-O	Person-Organisation Fit
PS	Psychological Strengths
PPIs	Positive Psychological Interventions
PWB	Psychological Wellbeing
ST	Self-Transcendence
SQ	Spiritual Intelligence
SWLS	Satisfaction with Life Scale
SWB	Subjective Wellbeing
VIA	Values in Action
WB	Wellbeing
WS	Workplace Spirituality

## ABSTRACT

### **Title:** PSYCHOLOGICAL STRENGTHS OF SPIRITUALITY AND TRANSCENDENCE AND WELLBEING OF MANAGERS IN THE AUTOMOTIVE SECTOR

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of managers, drawing on the constructs of the PERMA model of wellbeing and on their respective challenges, as well as to examine the role and utilisation of the psychological strengths (PS) of transcendence, so as to overcome managerial challenges within the South African automotive manufacturing industry. This study employed a qualitative approach in its method of data collection and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis for interpretation and analyses. The data was hence analysed via an idiographic, inductive and interrogative approach. The Broaden-and-Build theoretical framework was implemented, as a broadened behavioural repertoire, over time, is said to also build skills and resources that enhance survival. Psychofortology provides a perspective of positive psychology from which this research was conducted.

The study participants comprised twelve managers within the subsidiaries of the chosen company in the automotive sector, nationwide, who voluntarily participated in the research. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data and gain insight into the managers' experiences of wellbeing, the challenges they experienced, the positive and negative factors that were taken into account, and their use of psychological strengths to negate these challenges. The intention of the study was to propose a set of guidelines that could be used to develop a holistic wellbeing intervention for managers by investigating and building on the PS of transcendence that promote wellbeing and that facilitate the capacity of an individual to "flourish."

The findings suggest that the PS of transcendence were utilised by managers in their experience of wellbeing; however, these were not adequately utilised to cope with challenges. This was due to managers not having a good knowledge and experience of the strengths. It was established that the implementation of existing positive psychological interventions (PPIs) is not adequate. The PPIs are not standardised and

customised for each of the subsidiaries, and further development is required to suit the unique requirements of each subsidiary in order to address the specific challenges experienced as noted in the findings.

The following recommendations for the study were made, and discussed in three parts. The first part discusses the more commonly used PPIs in the workplace, the mainstream or traditional approach. These PPIs are currently found to be implemented within the organisations to greater and lesser extents; however, they are not uniform, customised nor standardised across all 242 subsidiaries. A more user-friendly approach to the traditional approach was recommended for how existing PPIs may be further developed, utilising PS for transcendence and incorporating a more personalised approach. The second part comprises practical activities or mindfulness exercises that can be practised by managers either within or outside of the workplace to further develop their PS of transcendence. The third part discusses a less common approach which is only practised by some and generally practised outside of the workplace. This alternative approach provides a means to connect with and develop the inner working of the body or the internal state of being.

Comparative, quantitative, empirical studies with larger samples are suggested to support the findings and to further explore this interesting phenomenon.

**Key Terms:** Psychological strengths (PS), Appreciation of Excellence and Beauty (ABE), Gratitude, Hope, Humour, Spirituality, Wellbeing (WB), Positive Emotion/Pleasure, Engagement, Meaning, Positive Relationships, Accomplishments/Achievements, Positive Psychological Interventions (PPIs), Emotional Intelligence, Workplace Spirituality, Spiritual Intelligence, Consciousness

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

Over the past two decades increasing numbers of workers have communicated their need for a more humanistic work environment, more meaning and purpose and a connection to something greater than the self (Indradevi, 2021). In conjunction with this is an increasing demand for managers to cope with the accumulative challenges and complexities of a global work environment that requires resourceful development opportunities (Mayer & Boness, 2011). In particular, managerial wellbeing is impacted by these dynamic environmental aspects and the (re)-construction of wellbeing has become a fundamental focus in South African organisations (Barkhuizen & Rothmann, 2004, as cited in Mayer & Boness, 2011). The automotive sector, in particular, is one of the leading industries that create economic growth; however, as a result of the complex nature of globalisation, it is faced with a constant burden to stay within the market trend amidst fluctuating customer demands.

The complexities of the Covid-19 pandemic, and especially lockdown and the massive hit that all walks of people, as well as companies faced was a traumatic experience. It was trying times for South Africans and the world at large, as the pandemic unfolded, as it presented numerous unprecedented economic, political and social challenges. Coping with these challenges proved difficult, especially for managers, who were forced to exhibit courageous leadership; to care for and provide direction for their staff. In an article by Flotman (2021), paradoxically, it was established, these hardships gave them a purpose during times of adversity and helped them to cope as well, as self-transcendence became and remains an important research theme. Little is known about the role of self-transcendence in cultivating meaningful work and its impact on the wellbeing of middle managers in the face of adversity (Flotman, 2021).

Current research is drawing attention to the problems faced by managers and their wellbeing in the troubled automotive industry, where it has been confirmed that managers possess the poorest levels of wellbeing (Gellatly, 2019). The wellbeing of managers needs urgent attention to effect desired changes that would help them to endure the demands of the work environment, and it has been suggested that bridging this gap requires future consideration (Gellatly, 2019).

According to Niemiec (2021); Maheshwari (2021); Indradevi (2020); Daniel (2019); Gupta and Mitra (2017); Daniel & Chatelain-Jardon (2015) and Mayer and Viviers (2014), spirituality in the workplace has not received enough academic interest. The concept is regarded as a soft, ill-formed phenomenon which could be the reason for the lack of empirical research related to this concept, hence, limited research on spiritual leadership in the workplace exists. There are further limitations to consider with regard to research on spirituality in the workplace. Although there is a growing body of literature on workplace spirituality, it has been criticised for lacking rigor or critical thinking as the focus has been primarily on the personal spiritual experience within the work environment, according to these authors.

Widodo (2024) discusses in his empirical study, the relationship between spirituality at work and meaningful work as mediated by self-transcendence, that the workplace is becoming more dynamic and has high expectations of its employees. As a result, he states that one's self-transcendence condition is disrupted, and the meaning of one's work is diminished. Pandey (2017) extrapolates that as a result work pressure is a serious threat to employees who are exposed to a variety of psychological issues such as fatigue, stress and work-life balance. Hence the importance of further exploring this avenue of intervention for support.

Positive psychology emphasises the benefits of personal strengths to enhance wellbeing; however, existing research has tended to focus on what strengths people *have* rather than on what strengths they *use* (Seligman, 2011). Wood, Linley, Maltby, Kashdan and Hurling (2011) contend that the ways in which people use a strength provides a significant longitudinal predictor of wellbeing as effective use of a strength is associated with lower levels of stress, and with higher levels of self-esteem, positive affect and vitality. Self-transcendence was an intervention that served as a coping mechanism demonstrating that in being self-transcendent one can control the quality and direction of one's life (agency), (Flotman, 2021). In doing this, personal resilience could be improved in the interest of enhanced wellbeing and a meaningful life. Hence the aspect of these psychological strengths requires further exploration as it relates to the wellbeing of managers in the automotive sector.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Organisations in the automotive industry suffer huge losses from low productivity, decreased work engagement, poor performance, low job satisfaction and the inability to retain key personnel within their workforce. The wellbeing of managers has been proved to have a significantly positive effect on the above stated aspects in the life of individuals in the workplace (Di Martino, Eiroa-Orosa & Arcidiacono (2017). Furthermore, positive psychological interventions (PPIs) based on psychological strengths have proved beneficial in advancing and promoting wellbeing.

Pawar (2014) argued in previous research that spirituality in the workplace affects emotional, psychological, social factors, and spiritual fulfilment in employees. In the face of these challenges, workplace spirituality can motivate managers and business leaders to seek long-term, sustainable, and healthy solutions. Workplace spirituality research has the potential to provide a lot in the future, as concern for human wellbeing in the workplace becomes more prominent for all stakeholders (Pandey, 2017).

The development of personal strength has been adopted and advocated as a way of making popular advances based on positive psychology (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001). This is seen as enabling workers to become happier and fully engaged, and to improve the quality of managerial leadership (Kaiser & Overfield, 2011). Research investigating the psychological strengths of managers in the automotive manufacturing sector has been given insufficient attention. There has been little focus on the role played by psychological strengths in wellbeing and in intervention strategies implemented to promote wellbeing, given the emphasis on having rather than using these psychological or character strengths. This study intends to address these gaps in the literature and research.

## **1.3 PURPOSE STATEMENT**

This study aims to explore experiences of wellbeing, based on the constructs of the PERMA model within the challenging environment of the automotive manufacturing sector. The intention of the study is also to propose a set of guidelines that could be used to develop a wellbeing intervention for managers in the industry by investigating and building on the psychological strengths that promote managers' wellbeing and

that facilitate the capacity of an individual to “flourish.” This investigation was carried out with the following research questions and research objectives in mind.

#### **1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The following are the research objectives that will direct this study:

- a) To explore the experiences of the wellbeing of managers at the workplace according to the core elements of the PERMA model of wellbeing.
- b) To examine the role of the psychological strengths of transcendence in negating the challenging experiences of managers and how these contribute to the wellbeing of managers as set out by the PERMA model.
- c) To identify existing strengths-based positive psychological interventions for managers that promote managers’ wellbeing at the company in order to further develop them.

#### **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following research questions guide this study:

- a) What are the manager’s experiences of wellbeing according to the core elements of the PERMA model of wellbeing?
- b) How do the PS of transcendence contribute to managers’ wellbeing as per the PERMA model?
- c) What are the challenges experienced by managers in the workplace and the role of the psychological strengths (PS) of transcendence in negating these challenges?
- d) What are the existing positive psychological interventions (PPIs) based on the psychological strengths of transcendence for managers at the workplace?
- e) How do the existing PPIs help to promote managers’ wellbeing at the company and how can these be further developed?

## 1.6 MAIN ASSUMPTIONS

Qualitative research draws on a basic assumption that reality lies in the ways that an individual constructs meaning through interactions with society. Meanings are developed by individuals through their experiences, and qualitative research involves the mediation of such meanings through the perspective of the researcher. In any research in the social sciences there are multiple realities – those of the investigator, those of the people who participate and those of the readers who make sense of findings. There are also multiple perspectives, including those of the diverse participants in studies such as this one.

The aim of positive psychology is to explore the positive elements that give meaning to our lives and how this exploration can be used to improve lives (Seligman, 2011). According to Seligman, Parks and Steen (2004), its main goals are to foster positive emotion, gratification and meaning so the human being is able to gain fuller happiness. In the perplexing automotive industry, the evidence from the literature is that managers' wellbeing is of vital importance, as it has been confirmed that managers possess very poor levels of wellbeing (Gellatly, 2019). Seligman wanted to rekindle in psychologists the profession's original mission, which he saw as building people's strengths and fostering their genius. He identified that psychology had drifted away from these critical areas in its constant preoccupation with poor mental health (Seligman, 2002; 2011). Hence the belief is that an emphasis on the positive aspects of the mind is vital for wellbeing.

If one studies the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), one realises how much progress has been made over the past 60 years in the diagnosis and response to mental disorders, but we still know little concerning what nurtures people's optimism, kindness, generosity, contentment, engagement, purpose or brilliance (Seligman et al., 2004). Despite the recently increased interest in positive psychology, its ideals and assumptions go a long way back. The intention of its theorists has been not to replace the contributions by mainstream psychology over the years, but rather to supplement its existing knowledge in addressing illness and healing harm through an understanding of how to nurture wellbeing in people and in communities (Seligman et al., 2004).

Psychological strengths have gradually been recognised as a sustainable response to some of the problems facing human resource management in the workplace (Indradevi, 2021), and there are many quantitative studies to prove this. It has been found in various studies that, by incorporating the spiritual aspect in the work experience, creativity and improved problem-solving abilities will increase and stress levels will decrease (Indradevi, 2021). Hence the drive to create and improve on interventions to enhance these strengths will have a significantly positive effect on the wellbeing of the workforce.

## **1.7 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION**

The pillars that applied positive psychology has contributed as the base for the field are these four: virtue, meaning, resilience and wellbeing for society (Wong, 2011). Many studies have focused on these concepts, which have been identified as factors that enable people to survive and flourish and which have been the focus of many studies, as factors that contribute to human survival and flourishing. Virtues are indicative of those characteristics, strengths and values that assist people to act in moral ways and that aim at achieving positive ends for both themselves and the society. Wong (2011) sees these virtues as representing the most significant strengths of character that individuals should demonstrate and they contribute towards positive purposes, as values that actively nurture worth and excellence. Given that they are social values, they reflect strengths in the culture that people are located in and influenced by (Wong, 2011).

In this study, the concepts of the psychological strengths of transcendence will be explored together with the concepts of wellbeing. Transcendence includes appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humour and spirituality (Park, Peterson & Seligman, 2006). Wellbeing includes positive emotion, engagement, meaning, relationships and accomplishments (Seligman, 2011). This joint exploration aims to establish the roles that each play in these facets of wellbeing.

## **1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The study will make use of a qualitative research approach, with the information on methodology and design fully described in the relevant chapter.

### **1.8.1 Study site**

The company where the research is to be conducted is a public company, i.e., one that is listed on the JSE (Johannesburg Stock Exchange). Its base is in Johannesburg and it is the holding company for a range of subsidiaries across the world. These are all involved in manufacturing, distributing and retailing of products related to energy storage and automotive components. The group exports to roughly 46 countries worldwide.

### **1.8.2 Population and Sampling**

The company employs 11 382 employees, internationally 11 392 employees, and the subsidiaries based in SA 8 643 employees. Purposive judgmental sampling was the method used to select participants. The sample number aimed at originally was 14, or until the point where saturation would occur. These were drawn from the executive and manager levels from the various sub-divisions of the holding company, Company X, in the automotive manufacturing sector.

### **1.8.3 Data Collection**

Data was gathered through the use of semi-structured interviews. Open ended questions were prepared in advance and used to guide the interview.

### **1.8.4 Data Collection and Screening Tools**

The VIA Strengths Survey Questionnaire (Park et al., 2006), is a self-report, screening instrument used to inform the participant selection process. It is an English-language questionnaire that measures 24 widely-valued character strengths, which was used to inform the participant selection process. The researcher selected a total of 30 managers from the various subsidiaries of the company and requested them to complete all sections of the VIA questionnaire, comprising 24-character strengths of six virtues namely: wisdom and knowledge; courage; humanity and love; justice; temperance and spirituality and transcendence. From those who met the inclusion criteria of the composites of spirituality and transcendence (appreciation of beauty and excellence; gratitude, hope, humour, spirituality), the researcher then selected 14 managers to participate in the interviews. Semi-structured interview schedules were created, informed by the PERMA Model of Wellbeing (Seligman, 2011), which covered the composites of positive emotion; engagement; meaning, positive relationships and

accomplishments/achievements. Questions were extracted based on the information provided by the author on the composites of the PERMA model (Seligman, 2011) as well as by the Spirituality and Transcendence aspect of the VIA Strengths Survey Questionnaire, (Park et al., 2006, p. 119).

### **1.8.5 Data Analysis and Research Approach**

The data was analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Phenomenology is the research approach that was used in this study. It is an approach suitable for the social sciences as it aims at description of individuals' experiences and requires that the researcher observes thoughts, perceptions, memories and imaginings (Polkinghorne, 1989). It is believed that people constantly and necessarily interact with the world; their consciousness allows an awareness of their surroundings and context. This approach includes seeing fully, both in body and mind, the dynamics of these interactions. It focuses on the ways in which people relate to and interpret experience, going beyond mere sensation (Polkinghorne, 1989). Using this research approach to explore how people understand their experiences is known as interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). This seeks to identify processes and self-reflections that make up experiences, so that the researcher can give meaning and understanding to the events in respondents' lives (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Smith & Osborn, 2007). The methodology chapter presents a fuller description of IPA.

### **1.8.6 Data Verification and Trustworthiness**

**Reliability:** Reliability was achieved through transparency and by giving full detailing of the research process; in addition, the theoretical approach used for interpreting data is set out fully. The tape-recording of interviews was used to enhance reliability. The instruments where open-ended questions were used to assess and measure are considered reliable and valid (Elliot, 2005).

**Validity:** Validity was achieved by the use of the method of analytic induction. Kvale (1999) advocates that the validity of qualitative data encompasses: validity of craftsmanship; communicative validity; and pragmatic validity. These are discussed in more detail in the research chapter.

**Trustworthiness:** The measure of quality adopted in qualitative research is typically judged on the basis of the extent to which the process is seen as dependable and

trustworthy (Grant & Lincoln, 2021). Four constructs were used to ensure that the research process, including interpretation, thematic analysis and coding, was rigorous. The ways in which the research findings can be seen as credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable are discussed in more detail in the research chapter (Mackey & Gass, 2005).

## **1.9 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The chapters that follow in which the findings are set out involve the summarising, contextualising and interpreting the results of the data analysed. The integration of the literature review, theoretical framework, paradigm perspective and the process of empirical inquiry, in response to the statement of problem and the research questions, is fully described in these chapters. This takes the form of a narrative report, tables and graphical representations to present the analyse data on the components of the study. The findings presented will be supported by a description of the outcomes of the analysis of the data and substantiated by relevant literature after each category has been described.

## **1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Guidelines for ethics in research were adhered to during the research process. These included ensuring that the research process followed the plan set out in the application for ethical clearance. It required informed consent by participants, compliance with requirements for confidentiality and anonymity and ensuring that the participants would experience no harm. In addition, full feedback was provided to participants. These considerations by the researcher are described as follows:

**Voluntary Participation:** Participants were assured that they were free to participate or not and that they could withdraw at any time. If they did withdraw or withhold participation, there would be no come back from the researcher (or indeed from the company). They would lose no benefit and suffer no mistreatment. The participants were required to sign a form as an indication that participation was voluntary and not forced. Participants were free not to respond to specific questions if they felt uncomfortable answering them. They could also choose to end the discussion at any time during the interview. In the case that participants would want to withdraw

information after being interviewed, they were informed that they could contact the researcher directly. Participants incurred no costs through their involvement and were not offered any incentives or inducements to participate.

**Human Participants' Protection:** It is important that respondents are not subject to any harm, whether physical or psychological. It is never possible to excluded all risks, but these should never be more than what people experience in their everyday lives. Potentially, some questions could evoke a degree of anxiety or regret, but where this was seen as possible, the researcher informed participants of this in advance and was ready to provide debriefing or counselling immediately if at all necessary, however, in reality, this was not needed. Given this first rule of “do no harm”, the researcher proceeded thoughtfully with examining concepts related to the topic, by contextualising them and continuing to examine whether certain existing intervention processes at the subsidiaries were helpful or not (Ciarrochi, Atkins, Hayes, Sahdra & Parker, 2016).

**Informed Consent:** This principle means that respondents need full information on the topic of the study and on the research processes and their rights of withdrawal, and only then are asked whether they wished to participate or not. This ensured that their participation in the study was indeed fully voluntary.

**Right to Privacy:** The requirement of confidentiality was fully applied in the study. This entailed that the specific responses by participants were not divulged in ways that could be traced to any specific individual. Unless a participant had given prior written permission, no-one could be informed as to how he or she had responded. In reality, this eventuality did not arise.

**Honesty with Professional Colleagues:** The principles of honesty in reporting of findings was applied by the researcher. The discussions regarding the nature of the findings was fully reported without any form of fabrication. The results of the research could not and were not to be made public without the explicit consent of respondents; the researcher is obligated to grant any confidentiality request should this still arise. A letter of consent from the management of the company granting permission to carry out the research was obtained by the researcher. A signed declaration on the policy on research ethics of UKZN was submitted.

**Anonymity and Confidentiality:** All information provided met the requirements of confidentiality. All data was stored with the researcher, who alone has had access to it. Care has been taken so that the data would be used only for the purposes of the study and the actual data will be deleted on full completion of the study. The researcher has not made use of the names and designation of respondents in reporting in this these, and will not do so in any further reporting. Participants will remain anonymous, ensuring that it will not be possible to relate the information provided to any particular participant.

**Potential Limitations:** Qualitative research is often accused of reduced reliability and poor generalisation (Flick, 2022; Maxwell, 2012). It is also time consuming to collect, interpret and analyse data, and there are cost implications for transcribing data. Sensitivity is a challenge when collecting information and participants may well feel inhibited when they realise that the interviews are being recorded. Participants may also feel that their jobs or positions may be threatened should they divulge too much regarding personal or job-related stress factors and inability to cope. These considerations were taken into account in the research process. As researchers need to be aware of their own subjectivity as well as personal and/or professional reflexivity which may come into play, a section on this appears in the final sections of this thesis.

Despite these possible limitations, the qualitative approach was deemed to be the most appropriate for this type of in-depth study, as it is hoped to the study has provided rich and comprehensive data, new insights and better understanding of the phenomenon that was investigated, which cannot readily be obtained through quantitative research.

## **1.11 BROADER ISSUES TO BE INVESTIGATED AND RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS**

This research contributed to new theoretical and practical knowledge in the arena of organisational success, more authentic, transformational, inspiring and thus effective leaders. There is an indication and proliferation that a relationship need exists between authentic leadership, the leader's spiritual identity and spiritual leadership (Klenke, 2007), where leaders are able to provide consensus on the values, attitudes, and behaviours necessary for spiritual wellbeing, positive human health, psychological

wellbeing, life satisfaction, organisational commitment, productivity, sustainability and financial performance within organisations (Madi Odeh, Obeidat, Jaradat, Masa'deh and Alshurideh, 2023). This implies adopting a level of self-awareness, having a deeper understanding of one's emotions, strengths, weaknesses, needs, and drivers are propagated and prioritised in the work environment (Ariyabuddhiphongs & Kahn, 2017). This level of self-awareness is achieved by means of personal reflection or an introspective practice from a larger context on the events of one's workplace and personal life as mentioned in the literature review. It includes being able to make sense of one's own world (sense of meaning) as well as find purpose in living and are components of spirituality (Ghosh, 2020). Spirituality is an inherent component of human life (Wright, 2000). Empirical studies in organisational literature on constructs such as meaning and purpose in life, made a significant contribution to research in identifying a relationship between transformational leadership, self-awareness and spiritual leadership (Madi Odeh et al, 2023).

This study also aimed to develop recommendations to enhance workplace wellbeing with regard to positive psychological interventions to sustain and promote wellbeing for the managers and the organisation as a whole. This process involved first broadening and building on the existing knowledge and literature on constructs of psychological strengths and wellbeing and their various components, and also by expanding the current knowledge concerning the constructs. Secondly, it has been the intention of this researcher to develop further our knowledge of interventions that promote positive psychological strength, in terms of enhancing wellbeing in the literature and research.

Hence the broad aim has been to advance the development of managers and to better understand key aspects and concepts of the psychological strengths of transcendence and wellbeing within their environment via strengths-driven PPIs. This has aimed to make a significant contribution to the field of industrial psychology theoretically and experientially via guidelines for these PPIs, which were formulated and can be implemented and tested as a recommendation for future research. This has been done by keeping in mind the evidence and the criticisms levelled for and against mainstream PPIs respectively, which may lead to helpful processes and outcomes.

Furthermore, the study hopes to contribute to the field of psychological strengths and wellbeing by creating further awareness of the importance of cultivating a culture of wellbeing in the workplace that organisations may adopt and augment in their current and future work environments, as well as other industries. The creation of such a culture will not only bode well for the manager but for the employees, the organisation, the community and society at large. When a culture of psychological strength and wellbeing has been cultivated in the workplace, this will instigate a spill over into all other facets of life, in the hope that it will become a way of life (Proyer, Gander & Wellenzohn, 2016; Van Zyl, 2013).

## **1.12 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THE BROADEN-AND-BUILD THEORY**

Fredrickson (1998; 2001) sets out the Broaden-and-Build Theory, a conceptual model that has been utilised as a framework for this thesis. Both industrial and clinical psychology were intended to provide a response historically to psychological illnesses and unworkable behaviour, in society generally and in the workplace. What positive psychology has done is to shift the attention away from the damaged and broken aspects of people to their talents, their happiness and how psychological strengths can nurture their resilience and wellbeing (Carr, 2004; Seligman, 2004).

The Broaden-and-Build Theory (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001) asserts that enjoyment, happiness, joy and other emotions extend our awareness and help us explore diverse and exploratory thinking and action (Fredrickson, 2004). These positive feelings develop people's resources of intellect, body and social engagement, building up reserves that we can use under conditions of threat or indeed of opportunity (Seligman, 2002). Research evidence from longitudinal studies is that they help to develop resources that assist people to become resilient, effective and to be able to flourish for long periods into the future (Fredrickson, 2003; 2006). They also enhance responsiveness to the present environment, develop an aware connection to the immediate physical and social context, awaken creativity and build a sense that individuals experience positive developments in their lives (Carr, 2013).

Research has been built up in three areas of the field of positive psychology: positive individual traits, positive subjective experience and institutions that provide a supportive foundation for development of the first two (Seligman & Peterson, 2003).

This research typically focuses on such topics as flow, optimism, emotional intelligence, giftedness, creativity and wisdom (Carr, 2013). In distinguishing between positive and negative feelings, researchers explore the extent to which they lead to either win-lose (zero-sum) or win-win (non-zero-sum) outcomes (Carr, 2013). When there is a perception of threat, negative emotions act to focus and narrow down concentration, preparing people for fight or flight; this increases the likelihood of a win-lose outcome (Carr, 2013). On the other hand, positive emotions lead into more hopeful and aware outcomes (Carr, 2013).

The outcome of a broadened behavioural repertoire, over time, is said to also build skills and resources, which enhance survival (Chadwick & Raver, 2020) and lead to satisfied lives (Cohn & Fredrickson, 2006). By broadening and building on the elements of wellbeing and the factors that impact wellbeing, otherwise known as antecedents – such as the context of the workplace, personality attributes, and stress in the workplace – the consequences of wellbeing, namely the physical, psychological, behavioural, health insurance costs; productivity and absenteeism, are improved (De Simone, 2014). Positive feelings operate as a resource that has the ability to encourage similar behaviour from then on, leading to the repetition of rewarding experiences that can in time become recurring behaviour. This enables the exploration of how human strengths and virtues encourage resilience and wellbeing (Carr, 2013).

The science of and activities promoted by the positive psychology perspective, which conceptualises psychological strengths (PS) and wellbeing (WB), has its focus on human values, virtues and enhancement of people's abilities to lead more effective and more joyful lives, which is a further focus of this research (Scorsolini-Comin, Fontaine, Koller & Dos Santos, 2013). A scientific method is presented by Seligman (2011) so that people can enhance their WB, is linked also to exercises and strategies that enhance positive feelings. These include, such as: fostering optimism, mutually supportive social relationships, communicating gratitude, handling stress and obstacles, goal commitment and the development of a focus on present realities (Lyubomirsky, Dickerhoof, Boehm, & Sheldon, 2011; Lyubomirsky, Sheldon & Schkade, 2005; Seligman, 2011).

It has also been noted that people who focus on negative emotions are likely to more aware of both their skills and their shortcomings. They are good at recollection of

positive and negative data, can see risks that may arise, are more narrowly focused and practise critical thinking and decision-making. In contrast, those whose approach is more positive may actually be too optimistic regarding their abilities. They remember information that is more positive and they use ways of making decisions that are more positive for their lives. The term 'flourishing' is often employed for the description of those individuals who usually experience positive emotions, engage positively with their surroundings and succeed (Keyes, 2013). Those who meet these criteria are more likely to attain good mental health. Whether by design or not, they internalise positive emotions and develop what are termed the broaden-and-build effects (Catalino & Fredrickson, 2011; Keyes, 2002). They tend to respond favourably to daily activities that trigger emotion-based mechanisms that serve to maintain their wellbeing over time. This notion is consistent with the premise of the Broaden-and-Build Theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001, 2013).

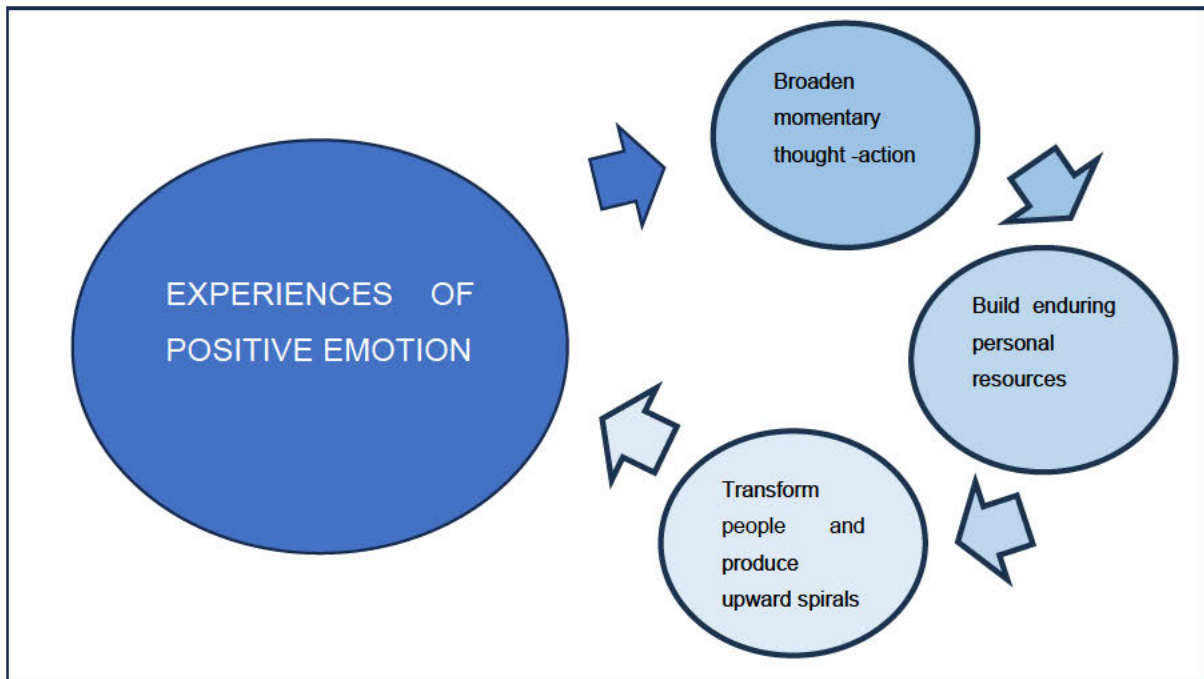
From the foundational theory on positive emotions, Fredrickson (2013) extended the ideas to incorporate non-zero-sum outcomes. The Broaden-and-Build Theory sets out to account for ways in which positive emotions can assist people in developing personally and in their general wellbeing. The theory asserts that there are very different implications for positive and for negative emotions (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005). As indicated above, negative emotions tend to have a narrowing down on people's cognitive awareness to help them negate situations that may threaten their lives, leading to direct and immediate outcomes. In contrast, positive emotions have a broadening effect, promoting personal resources indirectly and shaping resources like social connectivity, the strategies for coping and knowledge of the environment (Fredrickson, 2013; Fredrickson & Losada, 2005). Positive learning opportunities enable the accumulation of durable resources over time that can be used to protect against future threats and can serve as sources for resilience and for personal development (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005).

The effect on an individual person of having a positive disposition is that the person feels keen to approach and explore situations. This initiates access into new experiences that in turn permit the individual to confirm or refute their prior expectations. Excessively negative emotions make the person avoid new situations, thus losing the opportunity to review whether the impression is accurate. In summary,

the findings by Fredrickson and Losada's (2005) suggest that positive feelings enhance and extend exploratory behaviour in the short time, while, over longer duration, they enable fuller cognitive maps to develop that can account for what is good and what is bad in the aspects of the environment. This is a way of developing personal resources that last over time. Catalino & Fredrickson (2011) list six enjoyable activities that have the ability to bring out the onset of positive emotions. The activities are helping, interacting with others, playing, learning, engaging in spiritual activity and exercising.

In contrast to negative emotions, which impel individual to focus on self-protection, positive emotions act to broaden the range of thinking and action positively, in time increasing way of building person resources. These form a foundation for personal growth and transformation, for the creation of a spiral of positive, adaptive emotions (Catalino & Fredrickson, 2011). There is ample empirical research in the literature for the 'build effect' of positive emotions and the 'broaden effect' of positive emotions (Wagner, Wermelinger & Daum, 2023; Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005; Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, & Finkel, 2008; Rowe, Hirsh, & Anderson, 2007; Schmitz, De Rosa, & Anderson, 2009; Wadlinger & Isaacowitz, 2006). Sustained periods of positive emotion enable people to become more creative and more productive (Carr, 2013); to think and act more flexibly, and to have the enhanced ability to handle more effective challenging situations and longevity. Finally, evidence is that happier employees are likely to achieve higher performance evaluations and to earn more (Carr, 2013).

Figure 1 (below) presents a description of the processes that are significant to the Broaden-and-Build Theory. It claims that the different psychological strengths on which the analysis focuses operate in similar ways. In principle, the strength of kindness and the act of thoughtfulness regarding positive actions for others (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) not only lead into positive behaviours that enhance others' wellbeing but in turn build up a positive feeling of accomplishment, caring, benefaction and a positive orientation towards others. This is an ongoing process that, through the development of resources over periods of time, support the renewed behaviour in similar ways. Thus, positive experiences are repeated and form positive patterns of behaviour.



**Figure 1.0.1 The Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions (Fredrickson, 2005, p. 679)**

This study investigated the psychological or character strengths of transcendence that managers utilise in their workplace and that enable managers to draw on experience and other sources to improve their sense of positivity and develop their capacities. Thus, this theory was used as a framework to understand the process and ways in which these psychological resources of strengths become evident within the situations in which the managers work. This study also explores the experiences of psychological strengths and wellbeing in order to understand how these PS can be utilised to enhance WB. The evidence collected was used as a foundation to offer a set of recommendations to guide the development and promotion of PPIs, aiming at real and lasting workplace wellbeing (Burke & Richardsen, 2019).

### **1.13 THEORETICAL AND PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE**

Psychofortology is the perspective of positive psychology from which this research was conducted. The term 'fortology' was coined by Wissing and van Eeden (2002), drawing on Strümpfer (2013). Strümpfer had pushed to extend a concept developed by Antonovsky (1979, 1987), that of salutogenesis (Vinje, Langeland & Bull, 2017). This refers to the approach to human health that considers the factors that promote

and maintain the wellbeing of mind and body, instead of countering disease. The aim is to emphasise the methods used by people to cope and to ensure their health even under conditions of stress. The term psychofortology connects also with another construct, 'fortigenesis', a term referring to where strengths originate. According to Wissing and van Eeden (2002), this is a sub-discipline that focuses on the nature and the sources of psychological WB, how it is manifested and how psychological WB can be enhanced by developing human capacities. 'Fortology' is relevant to how the discipline of positive psychology reviews and classifies strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2003).

The approach just outlined differs sharply from the traditional approach based on the focus on disease and pathology, and viewing humans as those who simply receive difficulties. Seligman (2002) came to realise that psychology had come to focus on pathology and harsh experiences following World War II, resulting in its neglect of the complete range of human experience (Seligman, 2002; Gable & Haidt, 2005). In 1998, Seligman established positive psychology as a field of study (Peterson, 2006), aiming to shift from the emphasis on victims towards an emphasis on strengths; this is the foundation for the approach of psychofortology (Strümpfer, 2006). As much as positive psychology has many merits, it pertains only to the individual's determination of life, which in this study is the manager's experience of WB at an individual level (Gable & Haidt, 2005).

'Fortology' is a concept that can be applied to a range of disciplines, which is an advantage. In this, it differs from the term 'positive psychology.' Strümpfer (2013) observes that Seligman himself wanted the concept to extend beyond psychology and used the term 'positive social science.' The major task of positive psychology is to study the conditions and processes that have an effect on the best functioning and thriving of humans, whether individuals or groups, as well as institutional life. This study relies on a focus on positive life experiences (Gable & Haidt, 2005; Peterson, 2006). Hence positive psychology creates a wide canvas on which to view and examine the individual within a contextual basis.

Csikszentmihalyi and Seligman (2000) argue that the inculcation of positive qualities such as a person pursuing ways of being loving, courageous, persevering, forgiving, original and wise, makes life more meaningful and brings joy both personally and in

the workplace. Within groups, citizenship is promoted through being altruistic, civil, moderate and tolerant and through commitment to positive work. The rate of positive change can be assisted through drawing on people's potential and their positive experiences, instead of giving attention only to their shortfalls and limitations. Psychologists in this discipline maintain a stance of acceptance to the good and bad in people; they rely on use of the scientific method. Peterson (2006) explains that those using this approach study people by discussing with them what they see as most important about their lives (Peterson, 2006).

Though a recent emphasis in psychology, the actual ideas of this approach go back to ancient theoretical works, over 2000 years old. These ideas are present in Buddhism, in yoga, in Chinese medicine and in religions practised in Arab, Roman and Greek contexts. These teachings included salutogenic views, suggesting that they were the origins of what we might now call positive social science (Strümpfer, 2013). Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Western literature, there were authors from Rogers and Frankl who focused on the positive understandings of human beings (Strümpfer, 2005). The mainstream writers in positive psychology draw on work written in the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> Century that address such issues as flow, salutogenesis and self-determination theory (Strümpfer, 2013).

This study fits well with the paradigm of psychofortology as it focuses on the strengths of managers in the automotive sector. The focus of this study is on how we describe and classify psychological strengths. The methodology takes an inclusive approach to both the positive and the negative experiences of managers in their workplace, yet gives the strongest focus to the positive elements that have supported the managers in their development. It also takes the stance that managers are positive agents in the handling of their managerial roles. They play a central role, in that they promote and facilitate a commitment to the central principles for wellbeing in the workplace, rather than being someone who simply responds to difficulties when they arise. One reason for using a qualitative approach is because of its effectiveness in providing a clear description and understanding of such experiences. Through using this approach, the respondent is treated as not simply a subject in a series of events, but instead as a person who uses their agency to engage with events and with information, and makes meaning from these interactions (Polkinghorne, 1989). Conventional mainstream

psychology, especially within the quantitative approach, had sought to measure 'objective' phenomena. These were seen as observable through information from our senses. Instead, in positive psychology, the focus is on the respondent's personal world, while phenomenology is drawn upon to secure the aim of the study (Smith & Osborn, 2007).

## **1.14 STRUCTURE OF DISSERTATION AND OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS**

The outline of the dissertation is thus:

### **Chapter 1: Introduction and Background**

This introductory chapter has set out the Introduction, background to the study and motivation for the study. This was followed by the problem and purpose statements; research questions and objectives; broader issues to be investigated; theoretical framework; the model upon which the research project was constructed; theoretical and paradigm perspective; ethical considerations; research contributions and the structure of the dissertation.

### **Chapter 2: Literature Review on Wellbeing**

The research constructs are articulated and described in this chapter, in order to explicate the constructs to be investigated. The various topics for discussion are positive psychology and a critical discussion thereof; a brief introduction to the authentic happiness theory and how it developed into wellbeing theory, its various components as well as criticism of WB theory; the benefits of WB and how it pertains to workers. Relevant theorists, academic sources, the internet and scholarly articles are relied upon to consolidate the literature.

### **Chapter 3: Literature Review on Psychological Strengths**

In this chapter of the study, psychological strengths of the virtue of transcendence are discussed in detail including: definitions of strengths; the utilisation of strengths; taxonomies of strengths. It also presents a model that deal with strengths and with the nature of what is meant by healthy psychological growth. Following from that is a discussion of the development of strengths as it pertains to positive psychological interventions, with a discussion on the criticisms of positive psychological

interventions. Relevant theorists, academic sources, the internet and scholarly articles are relied upon to consolidate the literature.

#### **Chapter 4: Research Design and Methodology**

This chapter comprises a focus on research method, research design and a justification of the techniques, procedures and methods selected. It describes the research participants and their demographics together with the target population, procedures for sampling and size of sample. The chapter addresses methods of data collection; research instrument and qualitative procedures for data analysis as well as reliability, validity and trustworthiness. Ethical considerations are also outlined here as well as the expected challenges within the selected research approaches.

#### **Chapter 5: Presentation, Description and Analysis of Research Findings**

This chapter presents a thorough and critical analysis of the results. The findings of the part of the research are interpreted, presented and discussed here. A summary profile of the participants is discussed and the results are analysed in terms of themes of how the psychological strengths of transcendence negate the challenging experiences and how these contribute to the wellbeing of participants, according to the dimensions of the PERMA model of wellbeing. The issues of reliability as well as validity of qualitative results are also discussed. The chapter presents a thorough, critical discussion and explanation of the results of the research. The findings of the research are interpreted, presented and discussed herein.

#### **Chapter 6: Guidelines on how to Develop a Positive Psychological Intervention**

This chapter provides recommendations on guidelines for a positive psychological intervention, which were based on the results of the research. This section offers a set of guidelines that can be used to develop and promote workplace wellbeing for managers in the industry, based on the utilisation of appropriate psychological strengths as determined by the research, with the hope to improve coping mechanisms for managers to deal with their numerous challenges as well as alleviate their stress.

## **Chapter 7: Summary of Main Findings, Recommendations, Limitations and Conclusion**

A summary of the research is presented in this chapter. Here the limitations are discussed in relation to the depth and scope of the study after the research is complete. Conclusions were drawn from the findings presented in the previous chapters, which includes a culmination of the outcomes of the exploration, investigation and discussion of the research. Recommendations were made in accordance with the findings or outcomes of the research. These will serve to guide future research.

# **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW – POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND WELLBEING**

## **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The chapter begins by introducing the theories of positive psychology. This is a developing area of psychology and this chapter sets out the foundational elements of the theory before considering how it is applied within the context of organisations. It will pay specific attention to definitions; basic doctrines; the scientific nature of positive psychology; the criticisms levelled against it as well as its relation to authentic happiness and wellbeing.

Next is the introduction of the authentic happiness theory, and its relation to wellbeing theory and its history. The criticisms and inadequacies are discussed and how it developed into wellbeing theory. The construct of wellbeing is then discussed in terms of its definitions, components and benefits. From this follows the conversation on how wellbeing is conceptualised in Seligman's PERMA model (Seligman, 2011). PERMA stands for Positive Emotions/Pleasure; Engagement; Relationships; Meaning and Accomplishment/Achievements (Seligman, 2011). Criticisms of wellbeing theory are then discussed together with the benefits, so that it is possible to achieve a full understanding of wellbeing and how its elements are applied in the workplace.

The managers' experiences of wellbeing are then looked at in terms of the work context in South Africa, specifically the automotive industry. A discussion on management is held in terms of roles, pressures, responsibilities, as well as mental health/wellbeing within this industry. A review of the wellbeing of managers in the workplace in general will be discussed as well as in the automotive environment. This will focus on relevant literature in the South African context, in terms of not only what typically managers must deal with at work but also their coping strategies. Trends experienced internationally by managers in the automotive industry are also reported, as are typical experiences in the South African industry historically and recently. Relevant theorists, academic sources, the internet and scholarly articles will be relied upon to consolidate the literature. This is accomplished through the review of previous and current literature on the constructs. The aim is to describe and discuss the theory

and arguments pertaining to the conceptualisation of the constructs in the literature and in current and past research.

## **2.2 POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY**

The term 'positive psychology' has been applied to those areas of psychology that involve the study of positive feelings and affects, positive traits of characters and the organisational context that supports them (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005). It has been defined as

*...nothing more than the scientific study of ordinary human strengths and virtues  
(Sheldon and King, 2001, p. 216).*

There is a strong argument that, despite the earlier neglect of these issues, it is valuable to pursue principles of positive psychology. However, it is argued that the history of positive psychology has neglected the impact of negative emotions on the individual as well as neglected the power of context on an individual's lived experience (Robertson, 2018). Despite this, it is suggested that more attention by way of rigorous research entailing the combination of positive and negative attributes achieves a fuller understanding of the processes of teaching and learning than treating them separately (MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017).

Seligman (2002) states that capturing a sense of meaning in both happy and unhappy situations is core to positive psychology and to find one's strength and virtue is the aim of wellbeing. More recent researchers have intimated that this is very difficult to do in silos; one needs to understand the individual according to their significant environmental contexts (Arcidiacono & Di Martino, 2016).

According to Seligman (2002), wellbeing is seen to positively affect the lives of individuals through their experience of finding pleasure or positive emotion; being engaged; finding positive relationships and meaning and having accomplishments or achievements. Positive emotion or the life of pleasure (the pleasant life); the life of engagement (the good life); and the life of meaning (the meaningful life), were initially introduced as the three orientations to the authentic happiness theory (which was a precursor to wellbeing theory). These have been proven to have great significance in the organisation and in the lives of workers at an individual level and are linked to

positive organisational psychology (Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2005). These theories will be discussed later in this chapter.

### **2.2.1 Positive Organisational Psychology**

Over a decade ago, this field of study within organisations began to focus largely on how constructs of positive psychology relate to organisational outcomes and behaviours (Donaldson & Ko, 2010). According to Donaldson and Ko (2010, p. 178), positive organisational psychology is the “scientific study of positive subjective experiences and traits in the workplace and positive organisations, and its application to improve the effectiveness and quality of life in organisations.”

The sub-field of positive organisational behaviour was developed to explain the ways in which core humans demonstrate hopefulness, optimism and resilience where these psychological strengths are carried out and lead into positive outcomes for the organisation. These include satisfaction in the workplace, commitment to the organisation and happiness in the workplace (Donaldson & Ko, 2010). These behaviours can be assessed and strengthened; they are associated with the capacity of an individual to enhance performance.

### **2.2.2 Definitions of Positive Psychology**

Positive psychology has been described as the use of “psychological theory, research and intervention techniques to understand the positive, the adaptive, the creative and the emotionally fulfilling elements of human behaviour” (Compton, 2005, p. 3).

Similarly, Wong defines positive psychology as “the scientific study of virtue, meaning, resilience, and wellbeing, as well as evidence-based applications to improve the life of individuals and society in the totality of life” (Wong, 2011, p. 72). The author’s aim was to utilise positive psychology as an arena committed to extracting people’s full potential through their ability to derive meaning from both positive and negative experiences.

Seligman et al. (2005) argue that this approach develops a holistic, balanced approach to complement and acknowledge the juxtaposed limitations and potential of people with the aim, whatever the challenges, to create the most positive life from one’s experiences (Seligman et al., 2005).

When faced with challenging situations or difficult life experiences, certain characteristics of the human condition enable individuals to not only maintain a positive attitude but to also thrive (Seligman, 2004). He observes that in the Second World War, where many people were left both physically and emotionally scarred as outcomes of the times, psychology emanated as a consequential science devoted to healing (Seligman, 2004). This is a celebration and revitalisation of the well-functioning aspects of our humanity.

### **2.2.3 The Basic Doctrines of Positive Psychology**

Positive psychology seeks an understanding and comprehension of the core elements that make life worth living and of the ways in which human beings may achieve this (Seligman, 2011). The aims of positive psychology are to develop positive emotions, sense of gratification and meaning, in the process achieving greater happiness (Seligman, Parks & Steen, 2004). Compton and Hoffman (2019) report that Seligman's undertaking was to work for the revitalisation of psychology's foundational vision of building people's capacities and of nurturing intelligence, a focus that had fallen into neglect within the dominant psychological movements. These had come to focus primarily on mental disorder.

Evidence of gains made in diagnosing, treating and providing prognosis of mental disorders can be found in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (Fischer, 2012). In contrast, so little is known about what makes people feel optimism, engagement, kindness, contentment and other positive qualities (Seligman et al., 2004). As was observed in the previous chapter, this is both a more recent development and something that draws on ancient traditions. As Seligman et al. (2004) observe, the aim is not to drop and ignore the achievements of mainstream psychology but to complement it with what we have learnt about nurturing and fostering wellbeing in people and their communities.

The four pillars that form the basis of applied positive psychology consist of virtues, meaning, resilience and wellbeing for society. These factors have contributed to human survival and flourishing and have been the focus of many research papers.

**Virtues** form the first pillar. They concern the elements that enable human being to act in ways that are ethical and that aim to bring good for both themselves and for

society generally. They are often influenced by culture and exemplify the finest in people. They shape values that nurture the desire to be worthy and excellent (Wong, 2011).

The second pillar, **meaning**, is considered the central concept of psychology, a focus of Bruner (1992). An analysis was conducted by Peterson (1999) to prove the association between neuropsychology and beliefs in relation to meaning. Compton and Hoffman (2019) saw the purpose of existence to be that people could achieve meaning. Such scholars took the view that positive psychology should advance from beyond its scientific foundations so that it could assist people to create meaning. As a core aspect of our existence, meaning can be reached through the use of narrative, myth-making and other cultural expressions. Scholars such as Wong (2011), Vohs and Baumeister (2011), Carver and Scheier (2001) and Ryan and Deci (2000) assert that, beyond being a concept, there is a structure to meaning and it works as part of a process of self-regulation that supports and brings integration to elements of motivation that we typically refer to as 'understanding', 'purpose', spiritual and moral 'responsibility' and feelings of 'enjoyment.' Various studies have demonstrated the relationships between meaning and the dimensions of wellbeing that were developed in personal and social psychology. Our experiences such as happiness, achievement, intimacy and self-acceptance also provide meaning (Wong, 2011).

**Resilience** is the third pillar. This refers to the capacity for adapting to difficulties in ways that one not only recovers but is strengthened in the process (Seligman, 2011). Our desire to survive has led humans into this adaptive process. It is built up through protective factors in people and in our environment that work to forestall illness and that aid our recovery from trauma and harsh experiences. Apart from recovery and endurance, resilience develops a protective capacity in relation to future difficulties. What enables resilience to develop is our capacities for learning and coping; these include cultural knowledge and the ability to distinguish adaptive from maladaptive coping behaviours (Mak, Ng & Wong, 2011).

The fourth pillar is that of **wellbeing**, which is an overarching term denoting health, the capacity to thrive and live well; it captures what we may see as having a 'good life.' It draws on positive feelings, involvement, meaning, mutually supportive relationships and achievements, according to Seligman (2011). It is experienced and observed in

terms of different aspects, such as social, economic, mental, physical and emotional elements. According to Wong (2011), the achievement of wellbeing depends on the realisation of the three other pillars and on whether people appreciate and savour positive experiences of life. This concept does not suggest that we have to avoid or deny negative life experiences and suffering; it is instead that we seek to transcend them and encourage what is positive, despite the presence of obstacles. Similarly, Seligman (2011) asserts that cultural factors, which may vary from country to country, also influence the factors that potentially lead to wellbeing.

#### **2.2.4 Applications of Positive Psychology**

Compton (2005) theorised that there is the potential for people to study and apply positive psychology to focus on different forms and level of experience. He explained that what he referred to as 'positive subjective states' occur when the perspective in examining positive experiences is at subjective levels, such as emotions of joy, satisfaction and contentment or thoughts like optimism and hope (Compton & Hoffman, 2019). At this level, the focus is on 'positive individual traits', which at the first or individual level addresses relative stable traits, strengths of character and developing potential (Compton & Hoffman, 2019; Peterson, 2006). At the organisational level, the focus is on interests, skills, creativity, values, purpose, courage and meaning (Peterson, 2006). At the societal level the theory refers to 'positive institutions', including families, businesses, school and communities (Compton, 2005). According to Peterson (2006), the societal level supports the other two levels, so as to achieve people's flourishing. Csikszentmihalyi and Seligman (2000) describe positive psychology as a scientific study that involves positive and multiple levels of human functioning and perspectives. Following from this, Seligman (2011) advises that the purpose is to nurture the thriving of people, which entails having positive emotions, involvement, meaning, resilience and other positive characteristics.

The nurturing of happiness is in focus; this is a construct made up of three elements: pleasure, engagement and meaning (Seligman, 2002). However, happiness has many impacts; it goes beyond feeling good, as happier people are likely also to be healthier, to achieve greater success and to be more engaged in society (Seligman et al., 2005). Seligman, Parks & Steen (2004) assert that it is possible to research happiness and

unhappiness through science and that happiness is not the same as the lack of unhappiness.

### **2.2.5 The Scientific Nature of Positive Psychology**

What makes the field of positive psychology scientific is that it is based on evidence and on well researched conceptualisations of functioning, not on concepts randomly assembled (Diener, 2013; Seligman, 2011). The foundation for the ways in which positive psychology understands people and their capacities for flourishing is explained, supported and shaped through rigorous research. Compton (2005) reports that an early achievement of this field was in assisting psychologists to give attention to what people are 'doing right.' When the focus began to fall on the diverse ways that individuals thrive in life, these ways attracted theory, research and further intervention (Compton & Hoffman, 2019).

Gable and Haidt (2005) state that we must acknowledge that this approach does not argue that psychological disorders should be examined in a positive light. The approach is not only to focus on the one side of the coin; rather the argument is that people who are struggling with adversity or those who have some degree of security but lack joy and meaning in their lives at work do in fact have the potential for greater hope, productivity and satisfaction in future (Froman, 2010).

As was theorised by Seligman et al. (2005), the central function for positive psychology is the expansion of the happiness of individual people. Seligman (2002) asserted that the achievement of authentic happiness depends on the ability of a human being to pursue one or more of these orientations to authentic happiness: pleasure, engagement, and meaning. Through a concentration on these orientations, apart from adding positive relationships and accomplishments or achievement, human beings come to more fulfilment in their experience of wellbeing and a sense of positive regard for themselves and the lives they lead (Seligman, 2002; 2011).

As much as the study of positive psychology has proven beneficial, criticisms have been posited towards a purely positive psychological viewpoint, to be discussed as follows.

### **2.2.6 Criticisms of Positive Psychology**

A criticism that is fundamental is that the contribution of 'negative emotions' to growth is not recognised, and beyond that a forced situation to avoid negative emotions may actually cause more harm than good, via an inability to use the negative emotion to learn from or motivate change (Rowe & Fitness, 2018; Wong, 2011). Positive psychology has been criticised for being decontextualised and coercive, and without regard to context, it may lead to poor and even damaging strategies for avoidance of harsh but necessary experience and seeking pleasant mental states unconnected to reality (Ciarrochi et al., 2016). This is about placing great emphasis on positive states and giving inadequate consideration to negative experiences.

To further describe this, we can note how sensitive people are to negative emotions in contexts of environmental danger, which is an evolutionary adaptation that is pro-survival (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer & Vohs, 2001). Their argument is that failure to recognise threats has more serious, perhaps devastating, consequences for missing the significance and danger that people need to attend to. Such a need to focus on threats is highly pronounced in individuals' perceptions and actions, thus leading to an aim of reduction of negative experiences instead of the enhancement of positive issues. The response of positive psychologists has been a recognition of the need to give attention to negative emotions; instead of abandoning the disease model, the aim is rather to ensure greater balance. The intention here would rather be to build up positivity so that exposure to negative events may still lead to triumph. It is the belief of positive psychology that, by placing emphasis on positive emotions, the negative ones will fade away and eventually lose their importance (Wong, 2011). Therefore, the impact of negatively influenced events, as perceived by individuals, is greater insight. With regard to this argument, change is a matter of weakening the negative and not just strengthening the good.

Further criticisms concern the allegation that it flouts the structures of meaning provided by society, thus creating unnecessary limitations. The criticism is that positive psychology is considered a hindrance and a limitation by denying the organised meaning of structure that society provides. Instead, it is described as "subordination to objectivism" (Di Martino, Eiroa-Orosa & Arcidiacono, 2017, p.14). In other words, the basic concept of 'man' is described by Rand in 1992 as a "heroic being", with the

moral purpose of his life being his own happiness and his most gallant activity being “productive achievement” (Bhalla, 2020, p. 2). In defence of positive psychology, one draws attention to the ways in which it focuses on context, rather than on content, and thus it is not excessively individualistic. It does not hold the individual solely responsible whatever the circumstances of their environment (Ciarrochi et al., 2016). The implication for research is that we need to explore the kinds of relationships people have in facing the challenges of their specific contexts, if we are to gain a full understanding of the phenomenon we are investigating. For example, the championing of “cultural and human diversity” may promote better life conditions for individuals, groups, organisations, communities, and societies” (Di Martino et al., 2017, p. 15).

As Fredrickson and Losada (2005) lament, individuals give excessive attention to their faults of character rather than their strengths; the authors assert that it takes a great deal of focused work to turn these negative patterns of thinking towards a more positive direction. By ‘great deal’ they mean roughly three times more work, and term this concept the ‘critical positivity ratio’ (Fredrickson & Losada, 2013, p. 814). This concept has been largely accepted by those who see themselves as positive psychologists and has thus been drawn on in developing interventions that are based on strengths (Bates-Krakoff, Parente, McGrath, Rashid & Niemiec, 2022). These criticisms of positive psychology can be best addressed by the use of an approach that is holistic and balanced; it needs to incorporate both weaknesses and strengths, if there is a commitment to the achievement by psychology of positive outcomes (Seligman et al., 2005). This will be discussed further in the chapter on psychological strengths.

Next, we will examine the link of positive psychology to authentic happiness and ultimately wellbeing.

### **2.3 POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND AUTHENTIC HAPPINESS**

Marie Jahoda (Jahoda, 1958), a psychologist who wrote *Current concepts of positive mental health*, developed a framework that explored the attributes of people of sound mental health. The listing included: (a) self-attitudes including identity and self-esteem; (b) personal growth; (c) integration or a balance between attitude and growth; (d)

autonomy; (e) appropriate perception of reality with a level of empathy and awareness of social situations; and (f) environmental mastery with an ability to build relationships, solve problems, and adapt to various situations (Jahoda, 1958). She forthrightly asserted that the ways in which we judge mental health cannot be simply the absence of a specific mental disorder (Jahoda, 1958). A focus on strengthening the competencies of people of sound minds could help the individual achieve what she termed 'authentic happiness.' This approach led into the movements known as authentic happiness and positive psychology (Seligman, 2002).

These concerns emerged strongly in debates within psychology towards the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, and it built on Jahoda's (1958) development of a framework of competencies that would increase people's mental health. Csikszentmihalyi (2013) took this forward in the book *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. This drew attention to the ways in which time passes swiftly when individuals are truly involved in activities that bring joy into their lives. A speech by Seligman at the American Psychological Association Conference (Seligman, 1998) and the contribution by other theorists led to Seligman writing *Authentic happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfilment* (2002). This fully developed a theory known as authentic happiness.

### **2.3.1 The History of Authentic Happiness**

Since earliest recorded history, thinkers and groups have considered what constitutes happiness, including ancient philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Buddha, and Confucius (Seligman, 2002). Thomas Aquinas, the theologian, also attempted to define the concept and to speculate whether it could be achieved or not (Seligman, 2002). As a teaching of ancient philosophy, the concept of virtues began to emerge; it is found in Greece in the thinking of Plato and Aristotle and was later taken ahead within Christianity and Hinduism.

According to Nilsson (2021), virtue is a concept known otherwise as force, power, strength, high character, valour, as per the teachings of Samael Aun Weor (1917-1977). It is a valuable concept that points to the possibility of using it as a structure for meaning in one's life. According to Hütter (2021), there are two key aspects; firstly, it comes from within – it draws on internal rather than external motivation. Secondly, it is in a contrary relationship to vice or sin. In gnostic psychology, it is considered to

have originated within the vice and thought of as earned through the work of becoming conscious of our psychological defects as well as through comprehension and repentance, which thereby is believed to liberate the virtue. In this way the virtue is considered alive, intrinsic and well earned, with an element of the grace of 'God shining on earth' (Hütter, 2021).

## **Christianity**

In Christian teachings through the Bible, the faithful are urged to rejoice (Philippians 4:4) and to experience joy in the divine (Psalms 37:4); this is evidence of the religious teachings on happiness (Powers, 2018). Building on the Judaic tradition, Christian teachings developed the idea of deadly sins in contradiction to the virtues. These are paired as follows: 1) pride / humility, 2) greed / generosity, 3) lust / chastity, 4) anger / patience, 5) gluttony / temperance, 6) envy / charity and 7) laziness / diligence (Willimon, 2013). In these binaries, the idea was that sin was an abuse of God's freedom.

Estévez (2020) draws on John Bossy in explaining that the concept of seven deadly sins expresses a social and community ethic as the then Catholic Church attempted to restrain violence and achieve healing in a troubled medieval society. The seven sins constituted a dire warning on the need to restrain both personal and social behaviour. A sense of morality is a complex feature of our abilities in judging, thinking and acting. The person who fails in morality, in the common rules of societies and in human rights, is someone who contravenes the freedoms of others and can be seen as enacting wrong-doing (Castilla-Estévez & Blázquez-Rincón, 2021).

The table below describes the vices in Christianity as well as the capital virtues and their meaning. The original understanding of sin is of a failure in moral human behaviour.

**Table 2.1 Vices and Virtues in Christianity (Worthington & Berry, 2005, p.145)**

Seven vices in Christianity	Seven capital virtues and their meaning
Lust	Chastity - is purity found buried within the sea of lust.
Gluttony	Temperance - is balance, moderation and sobriety.
Greed	Charity - is opening up our hearts with generosity towards others.
Sloth	Diligence - is related to what Buddhists call Right Effort.
Wrath	Patience - is the ability to forgive people and situations.
Envy	Gratitude - is to learn value of everything.  Kindness - is a love for everyone, even your enemies, as set out in the Bible (Matthew 5:43-45)
Pride	Humility - is an attitude of worship for God who gave us life and a reaction to the miracle of life.

## Hinduism

In Hinduism, there are two forms of happiness. The first emanates from achievement and pleasure, from having a good life; the second is thought to come to us from God. In terms of this teaching, life has four aims, identified as Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha. Artha and Kama combined make up the concept of a good life. Artha is translated as “thing, object, substance”, often in terms of wealth, but it has a broader connotation of achievement, of success in the world, of fame and of power (Nishpapananda, 2010, p. 1). Kama is translated as pleasure, but pleasure not only in the physical sense but encompassing the intellect and aesthetics. This first type of happiness alternates with unhappiness. Moksha is understood as the immediate and mystical experience of the Divine, “the peace that passeth understanding” (Nishpapananda, 2010, p. 1). Moksha bestows a kind of happiness that is seen as the ultimate goal of an individual’s life. Dharma is an additional aim that is central to achieving both kinds of happiness. In Hinduism, the practice of Dharma is seen as the universal duty of all people. The happiness that comes from Moksha is considered the final goal of human life that individuals have the potential to achieve. It is believed

that the key to attaining both types of happiness is Dharma. Also, according to Hinduism, the one universal duty of all human beings, from whatever background or society, is the practice of Dharma (Nishpapananda, 2010).

There is thus ample evidence of the focus on happiness by philosophers, scholars and religious leaders over long periods of time.

**Table 2.2 Concepts in Hinduism and their Meaning (Mittal & Thursby, 2009, p. 303)**

Seven Concepts in Hinduism	Meaning.
Atman	Real self, innermost essence, often translated as soul.
Dharma	The inherent and unchanging state of reality, in Hindu thought. Also, a cosmic law that underlies good behaviour and the social order, righteousness, moral values. In Buddhist thought, universal truth.
Varna	To cover, to envelop, count, classify, consider, describe or choose, so loosely described as class, social class or order.
Karma	The total of an individual's actions in previous existences, indicating also their future fate, in Hindu and Buddhist thought.
Samsara	Life in the material world is bound to this as a cycle of death and rebirth.
Purushartha	Object of human pursuit of the four aims of all human life: (Dharma; Artha; Kama; Moksha).
Moksha	Liberation, spiritual values.

### ***Evolution of Authentic Happiness***

While there have been shifts in the understanding of happiness historically, there are long-lasting pillars that pertain to the concept in philosophy. These are typically seen as: Utilitarianism, Virtue, Hedonism, and Eudemonism (Lambert, Passmore, & Holder, 2015). The recent shift toward positive psychology has coincided with the burgeoning

focus on authentic happiness (Achor, 2010). This term is used to convey the general satisfaction with one's life (Kjell & Diener, 2021; Peterson, 2005; Seligman, 2002).

Seligman's work (Seligman, 2002) on authentic happiness was the foundational literature for this field. The concept links positive emotions from the past and those regarding the future with the joys of the present time. Happiness draws upon such positive emotions, on engagement and meaning in life; the focus of positive psychology is to enable people to reach higher states of authentic happiness.

According to Seligman, Parks and Steen (2004), the first form that authentic happiness takes is as a short-term, hedonic focus on happiness. The second form is where people experience gratitude, and is described as engagement. This generally requires that one draws upon one's strengths. The third form is meaning, which is about how we find and realise our purpose in our lives. Seligman et al. (2004) advocate that those who pursue all three forms work towards a full life. A person whose orientation is towards hedonic happiness is thought likely to fail when faced by adversity, while one oriented towards meaning has a greater likelihood of persevering despite suffering. Under the worst situations, meaning offers both survival and growth through its drawing on virtue, integrity and purpose (Wong, 2011). Presented following is a full account of all three of these orientations, noting that these are all relevant to wellbeing theory.

### ***Positive Emotion / Pleasure***

As reported above, the first orientation of happiness relates to hedonism (Park & Peterson & Ruch, 2009; Schueller & Seligman, 2010). In psychology, pleasure and happiness have been long related (Kringelbach & Berridge, 2010), for example in Freud's early work, where he asserts that people work towards happiness, driven by the desire to be and to remain happy. As early as the fourth century BCE, as Huta and Ryan (2010) write, the philosopher Aristippus contended that the highest goal is that of pleasure, whatever the source.

Pleasure is defined by Holt and Lock (2008) as a mental state that emerges when one enjoys or anticipates enjoying what is thought of as worthy of desire. This emotional state is felt when an individual fulfils their needs and desires, whether as a result of internal or external stimuli. Typically, people describe this, casually, as being happy.

From this perspective, this form of happiness entails maximising pleasure and positive emotions and minimising pain or feelings of displeasure (Tamir, 2009). Not that this is a uniform experience, as Hanley (2007) points out – the ability to experience pleasure varies considerably amongst people. Hanley (ibid.) states that some people have a far lower ability to experience pleasure than others. What one person may experience as pleasure may be very different from the experiences of another.

Similarly, pleasure is defined by Van Hooff, Geurts, Beckers and Kompier (2011) as a positive state characterised by positive feelings. Authors such as Gard, Gard, Kring and John (2006) discuss the primary focus of pleasure in the literature as on anticipatory and consummatory components, even though emphasis has primarily been given to the latter. Anticipatory pleasure is closely linked to one's motivation and one's goal-directed behaviour, which encourages a person to want more such experiences (Gard et al., 2006; Hanley, 2007). It is thought that cues bring an anticipation that certain rewards will be experienced, increasing a sense of arousal that promotes and guides action (Yan, Liu, Cao & Chan, 2011). This anticipation of pleasure provokes a sense of wanting something because of the benefits that are foreseen, thus directing actions towards achievement.

When a desire has been fulfilled or satiated, this is associated with the term 'consummatory pleasure' (Gard et al., 2006; Hanley, 2007). It is described as involving the satisfactions that a person experiences after he or she has attained what was desired. The inability to experience these two forms of pleasure is termed 'anhedonia', defined as the lack of capacity for experiencing pleasure, seen as a significant marker of depression (Horne, Bernstein & McNally, 2021; Gard et al., 2006; Yan et al., 2011; Hanley, 2007). An extension of this theory is that this may be a key factor in depression. This signified the need to experience positive emotions so as not to be caught in depression.

According to Seligman, Rashid and Parks (2006), a pleasing life is that life that contains enjoyable experiences likely to engender joy, rapture, ecstasy, warmth and comfort. These feelings may relate to the past, to the present or to the future. Seligman (2002) points out that such emotions from the past as satisfaction, contentment, fulfilment and pride can be fostered and extended by developing such practices as forgiveness and gratitude. This involves freeing oneself of from narrowly deterministic

patterns of thought. To increase positive emotions linked to the past, people need to address the past by learning to forgive and demonstrate gratitude. For the future, emotions such as optimism and hope can be strengthened through practising the reorganisation of ways in which people tend to pessimism (Carr, 2013). The immediate positive emotions of the present, such as joy, ecstasy, calm, zest, pleasure and flow, evoke our bodily sense of pleasure, but need further learning to enhance them (Lee Duckworth, Steen, & Seligman, 2005).

In the workplace, there is evidence that pleasure impacts positively on people's capacity for recovery following excessive work and stress. Van Hooff et al. (2011) report their study of how people recover from their work engagements daily, through their activities, their efforts and their satisfaction at work done. The focus was specifically on pleasure felt during engagement in the actual work as well as activities outside work. Great pleasure in either context was positively related to an individual's ability to recover. The implication is that greater pleasure during their time at work or during time off work led to greater levels of strength and lower levels of tiredness. The experience of positive emotions over long periods of time can have good and lasting effects with the people concerned (Seligman, 2002).

However, Money, Hillenbrand and Da Camara (2009) found little relationship between pleasure and satisfaction at work, though there was a significant relationship with engagement and meaning. It was found that pleasure did not have a significant influence on job satisfaction, whilst engagement and meaning did have a significant influence. Specific examples of the role of pleasure were in such phrases as "in choosing what I do at work, I take into account what is pleasurable" and "in work I love to do what excites my senses" (Money et al., 2009, p. 25). These were a few of the measures, amongst others, where the focus was on pleasurable experiences at work.

The present study explores managers' pleasurable experiences at work, using positive psychology as the lens, with particular reference to context.

### ***Engagement***

Engagement is the second element of authentic happiness and is described as connected with such terms as absorption, vigour and dedication. Vigour refers to having high levels of energy and the sense of resilience you experience in the

workplace, the determination to put efforts into your work, and not giving up when faced by challenges.

Within the framework of authentic happiness, engagement forms the second aspect of happiness. This forms the basis from which we can explore how managers and employees experience happiness, in conceptualising engagement in relation to one's work, drawing here on the Orientation to Happiness Questionnaire (Seligman, 2002), and using work and employee engagement as relevant constructs.

Engagement was defined as “the harnessing of organisational members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement people employ and express themselves physically, emotionally, and cognitively during role performances” (Kahn, 1990, p. 694). Other authors have had similar ways of describing it. According to Rich, Lepine and Crawford (2010), it can be seen as the way a person invests their self into a role, and Halbesleben (2021) refers to it as a psychological state that is positive and work focussed.

These conceptualisations of engagement aptly capture and support the definition by Kahn (1990), who described engagement as the ways in which an employee feels positively about their work, have a sense of commitment to the organisation and choose to put their efforts into the job. He further describes employee engagement as going beyond activities, games, and events, saying that it drives performance. Similarly, Harter (2018) defines as ‘engaged’ those workers who participate fully and enthusiastically in their work commitments.

Another definition, by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004, p. 293), is that engagement is “a positive and fulfilling work related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption.” Furthermore, Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter and Taris (2008, p. 187) contend that “vigour is characterised by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working; the willingness to invest in effort in one's work; and persistence in the face of challenges.” Schaufeli and Bakker (2010) add that dedication has to do with the feeling of being involved with your work and having during that involvement feelings of significance, enthusiasm and inspiration. In addition, other authors characterise absorption as being “fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching

oneself from work” (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008, p. 245). This encompasses all the three elements of engagement, vigour, dedication and absorption, which is the understanding of the construct engagement in this study.

Jones and Harter (2005) similarly present a view of engagement that is indeed multidimensional and draw, like Kahn (1990), on the idea of physical, emotional and cognitive dimensions and conceptualisations. From a different perspective, other authors often portray engagement as on a continuum, the far distant extreme of which is burnout. These approaches justify the role of engagement within the positive psychology framework, given the evidence that it requires a positive stance towards the self and to roles related to work.

Furthermore, engagement is not only about the self and one’s occupation but also the relationships between oneself, one’s fellow workers and the organisation and its ethos. It has somatic, cognitive and emotional dimensions. Kulan, Gatenby, Reece, Soane and Truss (2008) state that physical engagement is associated with the bodily energy that people deploy in achieving their goals at work. Cognition involves being aware of what is expected of a person at work (Luthans & Peterson, 2002), and this connects to sense of purpose and role in the organisation. This relates to a sense of purposefulness and understanding of the part that one plays in their work context. Kulan et al. (2008) refer to emotional engagement in terms of the feelings about the workplace environment and also the capacity for building positive relationships with others and feeling empathy in response.

In the workplace setting, the concept of engagement refers to workers who know the expectations and have a strong sense of what their role is, who relate with other employees and management or who experience other forms of meaningful work (Luthans & Peterson, 2002). Crabb (2011) similarly asserts that engagement is a way in which people operate positively within organisations.

Flow is a concept that relates to the idea of engagement. Scholars measure flow by a composition of the ratings of a person’s concentration, involvement, and enjoyment while carrying out a task (Vella-Brodrick, Park & Peterson, 2009). It refers to the situation where there are both high demands and high levels of skill to cope with the demands (Taukari, Kini & Thakkar, 2023). May, Gilson, Harter (2004) point out that

people in this 'flow state' need to give little attention to conscious control. They are so absorbed in the task that control is not necessary, in a way losing their awareness of being conscious of the self when deeply engaged.

Vella-Brodrick et al. (2009) report that, from the work on engagement and flow, happiness has been conceived of as not just the maximisation of pleasure (hedonia), but also the involvement of eudemonic qualities, such as personal growth. They also report that those experiencing flow are more highly committed, and Schueller and Seligman (2010) argue that they are more successful and productive.

The construct of engagement, according to Kulan et al. (2008), is multidimensional and applied here as including cognitive, emotional and physical aspects. It encompasses the grasp of what one's responsibilities in the workplace are, the capacity to relate positively with other employees and to feel positively about one's work, and the exertion of sufficient levels of energy to reach the goals set for one's work.

Salanova and Schaufeli (2008) report that increased resources such as job control, feedback and variety are associated with increased engagement in work and in turn more positive behaviour in the workplace.

Thus, in summary, the exploration of engagement within the role of the managers is imperative to understanding wellbeing for this study.

### ***Meaning***

Meaning is the third element and is associated with the degree of significance and purpose that workers sense in their employment. Work-meaning is a concept relating to how workers think of the experience of the workplace. So, for example, people find meaning in being part of and serving something of a larger scale than oneself.

Otherwise known as a meaningful life, this orientation is stated to be an orientation to being attached to and serving something beyond oneself (Lee Duckworth et al., 2005). Individuals have been seen to be driven to create meaning from the information and the situation they are in, whilst organisations seek positive, motivated, high performing employees who display collaborative efforts, thereby improving team and

organisational climate; people seek work that is meaningful (Bissola, Cori, Mizzau & Torre, 2021). For example, the positive, negative or neutral affects, also known as valence and the intensity or amount of meaning, that people derive from their work shape their thoughts, feelings and behaviours related both to work and life dimensions (Rosso, Dekas & Wrzesniewski, 2010). What they create from the objects, practices and networks they engage with may result from personal values and beliefs, or cultural norms and knowledge. According to Chalofsky (2003), meaning can be thought of in these ways: grasping the key purpose or significance of your intentions, and reaching clarity on the term in its context; they argue that, by 'meaning', scholars typically imply positive meaning.

### **Work-Meaning**

This term refers to the meaning that workers make of their experience of the workplace (Wrzesniewski, Dutton, & Debebe, 2003). These authors identify two aspects of work-meaning, the worker's understanding of the role played by their work in life and the social context within which they are placed. Potentially, the concept refers to its purpose outside the context of employment.

The assumptions underlying the concept are, first, that employees seek to draw meaning from all sectors of life, including the workplace. Secondly, that meaning is not a rigid or fixed phenomenon but, as argued by symbolic interactionism, it is in a state of constant production, affected by and affecting practices. Thirdly, that workers make sense continuously, in identifying what their work means for them, and, finally, that workers seek to shape the workplace setting to maximise the gains from the creation of meaning (Wrzesniewski, Dutton, & Debebe, 2003). Humans, in this perspective, are seen as a species that is driven to make meaning and, because work is so central to the lives of people, those involved in it aim to develop meaning and significance from it.

Three aspects of this concept are these: meaning of work, meaning at work and meaning in work. These overlap to some extent and are discussed as follows:

- a) Meaning of work refers to the role of work in individual people's lives, as sociologists would see the phenomenon (Chalofsky, 2003; De Klerk, 2005). It is relevant to the meaning that workers make of the work engagement but in

turn is shaped by how society views the significance of work. For example, one's reason for work is itself informed by social factors; it could include prestige, issues of status as well as income. The Meaning of Work Research Team (1987) investigated five significant constructs: work centrality; societal norms regarding work; valued outcome; work goals; and work role identification. Such constructs continue to inform research on this issue (Harpaz & Fu 2017).

- b) Meaning at work is the next factor relating to how the employee is committed, loyal and dedicated to the organisation (Chalofsky, 2003). This aspect focuses on the immediacy of meaning while the employee is in the workplace, including with fellow employees, and the relationship between the employee and the organisation in terms of the above factors.
- c) Meaning in work or meaningful work is particularly significant for the study. This, the third aspect of work-meaning, goes to the extent to which meaning is understood as something purposeful and significant. Chalofsky (2003) regards meaningful work as a way of being that is inclusive. It addresses the ways in which people experience a sense of meaning and purpose through involvement in work, which typically takes up much of their waking hours. According to De Klerk (2005), meaningful work requires working conditions that are supposed to engender motivation. This includes such aspects as autonomy, task responsibility, task significance, identity, complexity, challenge and variety. From this perspective, individuals see work as being an activity that extends and expresses the self. Overell (2008) identifies the changes within western societies in recent years, since 1970, as 'advanced modernity', and argues that these have driven the interest in meaning in work. One major element is the focus on identity, as increasingly people ask a central question, 'who am I?'. Such shifts increase the seeking for purpose in the workplace.

Work, according to Steger (2016), becomes seen as meaningful when people see their work as being purposeful, goal-centred, valuable or significant. The criterion of being meaningful is set by the employee not only for enriching and self-actualising themselves, but for benefitting others as well. According to Chalofsky (2003), referred to in Geldenhuys and Johnson (2021), a study of self-employed people found that meaningful work was the factor that most strongly related to an entrepreneur's feelings

of purpose in their involvement to the spirit or essence of living in the community environment.

Those people who identify their work as meaningful and who can see it as serving social or community purposes also demonstrate greater mental health. They are also people whose work capacities are valued by organisations (Duffy, Bott, Allen, Torrey & Dik, 2012) and who endorse self-actualisation (Alshawmar & Tulu, 2021; Maslow, 1965). Duffy et al. (2012) refer to a calling in one's work as reflecting a sense of its being personally meaningful, as driven by prosocial values and as arising from a sense of transcendence. Such aspects as purpose and as serving a higher purpose are central to work-meaning. Duffy et al. (2012) report that scholarship from various disciplines identifies a sense of calling as related to wellbeing at work as well as eudemonic wellbeing more generally. Hence those people that engage in meaningful work have greater commitment and satisfaction.

A striving for wellbeing and the ability to overcome adversities (Wong, 2016) are fostered by a mindset that makes meaning. In this vein, through adopting a meaning making mindset, workers can have a greater potential of achieving wellbeing and also overcoming adversities related to the line of work.

Seligman (2002) identifies three factors - pleasure, engagement and meaning - as orientating people towards authentic happiness. They also form part of wellbeing theory and seem to be invaluable with regard to general wellbeing, assisting people to handle challenging conditions and to achieve important goals within organisations. These additional orientations will be discussed under the wellbeing section.

### **2.3.2 Benefits of Authentic Happiness at Work**

Studies have corroborated and highlighted the benefits of having happy workers in that they produce increased quality of work; perform better on supervisor evaluations; work harder; and have lower absenteeism, lower burnout and turnover rates than their less happy peers (Bellet, De Neve & Ward, 2019; Kelly & Snow, 2019). Lyubomirsky et al. (2005; 2011) argue that people who are considered to be authentically happy have increased job satisfaction and engagement levels. Such people have stronger friendship and social networks, healthier immune systems and status generally and

longer lives. They are typically seen as more helpful and charitable, cope more effectively with stress and trauma. They also stay longer in their occupations.

Although the benefits of authentic happiness have been proven, a more context-focused approach of positive psychology interventions is proposed where, according to Ciarrochi, et. al., (2016) context is about events that are historical and situational that may influence behaviour. In greater detail, context refers to how things have been shaped by the immediate precursors and repercussions of behaviour, the situation historically, and the multiple structures and groups within which an individual is nested (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994), such as family, culture, social class and friendship groups. An example of this approach could be described as a memory of a supportive teacher during difficult exams which assists the student to increase effort to focus on her studies. The ability to recall memories is a part of the context that links to a stronger focus on study (Ciarrochi et al., 2016). Hence the promotion of authentic happiness within this wider contextual approach is vital for individual growth.

### **2.3.3 Inadequacies and Limitations of Authentic Happiness Theory**

In the literature of authentic happiness, the aspects identified above: positive emotions; engagement; and meaning may be experienced by individuals in diverse ways. Although it is possible, some say it is not always probable to experience positive emotions, be engaged and find meaningful work and meaning in life, all at once; however, we may experience one or two out of the three domains at any given time. The inadequacies are explained as follows:

- **Positive Emotion** is considered to be the fundamental meaning of happiness. Neither engagement nor meaning refer to how an individual actually feels, and whilst we may crave meaning and engagement, these dimensions do not constitute happiness (Seligman, 2011).
- **Life Satisfaction (LS)** is believed to rate more highly than it should in measuring happiness. The extent of LS is worked out by focusing on how good people feel at the time, hence mood is estimated to determine greater than 70% of LS and how well you judge your life is estimated to comprise less than 30% of LS; therefore, LS is thought to basically measure a cheerful mood (Seligman, 2011).

- **“Their Own Sake”** is an operative phrase in positive emotion, engagement and meaning, in that what you choose must not serve another master (Seligman, 2011).

Authentic happiness can be compared to the monism of Aristotle. Happiness is defined or realised through LS. Hence it was decided that improvements in theory should fully identify the aspects that people choose. Wellbeing theory moves away from monism and has several contributing elements; each element must comprise three aspects, if it is to be regarded as a significant element (Seligman, 2011, p. 21), which encompasses the following:

- (1) The element must foster wellbeing;
- (2) The element must have value in itself for people. This encourages individuals to seek that element for itself and not simply as a means to the other elements.
- (3) It should be exclusive, meaning being able to be defined and measured without drawing on the other elements.

By learning about each element, we are able to move our emotions in a more positive direction. However, a criticism of the theory of authentic happiness by Scorsolini-Comin et al. (2013) is that it aims to redefine the meaning of happiness in a subjective way (Seligman, 2011). This means that such concepts as engagement and meaning, relate to the ‘feeling’ that the individual experiences, rather than a conception of happiness. This feeling is considered subjective and devoid of the contextual aspects. Another criticism refers to life satisfaction (LS) which may be considered the central measure of authentic happiness. The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) created by Diener et al. (1985), aimed to assess levels of happiness. However, its results skewed to the right, indicating that most of those who responded were relatively happy. According to further studies, it was found that mood is seen from this perspective as the most relevant predictor of happiness, leading to the criticism that it treats happiness as a short-lasting mood dependent on the context (Scorsolini-Comin et al., 2013). LS does not take into consideration how much meaning there is, the amount of commitment nor the extent to which people engage with others. Hence LS is very erratic as a measure of mood and overly depends on the context.

Arcidiacono and Di Martino (2016, p. 7) remark that the criticism is levelled at LS as lacking context in the determination of the “good life”, they state that LS is low on “access to environmental resources, the role of power, justice and liberation and the value of participation, reciprocity and ethics.” So authentic happiness, as viewed from a LS perspective, is considered a subjective experience with an individual focus, whereas the theory of wellbeing is concerned with internal and external factors that have significant influence on the lives of people (Diener, 2009).

Following from the above, self-determination theory (SDT) advances the idea that both the content of goals and the reasons for pursuing them can influence one’s wellbeing. This introduces an integrated model for the motivational determinants of happiness and self-actualisation, with its foundation in the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2008). However, the criticism is that there is too much focus and intervention from the individual, who has the scope to alter the context, irrespective of its features and resources. Keyes (2013), on the other hand, grounds his theory of wellbeing in a social as opposed to an individualistic perspective and proposed five dimensions: social integration; social coherence; social actualisation and social acceptance. Keyes’s model was based on perceptions of wellbeing and people’s ability to adapt and to be integrated into society. This theory thus fails on the score of social factors.

Changing the viewpoint from LS to the awareness of meaningfulness and ethical life values, Carol Ryff’s Psychological Wellbeing theory (PWB) draws on Aristotle’s concept of eudaimonia, from the long past (Aristotle lived from 384-322 BCE). This highlights meaning as faithfulness to one’s inner self (daemon) (Ryff, 2017). PWB emphasises development of people in the context of the challenges they face. Further, it focuses on ‘environmental mastery’, which is a more social-orientated approach pertaining to a person’s capacity to initiate choice and change in their psychic and psychological context (Ryff & Singer, 2008). However, in these theories, the environment continues to be seen simply as an external driver for personal change. In response to these concerns, Seligman and related scholars reviewed authentic happiness as a theory, and then developed the Authentic Happiness theory into the Wellbeing theory which will be discussed as follows.

### **2.3.4 The Move from Authentic Happiness Theory to Wellbeing Theory**

This section aims to critically analyse authentic happiness and its link to wellbeing in order to explain the move towards a social and contextualised concept of wellbeing, and away from the overly subjective account of individual happiness.

Thus far, this study has assessed specific elements of authentic happiness. These include life satisfaction and feelings of happiness, and in addition, literature regarding the positive effects of authentic happiness and wellbeing. This section will focus on the movement towards the theory of wellbeing. The following information addresses research into the linked areas of authentic happiness, wellbeing and the environment, with a critical discussion of each theory and concept.

Happiness and wellbeing are “two highly debated concepts with overlapping meaning and theorisations” (Arcidiacono & Di Martino, 2016, p. 7). The models of happiness and wellbeing allow for better understanding of the complex approaches which are well explained as follows (Di Martino, Arcidiacono, & Eiroa-Orosa, 2017).

Seligman, the most prominent psychologist of happiness and wellbeing and the founding father of the positive psychology movement, identified in his theory of authentic happiness the core domains of positive emotions, engagement, and meaning (Seligman, 2002). The theory of wellbeing was further developed to include two more facets of relationships and achievements (Seligman, 2011). For the purpose of this study, these orientations will be investigated as experienced by individuals within the work context in diverse ways.

Seligman’s conference speech at the APA in 1998 sparked the initiatives to study in greater depth authentic happiness and positive psychology. The former concept (Seligman, 2002) includes such elements as hedonism, desire theory, and objective list theory, which indicates that happiness is a vital constituent of wellbeing (Fletcher, 2013). It was thought that combining all three elements of traditional happiness would lead individuals into experiencing greater authentic happiness (Royzman & Seligman, 2003; Seligman, 2002).

Despite the ancient philosophical focus on happiness, linking it to mental health is a recent development. In Maslow’s (1943) hierarchy of needs, each area linked to the

issue of happiness. He took the example of the happiness of a hungry man who had been guaranteed food for the rest of his life (Maslow, 1943). This model assisted psychologists to get their clients to set goals that moved them up the pyramid. Maslow's work encourages individuals to build and develop competencies on their road to success. Maslow's pyramid will be further explicated in the psychological strengths section.

Although there was initial success with the authentic happiness theory (Seligman, 2002), Seligman himself later reconsidered his theory as he found it to be inadequate in various respects. The reasons for this are explained as follows. Seligman (2011) indicated that any attempt to measure happiness merely measures life satisfaction (LS) with the goal being to increase LS. He stated that although the first element of authentic happiness, namely positive emotions, is considered to be the fundamental meaning of happiness, neither of the two remaining elements of authentic happiness, namely engagement and meaning, refer to how an individual actually feels and that the focus is too much on the 'self' with the use of the word 'authentic' (Seligman, 2011, p. 13). He then developed a more holistic theory of wellbeing that arrested the gaps in his first theory, adding to the first three elements of authentic happiness two more elements, namely: relationships and accomplishment/achievement (Seligman, 2011). With this inclusion, the emphasis shifts from the self to requiring relationships and interaction with others. According to Seligman (2011, p. 12) the model based on the Wellbeing theory is called "PERMA", which has five elements: positive emotion; engagement; relationships; meaning and accomplishment/achievement.

Peterson and Seligman (2004) recognised that, although it is possible to have positive emotions, be engaged and find meaning in a person's life and work, it is not always possible, as we may experience one or two out of the three domains at any given time (Seligman, 2002). By learning about each, we are able to move our emotions in a more positive direction (Seligman, 2002). Thus, Seligman's theory on Authentic Happiness, which originally comprised Positive Emotions, Engagement and Meaning (2002) was developed further into the Wellbeing theory which encompasses additional domains: Accomplishments / Achievements and Relationships (Seligman, 2011).

**Table 2.3 Authentic Happiness Theory and Wellbeing Theory (Seligman, 2011, p.12)**

Theory	Authentic Happiness Theory	Wellbeing Theory
Topic	Happiness	Wellbeing
Measure/s	Life Satisfaction	Positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships and accomplishment
Goal	Increased Life Satisfaction	Increased flourishing through the increase of positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships and accomplishment.

Given the inadequacies related to the Authentic Happiness Theory, as discussed by Seligman (2011), the development of the PERMA model by Seligman (2011) was aimed at improving the previous model by adding the two domains to the Wellbeing Theory in order to address these inadequacies. With this in mind and for this study, the concept of wellbeing that is aligned to the PERMA model will form the basis of analysis. The related measures and goals of theory of wellbeing will be described next.

## **2.4 WELLBEING**

The concept of wellbeing has become increasingly pre-eminent in mainstream organisational research, for reasons linked to its newly acquired broader definitions.

Wellbeing is couched in the discipline of positive psychology, which is defined as ‘the scientific study of optimal functioning of individuals and organisations’ (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014), with its major tenet being to cultivate positive qualities to enhance happiness and wellbeing. Strengths-based psychology is central to positive psychology, where it is understood that people want to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives (Pelaez, Coe & Salanova, 2020).

Seligman (2011) expounds that he was mistaken in his belief that positive psychology was specifically focused on happiness; instead, it is simply one indicator for the construct of wellbeing, which he now considers the key focus for positive psychology. He now understands the aim of positive psychology as being to enable people’s

flourishing. As he describes (Seligman, 2011, p. 13), flourishing essentially means “getting the most out of life or to grow, prosper, thrive, develop in a healthy and vigorous way.”

Scholarship and research studies have explained the perspectives by which wellbeing has been formulated, but in addition they have contributed to our understanding of how wellbeing can be fostered, advanced and sustained. Schueller and Seligman (2010) see five distinct orientations and identify the behaviours related to each orientation that contributes to individual wellbeing. They understand that people may well have to make compromises and trade-offs between the distinct orientation, potentially focusing on only one orientation and neglecting others. What matters most is to live a ‘full life’, the aim of the first three orientations, taken from the perspective of authentic happiness theory, with the addition of the addition of the composites of positive relationships and achievements/accomplishments from the perspective of wellbeing theory (Seligman, 2011).

On reviewing Seligman (2002, 2011) and his work, as well as related research in this field, I believe that positive psychology serves as an appropriate conceptual framework for exploring the wellbeing of managers. The study recognises the important role of managers in the workplace and also the challenges they experience. Exploring the subjective experiences of these constructs among managers, through these orientations, should enable the research process to gain an understanding of how to foster and encourage their wellbeing. In this way, managers and organisations may find solutions to the challenging situations that are typical in workplaces and can be assisted to perform their roles as best as possible.

#### **2.4.1 Definitions of Wellbeing**

According to Ryan and Deci (2001, p. 142), wellbeing is “optimal psychological functioning and experience.” Initially wellbeing was associated merely with the absence of disease (specifically in the non-work dimension). Later on, it was considered to encompass both work and non-work dimensions involving life satisfactions and general health (De Simone, 2014). There has still been an immense lack of clarity in the body of literature across different fields relating to wellbeing, as it was considered to have varied, fragmented and unfocused definitions. Over time, it

has acquired a more expansive sense of importance which has involved its physical, emotional, mental and social aspects (De Simone, 2014).

Warr (1990) refers to wellbeing in the broad concept of taking the “whole person” into consideration and De Simone (2014) expands this aspect of wellbeing by referring to mental, psychological and emotional aspects of workers.

#### **2.4.2 Components of Wellbeing**

Though not always in these terms, wellbeing has always been recognised as an all-encompassing goal for human existence. Since the time of Aristotle, attaining wellbeing has been a consistent focus for philosophers. In modern times, there would be general agreement that the good society is one in which being human brings a sense of contentment and, today, most people would agree that a flourishing society is one in which human lives are going well and wellbeing is seen as a worthy goal (Seligman, 2011).

Hence focussing attention on the extent of wellbeing in workplaces presents significant opportunities and benefits to society, as this has the potential to help employees to feel happiness, a sense of competence and satisfaction in their workplace roles (Jeffrey, Mahony, Michaelson & Abdallah, 2014). A high proportion of people’s lives are spent in the workplace (Field & Buitendach, 2011), perhaps a third of their total lives. They do not necessarily separate themselves from their work when they leave it (De Simone, 2014). In this vein, it would be prudent, however uncommon, to find enlightened companies that focus on the continual development of a wellbeing culture, companies in which the wellbeing of employees is prioritised. These enlightened companies believe that, if the employee is ‘happy’ and has confidence in the brand strategy of the organisation, they will in turn display maximum input and effort in their work (Jeffrey et al., 2014).

The construct of wellbeing in the workplace is multidimensional and includes subjective, eudemonic and social components (De Simone, 2014) Subjective wellbeing describes the individual’s general life experience and communicates self-professed happiness. This includes job satisfaction; organisational commitment assessed by job attitude and positive and negative effect. Positive emotions assist in buffering the effect of negative emotions, thus contributing towards greater resilience

in the face of challenges and promoting effective strategies for coping. Eudemonic wellbeing includes such factors as meaning in work, engagement in the job; thriving and flow (De Simone, 2014). The evidence is that people are more fully engaged in the workplace when the manager cares more fully about them personally. The element of social wellbeing is made up of feelings of being located within a meaningful community setting. It includes having both short-term and longer interactions and relationships with other members of the community (De Simone, 2014). It has also been stated by De Simone (2014) that employees are found to be more engaged in a workplace setting when they feel cared about by a leader or manager. This then speaks to the role of managers which will be discussed further on in this chapter.

### **2.4.3 Benefits of Wellbeing at Work**

Studies on wellbeing in the workplace have found that, in its presence, employees produce increased quality work; perform better on supervisor evaluations; work harder; and have lower absenteeism, lower burnout and turnover than their less happy peers (Bellet, De Neve & Ward, 2019; Kelly & Snow, 2019). Furthermore, those with higher levels of wellbeing at work are found likely to have greater qualities of creativity, loyalty, productivity and provision of customer satisfaction than those with lower levels of wellbeing. In some studies, it was found that employees with lower levels present with lower productivity, poorer decision-making, higher absenteeism and diminished general contribution to the organisation (De Simone, 2014). The lack of wellbeing features prominently as having the potential to affect people in negative ways which has a spill-over effect into non-work domains.

It was stated by Bakracheva (2020) that there could be various other indicators, components and multidimensional predictors that would effectively account for the complexity in optimal functioning in terms of life satisfaction, happiness and flourishing. A question was posed by Seligman as to whether the “understanding and alleviating of suffering supersedes the understanding and building of happiness” Seligman (2002, p. 5). He established from his research that depressed and impoverished people actually do care more about virtues, purpose, integrity and meaning. He also noted that the developments that provoke positive emotions have the effect of dissipating negative emotions (Seligman, 2002) However, according to some authors such as Baltes and Baltes, (1990), the later conclusions of Forgeard, Jayawickreme and

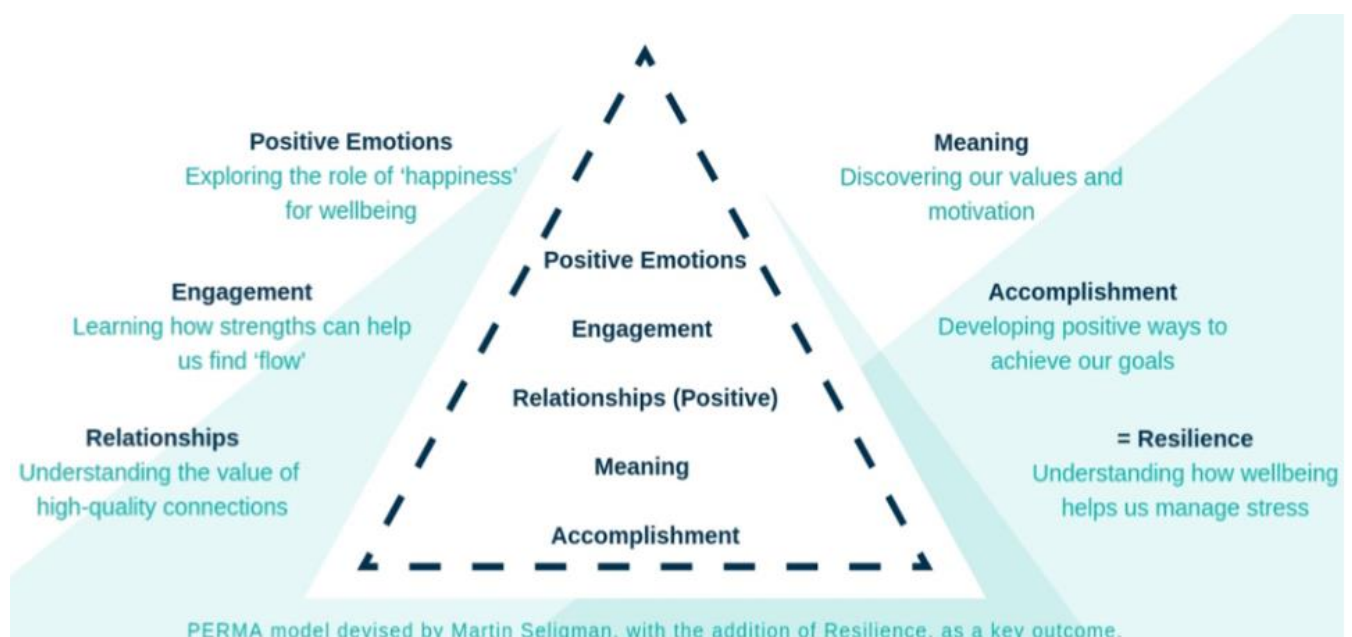
Seligman, (2011) and Bakracheva, (2020), it was found that the lack of negative states like negative effect, depression and anxiety does not necessarily mean positive effect, happiness, trust, social connection, meaning of life, positive emotions and wellbeing.

Experts have encouraged public and private organisations to focus on developing a culture of wellbeing, considering these benefits. A behavioural science professor at Instituto de Empresa Business School (Madrid), Lee Newman, reported saying that wellbeing should be incorporated into the job requirements for CEOs, and that they should be given incentives to include wellbeing in their repertoire, further expounding that wellbeing at work is particularly worthy of attention (Flint-Taylor & Cooper, 2014). He pointed out that the 2008 financial crisis has made for a work environment with less security and greater levels of stress.

#### 2.4.4 The PERMA Model of Wellbeing

This model aims to promote flourishing through building up each of its five component elements or dimensions. It is important to note that no one dimension alone defines wellbeing but all contribute to the concept as a collective. Although our experience of the elements can be either subjective or objective, it can still be investigated empirically by clearly defining and exploring the concepts.

#### The PERMA Model of Wellbeing



**Figure 2.1** The PERMA Model of Wellbeing (Seligman, 2011).

The dimensions of the PERMA model (Seligman, 2011) are described as follows:

**Positive Emotion:** Exploring the role of happiness for wellbeing

**Engagement:** Learning how strengths can help us find “flow”

**Relationships:** Understanding the value of high-quality connections

**Meaning:** Discovering our values and motivation

**Accomplishment:** Developing ways to achieve our goals

**Resilience:** Understanding how wellbeing helps us manage stress

Seligman, Parks and Steen (2004) regard positive emotion as the first dimension that could also be expressed as a temporary, hedonic pursuit of happiness. Engagement is regarded as the second dimension where we experience feeling of gratitude. Engagement requires that we make full use of our strengths. Meaning, the third dimension in the authentic happiness theory, is the fourth in the PERMA model. It includes seeking and coming to an understanding of one's life purpose. It is advocated that a person who pursues all three of the first three dimensions in the authentic happiness theory – the pleasant life, the good life and the meaningful life – is working towards what Seligman et al. (2004) term a 'full life.' It is thought that while an individual more focused on pure pleasure can readily fail once confronted by challenges, an individual focused on meaning has the capacity for perseverance despite suffering. Faced with the most challenging situations, meaning provides opportunities for surviving and growing by drawing on our purpose, virtue and integrity (Wong, 2011).

The first three dimensions were discussed as orientations of authentic happiness theory and the next two will be discussed under the wellbeing section as follows, as these were added on to develop the wellbeing theory (Seligman, 2011).

### **Relationships or Positive Relationships**

Relationships was added as a third element in the PERMA model and meaning moved to become the fourth dimension.

Relationships refers to the sense of being of receiving support, love and value from others. Such connections with others assume greater importance for older people. In the workplace setting, this concerns how we relate with others in that context (Rajoo, 2020), as workers who relate well to those around them find that it builds morale and wellbeing; in addition, this strengthens the organisation. Seligman (2011) comments that there is little in being solitary that is positive. The social environment has been found to be a major factor that prevents cognitive decline, as effective social networks have been found to contribute to better physical health among older adults (Seligman, 2011). Studies have shown being the bearer of good news and recognising success strengthen bonds and help people relate more positively and more enthusiastically (Dutton & Ragins, 2017). This applies especially to close relationships, helping to increase closeness, being satisfied and feeling well with each other as stated by Seligman (2018).

Positive psychology has been thought to be synonymous with “other people” and to encompass all connections that people have with all those others who are significant to them, including those in the workplace and the larger community (Seligman, 2011). Positive relationships are important as they foster collaboration, increase the ways in which people are productive, increase people’s morale, ensure longer retention of staff, transfer skills and knowledge more effectively, ensure higher levels of creativity and enable new employees to enter in supportive ways (Kahn, 2017).

Employees that experience positive relationships work better on joint projects and respecting your work mates helps you achieve at optimum levels (Dutton & Ragins, 2017). Increased communication may facilitate the tasks to be carried out efficiently due to collaborative effort, as everyone will be clear on the specific tasks and targets required to be met. Relationships are seen to also have a positive impact on skills related to productivity and their work (Roffey, 2016). Employees in such relationships tend to understand each other better, work more effectively, whether they are aware of it or not, and are thought to value the experience, wanting the organisation also to achieve well. The psychological state of the workers is also thought to increase productivity (Colbert, Bono & Purvanova, 2016), having a positive effect on professional output, as one spends many hours with people that they enjoy being with which helps to boost morale. When people are comfortable and know well the work-

related styles and attitudes of fellow workers, they experience a stronger sense of connection that makes them to want to stay longer, thereby improving the retention levels of the company (Rajoo, 2020). This sense of satisfaction, be it personal or professional, may prevent them from wanting to seek alternate employment elsewhere. Collaborative teams and more experienced workers are likely to be keener to share and transfer knowledge and skills to less experienced workers and in so doing, to deliver good long-term results (Roffey, 2016).

Some research has been conducted to assist with recommendations to build and improve positive and long-lasting professional relationships (Daniel, 2003); scheduling sufficient opportunity to build relationships, to be able to question colleagues; to ask or offer help; to keep promises; and to appreciate those you work with (Eby & Allen, 2012).

It takes time to be able to build work relationships that are positive, especially with the challenge of daily tasks. However, these issues can be averted by workers putting in a conscious effort to make time to build these relationships with fellow workers. Workers may utilise the time to do this during their lunch breaks, either after work or before depending on convenience, or even prior to meetings or other such circumstances. Another major aspect of building relationships is active listening, inquiring about the innumerable aspects that fill the lives of co-workers and being curious about this (Colbert et al., 2016). This kind of interest shown then provides the opportunity to build stronger bonds by being able to share information.

Where employees experience positive relationships with each other, research indicates that they are generally willing to assist each other whenever needed. During times when colleagues feel overwhelmed with work or experience difficulties with certain tasks, asking for or offering to help may strengthen relationships (Rajoo, 2020). A core element in a positive interpersonal relationship is trust (Kahn, 2017); if co-workers perceive you as trustworthy, they are more likely to bond with each other. The most effective way of doing that is, it has been said, is to deliver on your promises and keep to what you committed yourself to. It has also been noted that there is more likelihood of building supportive relationships with co-workers who value each other, who show appreciation and gratitude for their collaboration and for the tasks they

undertake in teamwork; these practices are vital to build strong relationships (Fapohunda, 2013; Kahn, 2020).

One's physical health has been shown to benefit strongly from the experience of effective social interactions, and in contrast ill health is associated with higher levels of social isolation (Colbert et al., 2016; Seligman, 2018). This clearly applies to our personal lives, but equally to the role of strong relationships and positive interactions in the workplace, being found to lead to greater health, both of the mind and of the body. Such effective, positive relationships with fellow employees also stimulate one's sense of being creative. An environment in which people feel relaxed in being themselves is one that also stimulates innovation and thinking, leading to greater efficiency and effectiveness in getting the job done (Rajoo, 2020). A new member who enters a team of employees that already have established positive relationships is able to integrate with the group more readily. They are able to witness the relationships between existing members and with time adopt similar practices. Potentially this is a challenging situation, but when one joins a team with a positive history of supportive relationships, it becomes possible to integrate readily.

Such relationships in the workplace foster cooperative, collaborative and productive ways of work; this is what we would understand as a positive working environment. If we wish to establish the quality of positive working relationships, researchers may well focus on specific concepts, measuring the degree of such variables as 'contact with others', 'social support', 'trust' and 'social interaction' (Warr, 2011).

According to Clark (2010), most employees treat work relationships as a critical element in what they value, and in his study, it was estimated that 65% and 69%, a majority of employees, in the one survey rated good relations in the workplace as 'very important', when considered as a factor in what they most highly value in employment. Robertson, Cooper and Johnson (2011) established that work relationships constitute one of the six 'key workplace factors' in their ASSET model of workplace wellbeing. Such relationships are related to employee's sense of being purposeful and having positive emotions, and these then foster higher levels of morale, motivation and satisfaction. There is a high correlation between having positive relationships in the workplace and personal wellbeing, as evidenced in the literature on wellbeing more

generally that addresses the importance of good social relationships to wellbeing (Stoll et al., 2012).

Warr (2011) cites various studies in a paper that includes reviews and meta-analyses, that demonstrates the connections amongst different indicators of social relationships and the hedonic, eudemonic, and evaluative indicators of workplace wellbeing, once the research has controlled for other variables. Studies that have explored this issue have also established the negative effects of unhappy work relationships on wellbeing. Such studies have examined, amongst other factors, levels of hostility, abuse, conflict, as well as depleting levels of social support. Warr (2011) reports that these different forms of evidence for poor social relationships in the workplace correlate negatively with hedonic, eudemonic and evaluative wellbeing.

North American studies have demonstrated that having a manager that employees perceive as trustworthy impacts more positively than higher pay on satisfaction in both the workplace and in life generally, according to Helliwell, Huang and Wang, (2015). A different question is that of the effects of very high or very low levels of social interaction in the workplace; possibly very high levels could have negative impacts on wellbeing related to social interactions; however, the evidence from various studies (De Jonge, Reuvers, Houtman, Bongers & Kompier, 2000), is that the lowest levels of wellbeing are found at both very high and very low levels of social interaction.

A relevant theory that explains the significance of workplace relationships and its connection to worker wellbeing is that of Self Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008). This theory observes that the psychological need for relatedness and positive connections with other workers has major consequences for effective management practices, given the evidence that job satisfaction requires positive and mutually supportive relationships with co-workers.

Seeing that the situation regarding the level of income is a lower factor than workers' trust in managers in determining both job satisfaction and even life satisfaction, there is a strong argument for employers to treat as of vital significance this facet of functioning in the workplace. Managers need to see that such a focus can provide the opportunity for advancing positive emotions such as satisfaction, motivation and morale. The investment of time in enhancing relationships amongst co-workers has

been shown to pay off through greater satisfaction in the workplace. For managers, it may mean that they should encourage employees to collaborate on projects, to explore ideas together and to learn skills from each other. This also provides a rationale for social events such as company away days, and other opportunities for socialising informally, so that staff members learn more about each other in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere (Jeffrey, Mahony, Michaelson & Abdallah, 2014).

### **Accomplishment / Achievement**

Accomplishment or achievement is the fifth and last element/dimension of the PERMA model of wellbeing, which was added later (Seligman, 2011). Even when these achievements may bring no positive emotions or meaning, or supportive relationships, employees often demonstrate their desire to achieve. Seligman (2011) argues that people gain a sense of accomplishment through setting and realising their goals, through mastery of an endeavour, and through being sufficiently self-motivated to complete what they aimed to achieve (Seligman, 2011).

Kern (2022) describes accomplishment as entailing that an individual has attained what they see as success in fulfilling their daily responsibilities and in achieving their goals. This factor is seen as significant for the achievement of wellbeing because it assists people in seeing their lives through a lens of self-confidence and pride. This factor is relevant to such concepts as passion and perseverance. Flourishing and wellbeing happen when striving towards a goal, driven by one's internal motivation or striving to attain some end, often driven by the enthusiasm of the chase or for reasons of improving a situation. Attaining such intrinsic goals – for example, growth and connection – helps lead us towards major advances in wellbeing, perhaps more than such external extrinsic financial or status goals (Seligman, 2011).

Achievements and accomplishments, and reflecting on them, build a positive sense of self. They strengthen resilience and give us critical information as to what our strengths in fact are. Reflecting on what we have achieved or expect to achieve brings a sense of gratitude, encouraging us to pursue a cycle of positivity that serves both others and ourselves.

The PERMA model identifies that optimal wellbeing also involves feelings of accomplishment and these factors have been shown, in the literature on caregiving,

to have significant importance. Carboneau, Caron, and Desrosiers (2010) developed The Positive Aspects of Caregiving model. This asserts that we can enhance wellbeing through our interacting with positive experiences in dyadic relationships and through feeling a sense of daily accomplishment. Together these foster feelings of meaning in our role as caregivers. The theory predicts that our use of our signature strengths provides major possibilities for those who give care to sense what they are achieving and to gain meaning in daily tasks of caregiving, in this process increasing the positive aspects of this work (Carboneau, et.al., 2010), which was shown to result in increasing levels of positive feelings regarding caregiving. However, there was no confirmation of the conclusion that accomplishment and meaning were central to these increased levels. There were still questions regarding whether caregivers gained increased feelings of accomplishment by drawing on using their signature strengths and whether this also led to an enhanced sense of meaning within their caregiving experience. The deduction was that mere participation in the research project and fulfilling the tasks assigned to them led to a sense of achievement, which may or may not have resulted from the signature strengths.

Following from this, Seligman (2018) states that research on PERMA is still in the early stages, where scholars are only now at the point of developing measures of work-related PERMA (Kern, 2022; Kun, Balogh & Krasz, 2017). In a recent study it was found by Jimenez, Hu, Garden and Xie (2021) that where PERMA items are developed to capture the individuals' wellbeing, accomplishment items do not visibly measure the individuals' subjective feelings of accomplishment.

## **Resilience**

Resilience is thought to be a key outcome of the PERMA Model and is an understanding of how wellbeing helps us manage stress. It refers to our ability to recover timeously from challenges, or to being tough, having the capacity to survive challenges and recover from harsh events in life. It is not that to be resilient means that one does not experience stress, but rather the process and the result of successful adaptation to the more challenging experiences, using one's emotional, mental and behavioural flexibility in response to demands, whether internal or external (Cherry, 2023; Seligman, 2011).

In the PERMA model, wellbeing is increased through a focus on a combined sense of feeling good, having a meaningful life with relationships that provide support and friendship, achieving one's goals and having a life full with engagement. The PERMA+ model is based on evidence and uses that to foster "happiness", thus decreasing anxiety, depression and the emphasis on stress. The model recognises that there are many possible ways in which we can work for increasing levels of positive feelings, for engagement, supportive relationships, greater meaning, and fuller achievement (PERMA).

Applying the model of PERMA is believed to lead into meaningful lives in which people feel fulfilled and happy; this is a framework that fosters a sense of being contented, genuinely and consistently. At the times when we experience these positive emotions, we enjoy stronger performance, more rewarding relationships, and improved self-regulation (Seligman, 2011). These contribute towards and guide workplace wellbeing, thus ensuring the promotion and enhancement of wellbeing for managers.

This next section will provide a general discussion regarding the concept, to clarify the ways in which we conceptualise wellbeing and its value for influencing managers positively.

A further exploration into these experiences of wellbeing of managers in their respective role, especially within South African automotive sector, will add to the existing knowledge in this particular area.

#### **2.4.5 Managers Experiences of Wellbeing: Contextual Factors**

Coetzee and Viviers (2007) have indicated that wellbeing as a construct in positive psychology has been studied in the South African organisational context, quite extensively. This interrelatedness between wellbeing or mental health or wellbeing and culture and spirituality in managers has however not been (Mayer & Boness 2011). A later South African study established that there was a complex interrelatedness between mental wellbeing, spirituality and religion (Mayer & Viviers, 2014). Here it was found that in the international automotive industry, spiritual concepts as well as religious beliefs, Christian values etc., all contribute to mental wellbeing traversing cultural groupings (Mayer & Viviers, 2014). In this research, it was further stated that

even though certain principles were found to support managerial mental health, managers do not use it effectively to increase their wellbeing. Hence recommendations were made to increase awareness and conversation around spirituality to “support transcending cultural and religious differences (particularly in the post-apartheid context) and create social wellbeing” (Mayer & Viviers, 2014, p. 312).

The above also applies to gender differences within the management realm as well. Research conducted in the Eastern Cape, at a well-known motor manufacturing company, found that with male and female managers in managerial levels, the advancement of males was more common and more rapid than females in the organisation, and that amongst the majority of the female research participants, stereotypes and prejudices exist around the promotion of women (Lloyd & Mey, 2007). This was substantiated by statistical findings that gender thus takes on a prominent role in the strategies of promotion. Although the respondents of the study attempted to make strides to improve the situation, including the implementation of flexible working hours and the creation of awareness around gender discrimination especially in the managerial levels of the organisation, the effects of which are yet to be seen (Lloyd & Mey, 2007).

In a constantly dynamic and unsustainable global and socio-technical environment, it was suggested that quite often managers experience self-limiting beliefs. It has been suggested that these managers should make an effort to unlearn these self-limiting beliefs in order to utilise theirs and their team’s highest potential (Maheshwari, 2021). This would then enable them to engender forward thinking enterprises that will guide and provide a long-term vision which will assist in establishing behaviours related to pro-social ones, as well as environmental behaviours, with the idea of creating a world of flourishing (Maheshwari, 2021). This technique of managerial style is referred to as Higher Consciousness Management (HCM). It provides managers to be able to go deep within to find their sources of abundant potential (Maheshwari, 2021). This could lead managers to connect with this element of ‘pure consciousness’ and therefore they could benefit from transcending their level of reality which is considered quite superficial and at a shallow or surface level (Maheshwari, 2021).

### **Positive and Negative Affect**

In 2012 the first World Happiness Report was published and many countries realised the importance of measuring happiness using the Gross National Happiness (GNH) index as a supplementary to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross National Income (GNI), towards establishing sustainable growth (Omar, Ramdani, Mohd & Hussein, 2018). Similar research investigating multiple measures of happiness suggests that happiness may also foster productivity (Zelenski, Murphy & Jenkins, 2008). These authors argue that regarding the debate of the happiness-productivity theme, an emerging proposition of the 'happy-performing' manager where state and trait indicators relating to affective wellbeing were examined to establish managers performance on the job (Zelenski et al., 2008). Also examined here to aid in establishing this was intrinsic satisfaction on the job as well as contextual factors. Hosie, Willemyns and Sevastos (2012) found that the manner in which managers were able to achieve and sustain increasing performance levels were determined by these components of affective wellbeing and intrinsic satisfaction on the job. This means that an improvement in the job of managers may circumvent a decline in affective wellbeing, performance levels and intrinsic job satisfaction, as well as enhance it.

Hosie et. al., (2012) also conclude that increased levels of performance are determined by intrinsic job satisfaction and that managerial effectiveness is impacted by negative or positive affect. Characteristics found inherent in the job such as job complexity and control; responsibility, utilisation of skills and challenges are all internal states associated with intrinsic job satisfaction, which are thought to positively affect manager performance more than any extrinsic incentives (Sujatha, 2023; Feng, Su, Wang, Liu, 2018; Clark, Oswald & Warr, 1996). Van Veluwen (2017) argues that it is the occupation and educational levels that determine whether extrinsic or intrinsic job components were valued and to what extent. He states that at higher occupational levels, self-expression and interest-value of work (intrinsic factors) were valued more, whereas at lower occupational levels, pay and security (extrinsic factors), were valued more.

According to Staelens, Desiere, Louche and D'Haese (2018), while we can derive satisfaction from intrinsic and extrinsic factors, as we can derive dissatisfaction, yet in both satisfaction and dissatisfaction the intrinsic factors are more powerful. Similar supportive findings from a study by Larkin-Perkins (2017) indicate that lower-level

employees were attracted by such elements as pay, relationship with managers and conditions of work, which are factors of extrinsic job satisfaction, these factors also being good indicators of likely employee turnover. This research indicates that, in order to retain such workers, managers must recognise the elements that lead to worker satisfaction. This understanding leads to increased employee retention, greater stability in the workforce, more rapid financial and organisational growth, and a lower cost structure arising from greater job satisfaction and lower voluntary turnover. In terms of social change and the economy, there can be benefits such as reduced unemployment and improved relationships affecting workers and the communities they come from.

Research by De Neve and Ward (2017) has found that the varied job types differ with regard to levels of subjective wellbeing, with regard to these different measures: life evaluation; positive affect, and negative affect. This impacts on different levels of workers differently in term of happiness. In their quantitative study, it was established that the labour-intensive work, such as performed by blue collar workers, correlates with lower levels of happiness as compared to the categories of white-collar workers: managers, executives, officials or professionals (De Neve & Ward, 2017). However, Seligman (2002, p. 74) reports on the basis of his research that it is “possible to be happier - to feel more satisfied, to be more engaged with life, find more meaning, have higher hopes, and probably even smile more, regardless of one’s external circumstances.”

Studies show that most Americans, regardless of objective circumstances such as money, social life, education, intelligence, race, gender and climate, say they are happy; they also underestimate the happiness of other Americans (Hershfield, Mogilner & Barnea, 2016). It has been found that those people who place a higher value on financial success than on other goals experience lower levels of satisfaction with their income and with their lives generally. A question posed in previous research (Easterlin, 2003), was: ‘Would more money make you happier?’ Where everyone had the same basic safety net, it was indicated that having more money has little to no relevance for increased happiness, while increasing wealth makes little difference to personal happiness (Hershfield, et. al., 2016; Seligman, 2002). In another study by Whillans, Macchia and Dunn (2019) it was posited that research participants who

valued time experienced greater happiness and satisfaction while they were students and while they were in their careers.

These results provided strong evidence that those who value time over money experience greater job satisfaction and wellbeing. This was corroborated by a study that crossed national borders that involved thousands of people and approximately 37 countries. It found that increased purchasing power did not relate to greater levels of satisfaction (Easterlin, McVey, Switek, Sawangfa & Zweig, 2010). Similarly, in another study, by Madea (2013), it was detailed that earning more can have the effect that people have lives of greater happiness and fulfilment in relation to those in poverty, at the microeconomic or individual level, however, the effects are minor in relation to happiness generally. The statistically-proven factors that impact more than financial status on happiness are such situations in life as being married or not, level of health, whether one has children or not, and the nature of the working environment (Lawrence; Rogers, Zajacova & Wadsworth, 2019; Sujarwoto, Tampubolon & Pierewan, 2018; Mahadea, 2013).

Within the South African context, the fact that findings at the individual and aggregate levels are similar suggests that the paradox in the literature regarding income and happiness is not relevant here (Kollamparambil, 2020; 2021). This means that, in the SA context, in order to understand wellbeing, individual and contextual factors of happiness need to be understood contextually, especially within the low to middle-income bracket. As an extension of this, results from a study (Sujarwoto et. al., 2018) indicate that factors such as happiness and LS are highly correlated with factors both within individual households and at governmental level. It was found that those people who live in households with higher income and wealth experience greater happiness and satisfaction. Lower levels of health and the experience of unemployment were highly negative for happiness and LS. Those people who live in districts with better levels of public services had happier and more satisfied lives. In contrast, those living in areas that were riddled with conflict and violence were less happy and satisfied. It was also found that personal religiosity and access to community social capital, in the form of indigenous culture and traditions, had positive effects on individual happiness and LS.

Seligman (2002) states that, for greater levels of happiness, there are certain changes in external circumstances that, if possible, to be made, would be positive, such as living in a democratic state with higher income levels and not in a dictatorship with low-income levels; entering marriage; avoiding adverse events and negative emotions, establishing a wide social network; and getting a religion. These have strong to moderate effects on happiness. He also states that changing circumstances such as money, health, education, race and climate had little to no effect (Seligman, 2002). Although there is an evidence base to support this view, one needs to critically engage with this understanding and question whether or not this is true within all contexts.

### **A Measure of Money**

To analyse the relationships between income and wellbeing, one needs to work with the logarithm of income (known as log income) rather than raw income (Stoll & Covington, 2012). Once you put income onto such a scale, income is seen to be multiplied to a degree as you move between points on the scale. In contrast, using a standard scale, the space from one point to the next would cover the same amount of income. Using log-income, as income increases beyond a certain level, the significance of the increased levels of wellbeing becomes smaller. Stoll et al. (2012) state that the evidence from studies over several decades on the impact that actual income levels have on wellbeing is that, at any point of time, the relationship between income and wellbeing is positive. However, the studies also indicate that an increased income does not translate into increased wellbeing at a steady pace. Once one has reached a certain level of financial security, greater increases carry much less in terms of the benefits we perceive in our state of wellbeing.

In other words, changes in income have a much greater impact on the happiness of the poor than they do on the happiness of the wealthy. Stoll et al. (2012) report on various studies that find a positive correlation between reported wellbeing and the log of individual or household income. This relationship is, however, not linear. Scholars also differ regarding the extent to which one can plot as a straight line the correlation between log-income and wellbeing. While this issue has not yet been resolved, few would dispute the basic point that increasing incomes has a gradually diminishing effect on increase in wellbeing. There are scholars who assert that they can explain the relationship through the theory of the diminishing marginal utility of money (Dubois

& Ludwinek, 2014), according to which, once an individual's desire for money becomes (yet to some extent though not totally) greater and greater, increases in income are needed to get to the corresponding increase of wellbeing. The issue of relative levels of income, in other words, whether their earnings are higher, lower or similar in relationship to others within the group in which they find themselves, has a major effect on wellbeing. A range of studies indicates that, irrespective of the actual income levels, beyond a basic threshold, when one has a lower earning power than others, one experiences lower levels of wellbeing (Dubois & Ludwinek, 2014). Similarly, having a higher earning power is associated with higher levels of wellbeing.

Such relationships – between levels of income and levels of wellbeing – have been shown to differ, depending on the gender and age of the people concerned (Stoll et al., 2012). The strongest relationship between the two has been found in various studies applied to middle-aged workers, when compared to those early in their careers or later in life (Stoll et al., 2012). A study conducted by DeLay and Clark (2020) that measured how diverse workplace characteristics related to job satisfaction found that consistently much higher percentages of men rated high income as 'very important' than the percentages of women, when surveyed over three years of data from an International Social Survey Programme.

Thus, one can explain the significance of having enough income to ensure employee wellbeing, based on the instrumental value of money, which allows individuals to buy the goods they need and the lifestyles they choose, as well as being a marker of public recognition. To explain this, we can draw on evolutionary (basic survival) theory or on psychological theories that address social status. However, there is no one clear standpoint from the literature on the best way of explaining such phenomena.

### **The Behaviour of Managers**

One of the most critical factors that affect employees' wellbeing in the workplace is that of the behaviour of managers, which is a central element of management systems. As Warr (2011) reports, there is a plethora of studies that have established medium to strong correlations and meta-analytic correlations between behaviour by managers that is seen as positive and different indicators of worker wellbeing. Warr (2011) defines positive manager behaviour in such terms as managers' readiness to hear

staff views and experiences fully, their ability to show support, their readiness to demonstrate respect and concern for the welfare of those who report to them, and their willingness to convey their gratitude and appreciation for what workers have achieved. The strongest correlations that emerge from this research are found between measures of positive manager behaviour and closely related, conceptually, aspects of wellbeing. These include such elements as workers' satisfaction with supervisors. The less robust correlations are between measures of positive manager behaviour and the more conceptually distant aspects of wellbeing – an example being workers' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their level of pay. The more moderate correlations are to be found between measures of positive manager behaviour and overall levels of satisfaction with the job.

In addition, Warr (2011) reports studies highlight a negative correlation between poor behaviour by managers and employees' overall levels of satisfaction with the job, where he defines 'poor manager behaviour' as such practices as favouritism, humiliating those who report to them, resolving conflicts through imposing solutions, failure to encourage initiative and imposing unreasonable punishments (Warr, 2011). Researchers in the 1980s moved away from a focus on 'considerate' manager behaviour, such as taking the feelings of workers feelings into account, towards 'transformational' manager behaviour, such as acting in ways that inspired, motivated and stimulated achievement, or were charismatic. A further focus was on 'transactional' behaviour, such as rewarding on the basis of effective performance and intervening to correct practices if it was anticipated that performance was inadequate. Consistently, it was found that there were high correlations between transformational management styles and employee satisfaction, leadership and overall satisfaction on the job, while the correlations between these factors and transactional management styles were lower.

The evidence from the literature review clearly indicates that it is the wellbeing of managers that will enable their ability in their roles to be retained and to deal constructively with challenging issues that confront them in both personal and workplace situations (Bux, 2020; Seligman & Peterson, 2003). Such challenges are likely to include individual, interpersonal, organisational, community, and public barriers. This doctoral study seeks to report and develop an understanding of the

degree to which positive interventions can provide support, enabling these managers to find solutions to problems in a proactive way, drawing on challenges confidently and effectively (Carr, 2013; Caprara & Cervone, 2003; Fredrickson & Losada, 2005). The concept of wellbeing, couched in the terms of positive psychology, focuses on the value of understanding positive emotions, on building strengths and virtues and on providing guidance for a good life (Seligman, 2011).

## **2.5 CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this chapter has been to present an introduction to constructs of wellbeing, as understood by researchers in the field of positive psychology, and to outline the developing concept of wellbeing as a modern and complementary addition to mainstream psychology with a focus on its' doctrines, the theory, practice and research. Wellbeing was described with special emphasis on its composites, benefits and criticisms. An historical overview of the move from the theory of Authentic Happiness to that of Wellbeing was provided as well as the criticisms levelled against both theories. The chapter has also discussed managers' experiences of wellbeing, ending with a discussion on ways to promote and maintain wellbeing for managers.

The next chapter discusses the psychological strengths of transcendence and the positive psychological interventions that are used to develop these strengths in managers for the purpose of enhancing their wellbeing.

# **CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW – PSYCHOLOGICAL STRENGTHS OF TRANSCENDENCE AND POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS**

## **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter begins by introducing psychological strengths. It starts with a discussion on a model that presents concepts of strengths, including those of healthy psychological growth, positive psychological strengths or character strengths, taxonomies of strengths as well as the utilisation of such strengths. How we conceptualise and categorise positive psychological strengths is set out in this chapter. It presents such psychological strengths as the virtues of transcendence, being the focus of this research. These are discussed in terms of how it pertains to managers in the automotive sector, paying particular attention to managers' experiences relating to strengths and virtues and how these are currently applied within the workplace and in the relevant scholarship.

Next is a discussion on positive strengths unpacking its definitions of strengths and virtues. Seligman's theory of virtues is discussed; Buckingham and Clifton's strengths; thereafter a discussion of psychological strengths in the workplace and the development of strengths ensue.

The chapter presents relevant South African research on the strengths that managers experience at work. It also explores international trends in scholarship on managers in the automotive industry, as well as the challenges, both historically and in the present, that such managers have experienced in South Africa.

This chapter culminates in a discussion on positive psychological interventions in the workplace and how these enhance wellbeing in the workplace. Relevant theorists, academic sources, the Internet and scholarly articles will be relied upon to consolidate the literature. This is accomplished through the review of previous and current literature on the constructs. The aim is to describe and discuss the theory and arguments pertaining to the conceptualisation of the constructs in the literature from current and past research.

## **3.2 PSYCHOLOGICAL STRENGTHS**

Psychological strengths have become a well-researched facet or predictor of wellbeing (Seligman, 2011). As Proctor, Maltby and Linley (2011) report, people have specific strengths, for example, courage, wisdom and humour. These are connected to feelings of being oneself, one's identity and authenticity, which engender strong intrinsic motivation to apply them in real situations. Seligman explains that by deploying one's highest positive psychological strengths to meet one's highest challenges, we are able to go into what he describes as "flow" (2011, p. 24).

### **3.2.1 Definition of Strength**

According to Linley, Joseph, Harrington and Wood (2006) and Seligman (2002), scholars define a strength as a natural ability to behave, think and feel in ways that are authentic and energising, promoting optimum functioning, effectiveness as well as development.

### **3.2.2 A Model of Strengths and Healthy Psychological Growth**

Lopez, Pedrotti and Snyder (2018) report that the increased recognition of strengths and of ways in which they can be utilised, the interconnections with resources, healthy processes and fulfilments need to be thought of as one element of an all-encompassing and highly complex process. These authors also highlight that there is a need for a model that can account for the ways in which such concepts – of strengths, healthy processes and fulfilments – interact with each other to advance the possibilities for a 'good life'. They put forward the model that follows below. This model is situated within the specific context (Lopez et al., 2018) and presents strengths as a necessary element in growth that seeks to ensure that people can develop healthy processes and achieve personal fulfilment. The model assumes that we all possess strengths and that we potentially could all reach optimal mental health (Lopez et al., 2018). These authors also argue that such healthy processes succeed in responding to challenges if they are based on strengths. However, those that are not based on strengths may still contribute to psychological survival but are unlikely to lead to optimal mental health. Lopez et al. (2018) recognised that people who develop a whole repertoire of strengths and healthy processes are significantly more likely to have a fulfilling life. They are also more likely to find both their personal engagements and

their work meaningful and to gain benefits rather than harm from facing problems and challenges.



**Figure 3.1 A Model of Healthy Psychological Growth (Lopez & Snyder, 2003, p. 463)**

The diagram of the model includes arrows that outline the different routes to positive psychological growth. On the right, the arrows demonstrate how strengths can be deployed to foster those processes that lead to fulfilling outcomes; the direction may also go from strengths to fulfilment directly, as in the expressions for love or satisfaction. In contrast, the left arrows demonstrate how we can maintain strengths and healthy processes, according to Lopez & Snyder (2003). Individuals who experience higher levels of fulfilment are more adaptive; this enables them to keep and to develop new strengths. In addition, having a fulfilling life may also make a direct contribution to the extension of an individual's range of strengths. Illustrated here are the potential ways in which strengths, healthy processes and fulfilments interact with each other, but, according to Gallagher, Lopez and Snyder (2019), the model does not present all the detailed interactions.

In terms of this model, a focus on achieving optimal psychological health is a route to enabling more successful responses to opportunities and challenges. The theory is that psychological strengths – as with positive emotions – enhance processes that add healthy adaptations and, as in this study, strengthen the ability of employees to attain their goals. This perspective accords with the Broaden-and-Build Theory (Fredrickson, 1998); at present there is no alternative model in the literature that addresses strengths, their development or related processes. Furthermore, we lack theoretical

development that would enable us to determine whether the model's explanation applies to strengths generally. The categorisation of strengths is not the same for different scholars; despite that, it is possible to describe the most recognised groupings in the literature, which will be done in the next section.

### **3.2.3 Positive Psychological Strengths or Character Strengths**

Positive psychological strengths or character strengths as it is known in the research by Ruch, Niemiec, McGrath, Gander and Proyer (2020), is conceptualised with the intention to improve theoretical models on wellbeing. The focus of this research is to focus on developmental improvements of strengths-based interventions to enable better use or deployment of psychological strengths and the implications for wellbeing by relying on particular strengths. Psychological strengths, as described by Seligman (2011), both underpin and support wellbeing. It has been established, according to the five elements of the PERMA model of wellbeing, that by creating improved positive emotions; better engagement; increased meaning; more accomplishments and improved relationships will collectively enhance wellbeing, as discussed in the previous chapter.

The belief is that some people are able to evoke ancient or buffering strengths which rise to the surface only during phasic activity (challenging times) that make them invulnerable to helplessness whilst others collapse at the first sign of trouble. Peterson and Seligman (2004) states that hard times pose a uniquely suitable situation, enabling the display of many of these character or psychological strengths. The ability to identify your fundamental strengths and to use them in the workplace every day has been described by Seligman (2002) as contributing to an individual's authentic happiness. Later these strengths were described by Seligman as being instrumental in enhancing wellbeing in that it assists an individual to 'flourish' (2011).

Ideally, people should proceed beyond identifying their strengths to being able to deploy them in the right way and the right contextual situation and time (Bates-Krakoff et al., 2022). The author argues the need for balance, which makes the best use of a strength. In contrast, one could over-use a strength or misapply it, leading to unworkable results, which could be counterproductive.

Psychological strengths are a key focus area of positive psychology. Csikszentmihalyi and Seligman (2000) initiated a change in psychology from the study of pathology to preventing and forestalling illness. Strengths were identified as being of high value to wellbeing and prosperity; they can enhance achievement of goals, even addressing various goals simultaneously. Clifton and Harter (2003) point to the possible development of strengths by using knowledge and skills to lead to more positive outcomes.

Human strengths need to be understood but defining human strengths is challenging. It is not easy to determine the direction of a strength, but it is of importance to define and clarify what makes up strengths and how we can apply them (Gruman, Lumley & González-Morales, 2018). Many considerations need to be taken into account; for example, should we describe strengths on the basis of whether they are adaptive and functional; should we measure them in subjective or objective ways; should we consult systems of values or of ethics; should we take into account how stakeholders perceive change (Gruman et al., 2018)? How we understand strengths is often ambiguous, as it involves such issues as evaluating how doctors and psychologists treat people, how we can develop interventions or promote, in an organisation, a culture of excellence.

Scholars have thus taken different approaches to explain strengths and have made considerable progress in that we have a better understanding of such constructs as intelligence, health, creativity, emotion, self-regulation, personality and close relationships. There are eight themes identified by Aspinwall and Staudinger (2003) that cluster these elements accordingly: (1) Cognition, judgement and intelligence; (2) Creativity, excellence and wisdom; (3) Development and aging; (4) Emotion; (5) Health and wellbeing; (6) Institutions and culture; (7) Self and personality and (8) Social relations.

Confronted by either opportunities or challenges, individuals call up their strengths, according to Carr (2004). The author focused on three forms these may take, which are: historical, personal and contextual. The first of these is related to early experiences of being securely attached to a parent, or having a parent who provides guidance, good experiences in schooling and one's own history of dealing effectively with challenges. When it comes to personal strengths, we are thinking of the capacity to solve complex problems. This category includes a range of different strengths –

such as creativity, intelligence, wisdom, ease of temperament, emotional intelligence, self-esteem, positive defences, positive motives, positive personality traits, 'immuno competence' and positive capacities for coping (Carr, 2013; Park et al., 2006). Contextual strengths concern the resources within an individual's social network and ways of living – for example, family relationships, role in an occupation, networks of social support and involvement in leisure activities.

Seligman (2002) proposed 24 distinct character strengths that he listed as virtues of wisdom; courage, love, justice, temperance and transcendence. This is known as the Values in Action (VIA), a categorisation of strengths, which is an inventory of strengths or moral traits that contribute to happiness, wellbeing and the feeling of being fulfilled (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Interventions that focus on strengths are determined as meaningfully connected with wellbeing (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2006).

### **3.2.4 Systems for Classifying Strengths**

Seligman (2003) was instrumental in establishing ways to categorise and measure psychological strengths and virtues, as did also Buckingham and Clifton (2001), who developed a listing of **signature strengths**.

#### **3.2.4.1 Buckingham and Clifton's Strengths**

These authors (Buckingham & Clifton; 2001) took a different strategy to the description of strengths by make a distinction between 'strengths' and 'talents.' They explored the processes of neurology that shape people into their unique selves. An individual's neurological development is critically dependent on both one's genetic makeup and one's experiences of life. These both lead to unique and consistent ways in which people interpret and respond to the world around them (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001). This is a process of developing long-lasting talents that are harder to change as people age. If one can combine these talents with knowledge (drawn from learning and from experience) and skill, talents become strengths. Thus, a trait or behaviour, whether positive or negative, that the individual can apply to achieve what they aim to achieve they would then classify as a strength (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001). For example, assertiveness or even aggression could be a strength depending upon the context. Capitalising on these strengths enables an individual to learn rapidly and to experience satisfaction in such situations (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001).

There is an increasing trend in the Global North to focus on how we assess strengths. Buckingham and Clifton's (2001) StrengthsFinder test and the VIA scale by Peterson (Park et al., 2006) are now in frequent online use as a means to assess users. Peterson's questionnaire includes 24 'character strengths', while the StrengthsFinder has 34 'talents' as 'strengths.' Both these approaches identify the prime strengths and as those that should be focused on for intervention.

There are, however, limitations as these instruments do not assess how much of a strength is present in the individual and they do not measure the degree to which individuals have succeeded in successfully regulating the strengths. Such understandings are essential for being able to develop interventions that would perhaps help the person apply their strengths more effectively. Biswas-Diener et al. (2011) also point out that, though the scales identify the 'top strengths', they do not explain how such strengths mutually interact and how they translate into behaviour. The constellation of strengths measured for one person will differ from the constellation of strengths for someone else, which is not surprising, but, in addition, there may be contradictory strengths (one such example would be consistency and adaptability).

An alternative approach to using scales for measuring psychological strengths would be inferring or deriving these based on the elements of personality that a person possesses. Buckingham and Clifton (2004) point out that we may be able to provide an explanation of an individual's behaviour through a meaningful description of their characteristics, describing these and the strengths associated with them.

#### **3.2.4.2 Seligman's Theory of Virtues and Character Strengths**

In the views of Seligman (2003) and Saleebey (2001), each person has a group of strengths that give access to both gratification and wellbeing, when they are utilised. They both argue that such strengths should be deployed in such areas of life as romantic relationships, in being a parent and in engagement in the workplace and in leisure. 'Character' is seen as extending beyond such concepts as 'integrity'; it may encompass the virtues that are promoted through both philosophy and religion. Together, these virtues and strengths of character foster a sense of personal identity, which they refer to as 'self-identity' or 'ascetic self-construal'. Saleebey (2001) argues that the identity element entails the understanding of who we are, our self-concept, as

it relates to one's environment, while 'ascetic self-construal' refers to one's commitment to advancing the best for oneself and for others.

Park, Peterson and Seligman (2006) identify five areas of strength, namely: (1) Cognitive, such as curiosity, love of learning and creativity; (2) Emotional, which would include attributes such as hope, zest and playfulness; (3) Conative, such as ability to make judgements, perseverance, prudence and self-control; (4) Interpersonal, including leadership and teamwork and (5) Transcendence, incorporating awe, gratitude and spirituality. It is the last factor/category which is the focus for this study.

There are, according to Seligman (2011), two categories of positive emotions: first, the immediate pleasures resulting from sensual experiences and, second, longer-lasting gratifications that result from experiences such as flow, when an individual is involved in activities that draw on personal or signature strengths.

### **3.2.5 The Utilisation of Psychological Strengths**

In times of stress and strife, a question posed by Seligman to be explored is, "does understanding and alleviating of suffering trump understanding and building of happiness?" (Seligman, 2002, p. 5). Seligman explains that depressed and impoverished people care more about virtues, purpose, integrity and meaning and further states that actions that foster positive emotions have the effect of dispersing negative emotions. It has been noted that some people develop buffering strengths making them invulnerable to helplessness, whilst others collapse at the first sign of trouble. Seligman (2002) expands by explaining that hard times have been seen to be a uniquely suitable situation, enabling the display of many strengths. The belief is that some people are able to evoke ancient strengths which rise to the surface only during phasic activity (challenging times).

Seligman (2002), in his explanation, expounds that strengths and virtues assist as a buffer against misfortunes and psychological disorders and also help to build resilience. He states that it is important to not only repair what has been damaged in people but also to assist individuals to recognise and develop their strengths and virtues.

According to Seligman (2011), wellbeing is derived from being able to identify one's fundamental strengths and to use them in workplace. He initially described the above as relating to authentic happiness (Seligman, 2002). He states that it derives its authenticity from engaging these strengths and virtues and being engaged in some activity that is valued (Huang, 2008). However, some authors state that there could be various other indicators, components and multidimensional predictors that are needed to fully account for the complexities of optimal functioning in relation to happiness, satisfaction in life, flourishing and wellbeing (Bakracheva, 2020).

In order to contribute to this body of knowledge, a further exploration into the above discussion regarding manager's experiences of wellbeing in the workplace, within their own set of unique environmental conditions, will be conducted. The Values in Action Classification System (VIA-IS), will be discussed for this purpose; it focuses on six values or virtues. These are the fundamental philosophical and moral characteristics of: wisdom and knowledge; courage, humanity and love; justice; temperance and transcendence, which are then more fully analysed to identify the key strengths of each virtue (Park et al., 2006),

The 24 personal traits associated with the six virtues are referred to as 'signature strengths'. Peterson and Seligman (2004) measured these using their 240-item self-report questionnaire. To demonstrate good character, in line with these definitions, an individual needs to exemplify two or more strengths within each group of virtues, as indicated below.

**Table 3.1 Classification of Virtues and Character Strengths (Park et al., 2006, p.119)**

Virtue	Strengths & Meaning
<p>1. Wisdom and knowledge (5) Cognitive strengths that entail the acquisition and use of knowledge</p>	<p>Creativity - Thinking of novel and productive ways to do things</p> <p>Curiosity - Taking an interest in all of ongoing experience</p> <p>Open-mindedness - Thinking things through and examining them from all sides</p> <p>Love of learning - Mastering new skills, topics and bodies of knowledge</p> <p>Perspective - Being able to provide wise counsel to others</p>
<p>2. Courage (4) Emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal</p>	<p>Bravery - Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty or pain</p> <p>Persistence - Finishing what one starts</p> <p>Integrity / Authenticity - Speaking the truth and presenting oneself in a genuine way</p> <p>Vitality - Zest, Passion and Enthusiasm – Approaching life with excitement and energy</p>
<p>3. Humanity &amp; Love (3) Strengths of humanity include positive traits manifest in caring relationships with others</p>	<p>Love – Occurs within a reciprocated relationship with another person</p> <p>Kindness – Generosity, Nurturance, Care, Compassion,</p> <p>Altruistic Love, Niceness</p> <p>Social Intelligence – Emotional Intelligence, Personal Intelligence.</p>
<p>4. Justice (3) Civic strengths that underlie healthy community life</p>	<p>Fairness - Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice</p>

	<p>Leadership - Organising group activities and seeing that they happen</p> <p>Teamwork - Working well as member of a group or team</p>
<p>5. Temperance (3) Strengths that protect against excess</p>	<p>Prudence - Being careful about one's choices; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted.</p> <p>Self-regulation - Regulating what one feels and does</p> <p>Forgiveness &amp; Mercy - Forgiving those who have done wrong</p> <p>Modesty Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves</p>
<p>6. Transcendence (5) Strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and provide meaning</p>	<p>Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence - Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/or skilled all domains of life.</p> <p>Gratitude - Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen</p> <p>Hope and Optimism - Expecting the best and working to achieve it</p> <p>Humour - Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people</p> <p>Spirituality – Religiousness - Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of life</p>

Psychological strengths of transcendence (the 6<sup>th</sup> and last virtue) as indicated above will be discussed in the next section.

### **3.3 PSYCHOLOGICAL STRENGTHS OF TRANSCENDENCE**

Studies have especially focussed in the last two decades on transcendence as the sixth listed virtue (Park et al., 2006). In some of the literature, it is referred to as the

virtue of spirituality and transcendence and in other texts it is only referred to as transcendence, while spirituality is the fifth and most popular character or psychological strength under the virtue of transcendence, hence it is sometimes included as the virtue, but is also part of the virtue (Park et al., 2006).

The workforce are people and, as such the strength of spirituality relates to them. Thus, it has gradually been recognised as a sustainable response to various human resources challenges (Indradevi, 2021). The reason for the focus on transcendence for this particular study is that it has been noted that, by incorporating a spiritual aspect in the work experience, organisations have realised increased levels of creativity; reduced stress levels and improved problem-solving capabilities (Daniel, 2017; Daniel & Jardon, 2015). It has also been observed that workplace spirituality has resulted in an increased level in the identification with the organisation, satisfaction of rewards and its related activities, resulting in greater satisfaction on the job; an enhancement in involvement on the job, levels of honesty, commitments as well as improvements in job performance (Duchon & Plowman, 2005, as cited in Indradevi, 2021). Further to this, the study of human strengths is believed to be critically important, considering that the historical focus of psychological research has been on weaknesses, syndromes or deficits and therefore the shift in emphasis to “positive qualities that help people flourish” is beneficial (Disabato, Goodman & Kashdan, 2019, p. 65).

Workplace spirituality is also attracting much attention recently in the management science field, due to organisations realising that workers are satisfied with more than just materialistic things (Indradevi, 2021). There is an emerging perspective on spirituality within organisations, and a shift in business ethics towards the concept of business spirituality. That idea is about there being something more to employment; it encompasses a commitment to thriving and flourishing that goes beyond just surviving (Indradevi, 2021). It is believed that human existence has both inner and outer dimensions and that the fostering of the inner dimension leads to an enriched outer life that has greater meaning and efficiency (Indradevi, 2021).

Regarding the business spirituality theme, related research was conducted to examine the indicators of both traits and states of emotional wellbeing and job satisfaction, and how dimensions of both tasks and context relate to managers’ work performance. It was found that elements of affective wellbeing and intrinsic satisfaction on the job

indicate how managers are able to acquire and sustain increased levels of work performance (Hosie, Willemyns & Sevastos, 2012). This means that we can improve managers' jobs to forestall any decline in their emotional wellbeing, job satisfaction and performance. Hosie et al. (2012) conducted a study that concluded that managerial effectiveness was impacted by both negative and positive feelings of wellbeing, and that an increase or decrease in intrinsic job satisfaction was correlated with either increased or reduced performance, respectively. What is meant by 'intrinsic job satisfaction' is the inner state related to job characteristics, or those inherent in the job, for example, using skills, the degree of job complexity, levels of personal control, amount of responsibility, and challenges; this construct is found to play a more important role in affecting manager performance positively than extrinsic incentives (Wang, Lu & Su, 2018; Clark, Oswald & Warr, 1996).

Self-transcendence (ST), is one such intrinsic factor that has played a significant role in the sense-making and meaning-making activities of participants leading to positive feelings of wellbeing. In his research, Flotman (2021) synthesises the enabling role of ST. Three major themes emanated from the findings of this study that describe the role of ST in cultivating meaning and wellbeing. The first theme describes how ST could serve as coping mechanism during adversity. The second theme describes how ST facilitates the re-negotiation of meaning, leading to potential shifts from a blame orientation to a work orientation, from reflection to reflexivity and from self-consciousness to other-consciousness. The third theme describes how ST enables the exploration of the adaptive benefits of anxiety.

In a study by Widodo (2024), the goal of his research was to investigate and analyse the relationship between spirituality in the workplace and self-transcendence, Person-Organisation (P-O) Fit, and achieving meaningful work. He described workplace spirituality as "an individual interpretation of spiritual need satisfaction and meaning at work that varies from person to person" (Widodo, 2024, p. 326). It was found in this study that employees with high spiritual values possess stronger feelings of P-O fit as a result of the alignment of their personal values and sense of connectedness with the organisation's values and aspirations. They were found to also be better equipped to adapt their skills and behaviour to expectations, demands and performance results, due to their understanding of organisational expectations. This resulted in greater self-

efficacy, a sense of mastery and influence over strategic, functional, administrative, and operational workplace outcomes (Widodo, 2024).

### **3.3.1 Definition of Spirituality**

Spirituality refers to an inner understanding of our possibilities for transcendence (or rather the ability to transcend the self), being connected deeply to the external world; experiencing a sense of community or connectedness; sensing or finding meaning or purpose in life; transcendent values; fostering intrinsic values and having a life free of hidden ulterior motives; the relationship with some power higher than us; seeking to a 'higher power' and using our spiritual connection to enhance our fullest potential (Ghosh, 2020; Westgate, 1996). For this study spirituality is considered a psychological strength of the virtue of transcendence (Park et al., 2006).

### **3.3.2 Definition of Transcendence**

Transcendence refers to capacities that lie beyond the self and that connect to a deeper and longer-lasting reality; connections to others, also to something larger than us and of a more permanent nature than the material, to the future, to the divine, to evolution, or to the universe (Park et al., 2006).

The V-theory of transcendence includes contemplation and ways of transcending what we see as reality on the surface, thus connecting with pure consciousness. Maheshwari (2021, p 77), describes this as a "unified field of all the laws of nature." The theory of transcendence can be explained by the principles and practices of higher consciousness management (HCM) and conventional management (CM).

The guiding principles of HCM are that we are all constituted by pure consciousness; we act driven by our true selves and perform our ethical duties through right, unbiased actions, whereas the CM principles are typically around command and control; its guiding principles are, for example, around setting; communicating and monitoring goals (Maheshwari, 2021).

A full set of the differences between HCM and CM are summarised in the table below.

***Table 3.2 Higher Consciousness Management versus Conventional Management (Maheshwari, 2021)***

Dimension	Higher Consciousness Management	Conventional Management
Fundamental Metaphor	Consciousness in action.	Command and control.
Guiding principles	Everyone is pure consciousness.  Act from authentic self.  Do moral duty through right dispassionate actions.	Set goals, communicate goals, monitor goals, rewards for achievement.
Management purpose	World as one family in harmony.  Holistic development and growth.	Gain success, growth, money and power in relative terms.
Leadership source	Self-awareness as the broad source of leadership potential.  Transcendence for higher Consciousness	Better skills, experiences.  Resources, and  Relationships.
Self-development process	Regular transcendence.	Functional training and coaching.
Individual vs Collective Management	Leadership comes from higher consciousness individuals.	Leadership comes from decisive individuals.
Leadership style	Inspire people to help develop themselves.	Focus on accomplishing goals

The above management types are typically the dimensions under the transcendence theory that describe how different managers may behave differently within the work environment, depending on which management dimension they follow.

The next section will cover the strengths that management uses that can be classified under the virtue of transcendence.

### 3.3.3 Psychological Strengths of the Virtue of Transcendence

Seligman's (2004) 24 distinct character strengths were categorised within the six virtues: wisdom/knowledge; courage; humanity and love; justice; temperance and transcendence. A summary of the taxonomy of these strengths is named the VIA (Values in Action) inventory, which is found below. It is an inventory of strengths or traits of moral value that contribute to happiness, wellbeing and fulfilment when drawn upon (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Building psychological strengths not only acts as a buffer against misfortunes and psychological disorders but also helps to build resilience and heal damage (Goodman, Disabato & Kashdan, 2017). People are not always aware of their strengths, a characteristic known as strength blindness (Biswas-Diener, Kashdan & Minhas, 2011) so the importance of making individuals aware of them and how to utilise them is paramount.

Strengths can be categorised as realised and unrealised. The realised strengths are more frequently used, which prove extremely beneficial and energises the person when used. The unrealised strengths are rarely deployed but can have significant benefits (Goodman et al., 2017).

**Table 3.3 Summary of the Classification of Virtues and Character Strengths (Park et al., 2006, p. 119)**

6 VIRTUES	24 CHARACTER STRENGTHS
Wisdom & Knowledge (5)	Creativity; curiosity; judgement & open-mindedness; love of learning; perspective
Courage (4)	Bravery, perseverance; honesty; zest
Humanity & Love (3)	Capacity to love and be loved; kindness, social Intelligence
Justice (3)	Teamwork; fairness; leadership

Temperance (4)	Forgiveness and mercy; modesty and humility; prudence; self-regulation
Transcendence (5)	Appreciation of beauty & excellence; gratitude; hope; humour & spirituality

Following is a discussion on the definitions and related research around the character or psychological strengths of the virtue of transcendence as a construct in this study.

### **3.3.4 Definitions of the Character or Psychological Strengths of Transcendence**

The transcending character strengths have a shared theme, whereby each strength allows the individual to cultivate ways of connecting to the universe at large and, in so doing, to make their lives more meaningful. These positive traits categorised within the virtue of transcendence are strengths that stretch beyond the individual and are social in nature, where the reach goes beyond social relationships to take in connections to part or all of the universe. The central tenet of this category of strength is spirituality. The definitions of this may vary, but they all refer to beliefs in and commitment to aspects of life that transcend the material, reaching what is generally referred to as universal, ideal, sacred, or divine (Park et al., 2006, 119).

The following will be described in terms of the VIA strengths survey (Park et al., 2006). Appreciation of beauty is the first strength in this category, and is considered to be a strength that provides a direct connect to excellence. The second is gratitude, which is thought to connect people directly to goodness. Hope is the third strength, which connects people directly to the future of which they dream. Humour is the fourth, one that is most debated; it enables an individual to connect to hardships and contradictions in ways that produce lightness and delight, instead of anger and fear. Spirituality is the fifth, connecting people to higher purposes and meaningful relationships with the cosmos. It has been noted that the grouping of these particular character strengths could possibly be reworked, trimmed or combined, or further expanded in later research work. This would occur, if, for example, the ability to appreciate beauty becomes recognised as relevant to an expert who has worked in a particular domain for many years, then it could possibly belong to the strengths of

wisdom and knowledge. Similarly, if humour and gratitude are experienced as strengths in the relationship of two people, rather than between one individual and the world at large, such strengths may fall within the category of humanity. In other instances, humour could also be associated with vitality and belong within courage, as a strength. It is believed that the strengths of spirituality and possibly hope may always remain related to transcendence as per the strong historical links between them (Tiger, 1979). Following is a critical discussion or description of the positive traits of the strengths of transcendence and its usefulness, as indicated in the literature.

#### **a) Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence (ABE)**

It has been stated that psychology has not given significant attention to ABE as a character strength. To address this, an instrument that measures the three component dimensions was drawn up so as to examine its psychometric properties in gauging what individuals experience subjectively when they seek to appreciate beauty and excellence, not only regarding their judgments of these dimensions. It was noticed that a person who appreciates beauty and excellence in varying spheres of life is someone with the character strength identified as awe. We consider it to be an element of the virtue of transcendence; it draws connections from those who display the strength to a world that is larger than themselves, whether it is the beauty of art or music, of skilled athletic performance, the majestic natural world, or the moral brilliance of others.

Those who have this strength identify and appreciate excellence intensely. The individual may be able to hold lengthy discussions about the objects of their appreciation, due to their interest in the subject, which is not defined by the pursuit of wealth. Peterson and Seligman (2004) regard the key element in this character strength as the emotions of wonder and awe in the presence of beauty or excellence. It could also be an appreciation of how these dimensions are present in such fields of knowledge as mathematics and science, and in daily events, even the ability to stop and smell the roses. Appreciation of beauty in the above as well as just in living is a component of what Seligman calls the “good life” (Seligman, 2011, p. 259). In conditions of greater intensity, one may experience the feelings of awe and wonder. It could also encompass watching a great sporting skill or in seeing acts of moral virtue,

and it kindles the related feelings of what authors term 'elevation' (Martínez-Martí & Avia, 2018).

The following discussion on ABE is as a result of a compilation of information extracted from various resources (Plato, 2017; Betancourt, 2023; Wong, 2020; Eco, 2004; Cheng, 2009), that was found to be relevant to this psychological strength. Among these various philosophers, there are recurring themes related to what is harmonious, perfect and divine, often in the company of either identical or closely related concepts such as excellence and beauty. Plato links the concept of beauty to what is both true and good, the latter referring not just to ethical goodness but to what is perfect (Hyland, 2008). He states that a full appreciation of beauty and excellence becomes possible only when there is an end to the desire to possess. Plato (2017) describes aesthetic pleasure as differing from other kinds of pleasure; because beauty generates a non-utilitarian, disinterested sense of pleasure. The appreciation of beauty and excellence requires the ability to transcend oneself and to acquire a richer, more intuitive and deeper understanding, in which people recognise their identity with those of others and with the whole. Plotinus argued that the beholder of beauty comes into a process of identification with what they behold; the person who see the divine becomes more like the divine (Gerson, 2014). Transcending the self shifts one's awareness of time. Gadamer regarded the experience of beauty as a time for celebrating something that connects us to the eternal (Wong, 2020).

There is therapeutic benefit in the appreciation of beauty. Schopenhauer saw in contemplating beauty a kind of catharsis, a state through which one's awareness of striving and suffering both disappear (Wicks, 2020). The idea of beauty and of the sublime are different, though occasionally overlapping, they are ideas linked with aesthetic experiences. Plato (2017) defines beauty as uncontaminated pleasure; in contrast, the sublime was a mixed pleasure. In addition, the order of the object of beauty resides in the object itself; the sublime resides only in how we apprehend it. Beauty and the sublime elicit different feelings. The face of someone witnessing the sublime is serious, fixed and surprised, while beauty calls up a serene facial appearance, often with joy. The sublime evokes respect; beauty, love. Actions that are driven by being kind and compassionate convey beauty, while those driven by principles may be sublime.

Shaftesbury identifies differences between people with regard to ABE (Martinez-Marti, Hernandez-Lloreda & Avia, 2016). The authors write of a person who demonstrates virtue, a person with experience of all forms of beauty. Such a person admires elegant proportions, the complex but unified systems of species. They are also sensitively aware of both harmonies and discords, feeling a sense of suffering when the universe is disturbed. Philosophically, ABE is seen as positive, not only because it is pleasing. Through ABE people come to feel fulfilment, expanding their awareness past their immediate concerns and feel a sense of connection to the social and physical environment. They learn new things about the world, see it freshly and have a sense of motivation to bring change. Schiller argued that the way to attain virtue and happiness was through the route of beauty (Plato, 2017). In cultivating our capacity for feeling beauty, we are also cultivating our ethical abilities, thus an education in beauty would make moral education unnecessary.

In light of the above, ABE may not only affect the wellbeing of individuals but also the wellbeing of those around them. Through the use of a broad range of indicators of pro-sociality, hedonic and eudemonic wellbeing, researchers have gained empirical evidence that supports the theorised positive qualities of ABE. ABE has been advanced as a character strength, one of its criteria being that it brings fulfilment (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), as expanded below.

Littman-Ovadia and Lavy (2012) report high correlations between ABE and openness to experience, extraversion and agreeableness. In similar vein, elevation was shown to correlate well with extraversion, openness to experience, and agreeableness (Landis, Sherman, Piedmont, Kirkhart, Rapp & Bike, 2009). Correspondingly, there are higher correlations between feeling awe and extraversion and openness to experience (Shiota, Thrash, Danvers & Dombrowski, 2017). Furthermore, absorption correlated positively with ABE (Steger, Hicks, Kashdan, Krueger, & Bouchard, 2007) but ABE and materialism were negatively correlated (Diessner, Solom, Frost, Parsons, & Davidson, 2008). In terms of wellbeing, ABE was shown to correlate positively with satisfaction in life (Diessner et al., 2008), with positive feelings (Littman-Ovadia & Lavy, 2012), and with post-traumatic recovery and growth (Peterson, Park, Pole, D'Andrea, & Seligman, 2008). Moreover, it was found that ABE was significantly

involved in the association in achieving recovery of life satisfaction after overcoming a psychological disorder (Peterson, Park, & Seligman, 2006).

In theory related to ABE, Peterson and Seligman (2004) argued the proposition that ABE is a unique construct consisting of three distinct but nonetheless closely related forms or factors of appreciation namely: B, ME and NME. The B Factor represents inner peace, sensitivity and awe; the ME Factor represents tranquillity, elevation and appreciation and the NME Factor represents admiration, energy and like excellence (Martinez-Marti et al., 2016). Research indicates that those with high levels of ABE also typically have high levels of self-transcendence. They get absorbed in activities, losing their awareness of time and self. They experience positive relationships with natural life and the universe and sense their place with others being within a living organism. They frequently experience vitalisation and comfort from spiritual experiences. They are further more likely to have an orientation towards other people, being more empathic, sympathetic, more actively concerned for others' wellbeing, and to have stronger beliefs that others are sincere and have good intentions. It was established that people with high levels of B focus less on material goals and that people with high level of both B and ME are likely to be less envious. Those with high levels of ABE are much more likely to have greater wellbeing, being more satisfied in life, experiencing more positive feelings and more vitality, feeling that they continue to grow personally and having a stronger sense of life purpose and hope. Those high in B and NME are slightly less anxious.

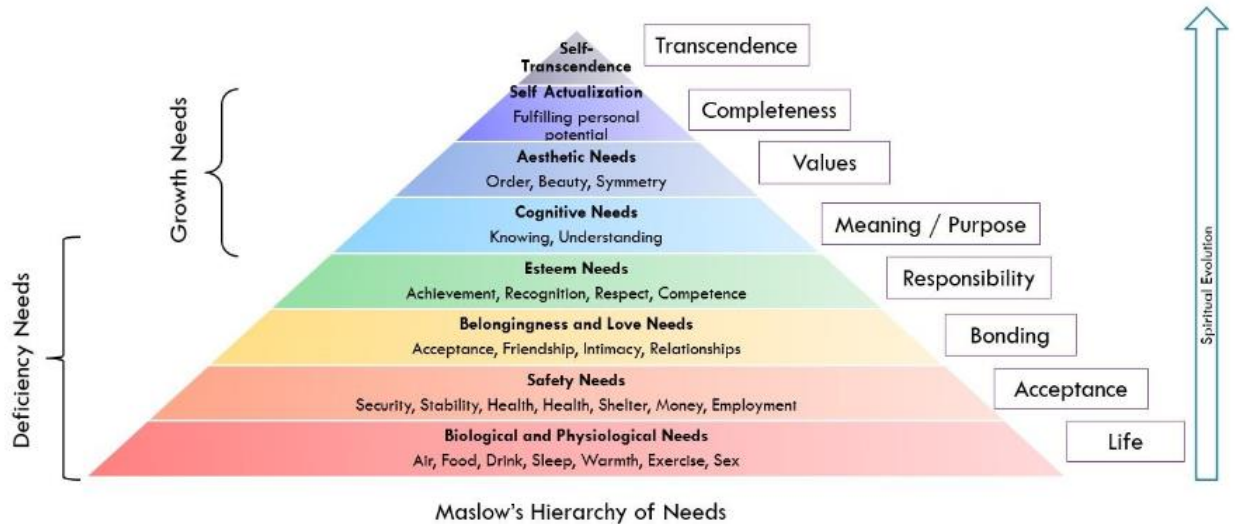
Furthermore, research participants high in ABE were established as being more likely to be open to experience, being agreeable, being extrovert, being more conscientious, and being less neurotic, achieve greater self-transcendence and more readily attain their life's aims. In contrast, people with high levels of ME are more likely than those high in B and NME to have prosocial beliefs, upright attitudes and behaviours. That entails greater kindness, greater sensitivity to others, altruism, empathy and a higher tendency to present to others a socially acceptable image of themselves. In contrast, people who are high in NME display a greater need to achieve and to be satisfied in life than those who have high levels of B and ME. Those with high levels of both ME and NME are more likely to have a sense of life's greater purpose than do those with

high levels of B. There are thus relationships between ABE and wellbeing that need further attention.

In other research, where ABE has been examined using indicators of wellbeing focused on aspects of the self, like life satisfaction, smaller associations were found; as such it was stated that it was inaccurately concluded that ABE has a low correlation with wellbeing in general (Martínez-Martí & Avia, 2018). This study found ABE to be correlated with hedonic and eudemonic wellbeing, particularly eudemonic. The highest relationship was with self-transcendence, as against other indicators that are more focused on the self. Self-transcendence involves key features of peak experiences, spirituality, flow and a feeling of connection to our environment, but has not generally been included within positive psychology as an indicator of wellbeing. However, in reality Maslow, in his later work, viewed transcendence to be the final motivational stage in his hierarchy of human development (Koltko-Rivera, 2006). It advances significant causes that extend beyond the self, including the commitment to a higher ideal, which may be beauty or excellence, and includes experiences of deep connection when attaining peak experiences, such as those of aesthetics. The definitions of meaning and engagement by Seligman (2011) operate in similar ways, as elements that are part of flourishing definitions of meaning and engagement, as components of flourishing, and are, according to Garcia-Romeu (2010), akin to aspects of self-transcendence; these include transpersonal identification and creative self-forgetfulness.

Late in life, Maslow focused on what he called self-transcendence which provide another dimension of needs. In this work, he stated that the self may reach its full actualization only through surrendering to a higher outside aim that requires altruism and spirituality. This he saw as equivalent to a desire to attain the infinite. The diagram below shows the self-transcendence aspect of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1970). Self-actualisation concerns the fulfilment of one's potential; whilst self-transcendence means to transcend the self. Those who succeed in this achievement typically achieve peak experiences, through which they pass beyond the individual ego. Self-Transcendence Theory is said to lead to valued goals in education, practice, and research. Transcendence takes three forms, the first being transcendence of ego (where the self extends beyond the ego), the second, transcendence of the self (where

the self extends beyond the itself) and the third spiritual transcendence (where the self extends past space and time).



**Figure 3.2 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1965)**

Because of its implication with self-transcendence, ABE is clearly relevant to individual wellbeing, but should also be capable of promoting sustainable wellbeing (Kjell & Diener, 2021), this because of the significance of factors that transcend the person, other people or greater entities like nature, as indicated through the high correlations with pro-sociality. As applies to individual wellbeing, ABE could, through self-transcendence, be related to longer-lasting kinds of wellbeing; as Pratscher (2020) points out, ongoing happiness requires flexibility in one's sense of self but is closely connected to the context and other people within it. In recent research on wellbeing (Delle Fave, Brdar, Freire, Vella-Brodrick, & Wissing, 2011), attention has gone to a particular aspect of how people feel 'tuned-in' to the world.

Arising from our awareness of the beauty of the natural world and of the excellent qualities of other people, features that have intrinsic value, not as providing some means for us to satisfy our needs, people may come to feel connected to them, motivating in the person an ethical sense of care and a wish to protect others and the world, thus fostering the wellbeing of other people and the environment.

We could aim to foster individual wellbeing through training them in ABE and in prosocial attitudes and behaviour; this would be good for both people and the natural environment, through developing deeper appreciation and connectedness, and developing more ethical behaviours through ABE. Such training in ABE training could also serve to strengthen interpersonal relationships as it encourages us to appreciate the positive qualities of other people, their value as people and the common sense in a group of the connections amongst its members. Environmental psychologists could similarly use ABE for promoting how we appreciate and feeling connected with the world of nature, leading to its protection and conservation. Interventions that are based on the appreciation of excellence may be of particular significance in education and in programmes of self-development, with the purpose of inspiring and motivating people to develop as persons (through appreciating moral excellence) and to strengthen skills and talents, and to attain their aims in life (through appreciating non-moral excellence).

Thus, we can recognise the significance of the role that ABE plays in fostering wellbeing, especially in the realm of self-transcendence, in contrast to other indicators of wellbeing that are more focused on the self – satisfaction in life, for example – that has been the prime areas for studying and practising wellbeing. This doctoral study serves to develop research and expand theory both on wellbeing generally and more specifically on the role of character strengths of transcendence for sustainable wellbeing.

### ***Research on ABE***

Martínez-Martí, Hernández-Lloreda & Avia (2016) have drawn attention to how theory in philosophical research points us to see the association between appreciation of beauty and wellbeing and positive feelings. This theoretical work has been strengthened through corroboration from empirical studies that demonstrate a high correlation between our ability to appreciate beauty and maintain a balance between the negative and the positive (Martínez-Martí & Avia, 2018). These relationships extend also to agreeableness, perspective-taking, trust, generosity, and increased helping behaviour (Martínez-Martí et al., 2016). Furthermore, appreciating beauty has been shown as correlating with various emotions related to the observation of others or of nature, life beyond ourselves.

In the study by Martínez-Martí & Avia (2018), the act of stopping to admire beauty was found to be effective and important in wellbeing interventions, and could be much better than any other type of engagement. People who reported that they perceive meaning and beauty in online art, in a study by Trupp et al. (2022), stated that they wanted to return, and were found to experience improved mood and decreased levels of anxiety, associated with what their subjective rating of the excellent of the online art was. Similarly, Martínez-Martí et al. (2016) report from research into an online training programme that they found significant positive correlations between experiences of beauty and wellbeing. Another study by Fancourt, Garnett and Müllensiefen (2020) found that those people who reported that they enjoyed and were emotionally moved in an intervention at an art museum were those with good wellbeing outcomes, which was consistent in findings with other students regarding creative activities and the regulation of mood. Finally, artists who reported their sense of wellbeing while viewing arts were those who were most likely to experience that they were making meaning while they were viewing the art (Myszkowski, Storme, Zenasni & Lubart, 2014).

## **b) Gratitude**

The awareness we have that we are experiencing good things, and not taking such experiences for granted, finding opportunities to convey thanks, make up what we term as gratitude. It can also be described as appreciating a person's moral excellence. Seligman (2011, p. 260) describes it as a "sense of wonder, thankfulness, and appreciation for life itself." We are grateful when people do well by us, through acting well and being good people. This can be conveyed towards impersonal beings and to other species, for example, to God, animals and nature, but not towards oneself. The root of the word is in the Latin word *gratia*, meaning grace.

Gratitude may also be considered our feeling of being thankful on receiving some gift. What is given could be material and given to us by another person, or it could be without intention, such as the sounds of music of great beauty that we by chance hear in passing. That psychological reaction to what is given is what we consider as gratitude, whatever it is, and to that possibly fleeting experience of the sense of grace. The gift may be tangible, deliberately provided by a specific other person or it might be more accidental, like the notes from a beautiful symphony or outdoor concert, as

we happen to pass by, a feeling of the benefits that we have gained from the actions of another. For a long time, gratitude has been seen to be a significant human strength, one that has come fairly recently though into the sights of psychologists. Of recent though, there is much interest in researching this trait (Emmons & Hill, 2001).

### ***Research on Gratitude***

Gratitude is considered a new arrival in workplace research and beginning to display signs of future potential (Locklear, Sheridan & Kong, 2023). What has been established is that gratitude enhances prosocial behaviour, stimulates a sense of wellbeing, and fosters relationships between people. The earlier research drew in particular on social psychologists (Fredrickson, 2004; McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons & Larson, 2001; Van Cappellen, Clapp & Algoe, 2023; Wood et al., 2010). They had explored its significance in relation to morality, to relationships and to personal feelings of wellness. In turn, this earlier research influenced subsequent studies on the role of gratitude in such relationships and practices. Work by clinicians (Wood et al., 2010) has brought gratitude into treatment. Clinical psychologists have begun examining gratitude as a treatment in clinical environment (Wood et al., 2010), seen as an attitude and practice with the capacity to boost people's wellbeing and to lower symptoms of mental disorder. Increasingly, the links between gratitude and wellbeing have been found within people in nonclinical settings, where attention has gone to the role of gratitude in the full range of elements of personal health (Portocarrero et. al., 2020). Van Cappellen (2023) reports on the role that gratitude plays in fostering good personal interrelationships, while Gordon, Impett, Kogan, Oveis and Keltner (2012) have focused on gratitude in romantic and platonic relationships and (Sun & Huang, 2019) on relationships in the workplace.

Numerous studies have established that gratitude has marked and measurable positive impact on people's lives, specifically on their emotional, physical and mental wellbeing (Emmons, 2007; Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Gratitude researchers have studied the ways in which individuals express gratitude, such as counting the good things in life such as our blessings; realising that some of our circumstances in our life could be better than those of others; being able to replace ungrateful thoughts with thoughts of gratitude; in writing messages of gratitude in letter or essay form;

reminding oneself for having survived difficult periods in one's life; questioning one's conscience deeply and simply giving mental attention to whom you are grateful.

Gratitude interventions have proved beneficial for the individual expressing gratitude. Those who keep a gratitude journal have reported fewer illness symptoms, exercise more, are more optimistic, and feel better about life as a whole; in addition, people who are grateful are those who have more positive feelings for longer periods (Emmons, 2007; Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Gratitude also delivers social benefits; those people who feel gratitude also increase their feelings of being connected to others; feel more generous towards others and experience more fulfilling relationships (Emmons, 2007; Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Therefore, this is a valuable emotion that serves to strengthen our coping mechanisms in dealing with stress and in building resiliency (Fredrickson et al., 2003).

### **c) Hope (Optimism, Future-Mindedness, Future Orientation)**

Hope is about taking an attitude about what good things the future may bring, expecting only the best, but also taking action to be able to attain it, giving attention to the future, with a positive mood, having expectations that what we wish for will finally be achieved, as well as the confidence that our efforts will have the impact we desire. Such efforts keep our sense of being buoyant and reminding ourselves of what actions we need to take. Future-mindedness, optimism and hope form a family of strengths that Seligman describes a "positive stance toward the future" (2011, p. 261-262).

Lionel Tiger (1979), the anthropologist draws a distinction between 'little optimism' and 'big optimism.' The former is about very specific hoped-for outcomes, such as achieving some immediate benefit that you are not yet sure of, e.g., whether you will find a convenient parking space. The latter concerns broader and greater expectations, about hopes for the nation or the community; this can more readily be understood as a positive and transcendent trait or expectation, e.g., "our nation is on the verge of something great", which is considered a signal character strength (Peterson, 2000).

We tend to see hope and optimism as concepts that overlap each other; however, one way of seeing the difference is that the former is generally seen as an emotion, and

the latter is seen as some kind of expectation. Each represents a positive outlook toward the future, an expectation that good outcomes are likely and will happen, and that things will get better. C. R. Snyder has championed the hope theory and its development. The theory states that people who have hope in their thinking tend to believe that they will be able to open up ways of attaining the goals they desire; they have greater motivation to make use of those ways, which in turn impacts on their feelings and their wellbeing (Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002).

Hope, in terms of the Broaden-and-Build Theory, enables individuals to develop further their repertoires of thought and action, thus serving to extend their personal resources for coping over time (Fredrickson, 1998; Richman, Kubzansky, Maselko, Kawachi, Choo & Bauer, 2005).

Hope is more than thoughts and emotions, as Ayan (2009) describes: Hope and qualities such as purpose and determination are wrongly perceived to be just mental states. Their use involves electrochemical connections that are key to the effectiveness of the human immune system. Within the whole organism, such states as faith, love, hope and the will to live are significant qualities with biochemical implications (Savage, Lujan, Thipparthi & DiCarlo, 2017).

Some regard optimism as an integral element of people's nature, located in the biology and evolution of our species due to the variety of adaptive characteristics involved in anticipating the future, counteracting fear and preparing for dire consequences (Tiger, 1979, discussed in Peterson, 2000). While, generally speaking, people of optimism think that they will have good things happening to them and those with pessimism the reverse, we cannot generalise this to all people. Optimists use more active, problem-centred planning in their coping, whereas pessimists tend to be more self-defeating, less persistent, and avoidant in their coping (Carver & Scheier, 2002). Optimists attribute bad occurrences to quite specific external and variable factors; pessimists attribute misfortune to internal, stable, and global factors. The optimistic explanatory style fares better than the pessimistic style on measures of depression and illness (Buchanan & Seligman, 1995; Peterson & Steen, 2002). Optimism is related with positive feelings and extraversion, while pessimism is related to negative feelings and neuroticism (Ionescu & Iacob, 2019; Bryant & Veroff (2017)).

Whilst viewing the contrasts between optimism and pessimism, the idea that pessimism is simply the absence of optimism and vice versa is incorrect; the two concepts are not mutually exclusive (Peterson, 2000). The “I’m not a pessimist, I’m a realist” retort has been often incorrectly used as an argument against optimism. Peterson & Seligman (2004) remind us that realism is a strength closely related to open-mindedness and judgment, that this strength involves seeing all sides of an issue, not solely the gloomy side, and that there is often enough ambiguity in any given situation to make room for optimism while still adhering closely to the facts.

Optimism could also be considered costly if it is too unrealistic, in that a denial of personal risk may lead some people to neglect important health behaviours (Peterson, 2000). Defensive pessimism, where individuals downplay their likely success to avoid disappointment and keep expectations in balance, is considered a coping strategy that is useful at times; however, if used frequently, it can result in interpersonal difficulties, and it may be perceived by others as a false humility and a lack of honesty (Carver & Scheier, 2002; Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

### ***Research on Hope***

The self-help movement that emerged in the 1950s and persists to the present day has included a number of influential figures who speak in different ways to improve one’s life and find happiness. One of the earliest and leading figures in the self-help pantheon was Norman Vincent Peale (1952), who propagated positive thinking. Although it is often overly simplistic and sometimes unhealthy to just “think positively” (e.g., this approach may be linked with avoidance and denial), in general, research supports positive thinking and shows it to be beneficial for physical and mental wellbeing (Carver & Scheier, 2002). However, optimism and an orientation of hope are much more dynamic than simple positive thinking. Hope and optimism have been shown in a number of studies to have multiple benefits, including better task concentration in academic settings, better athletic performance, maintenance of physical health, illness prevention, adjustment to chronic illnesses, better pain management, higher self-worth, lower levels of depression, enhanced positive emotions, an expanded circle of friends, and more perceived social support and competence (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Snyder et al., 2002).

Optimism also has a substantial protective effect, as stress is generally known to increase after a major life event, however, optimism has been found to buffer the stress and protects against prolonged illness (Dantzer, Cohen, Russo & Dinan, 2018; Kivimäki, Vahtera, Elovainio, Helenius, Singh-Manoux & Pentti, 2005). Nevertheless, optimism has not always been found to be protective for the immune system. In the main, optimism results in higher immune functioning, but when confronted with particularly difficult stressors, this does not necessarily occur (Segerstrom, 2006). Potential reasons for this include the fact that optimists are disappointed that their expectations were not met and this may affect the immune system; alternately, optimists may put more energy into coping with difficult stressors, and this greater effort may contribute to fatigue and physiological stress (Dantzer et al., 2018; Muraven, Tice & Baumeister, 1998; Segerstrom, 2006).

Peterson and Seligman (2004) identify other potential difficulties with optimism: where optimists tend to see themselves as below average in experiencing different problems (e.g., disease, failure, relationship breakups), and as a result, they may minimise their true risk across a variety of situations. It has been stated that if optimists learn to acknowledge their risks, they may be able to take corrective and appropriate steps to deal with the risks they face. Research by Shelley Taylor and others discovered that unrealistically optimistic beliefs about the future, even when inconsistent with objective medical evidence, may be health protective (Danaher, 2022).

#### **d) Humour [Playfulness]**

Humour and playfulness have been described as the ability to break into laughter and to elicit mirth or smiles from other people; to focus readily on the lighter side of life. The list of strengths to this point was regarded as righteous, especially the strengths of kindness, spirituality, valour, ingenuity, etc. Humour, being the second last strength of transcendence, however, is considered the most fun, playful and funny (Seligman, 2011, p. 263).

Various types or styles of humour found in organisations are described as follows: Affiliative humour is described as amusing others as a means to facilitate relationships. People who demonstrate this capacity tend to be well-liked and are typically seen as not threatening (Peterson, Seligman & Vaillant, 1988). The use of this pattern of

positive, non-antagonistic behaviour aids in reducing tensions between people and in building up relationships (Martin, 2019). This form of humour is perceived to ease social relationships, and to stimulate friendly interactions amongst people, who experience them being in a positive environment. When this is used within an organisational setting, people generally understand that the intention of its use is to build unity.

The second one is self-enhancing humour, which is described as finding amusement in life's hardships and staying positive. This is seen as providing a possible way of dealing with stressful situations, and thus in keeping a positive mood in addressing the situation. It has been shown to correlate negatively with neuroticism, but positively with self-esteem and positive feelings. It has been posited by Romero and Cruthirds (2006) that its use within an organisational context is generally when the person initiating it aims to enhance how they are perceived, as against perceptions of others in that situation. Martin (2019) regard the style as more focused on the individual than affiliative humour.

The third style is self-defeating humour, which is described as making amusing comments that do not enhance the self of the person who initiates this. Most people using this ridicule themselves; the intention is generally to defuse conflict, entertain and gain acceptance from them (Martin, 2019). The prevailing opinion is that those who typically use this style in an organisational context may be seeking to tone down high status, making themselves appear as easier to approach – which could be considered as a kind of manipulation.

Aggressive humour is the fourth style, which may be described as disparaging others as a way of manipulating them. Smith and & Khojasteh (2014) argue that those who do this generally are manipulating those around them through the implied threat of humiliating them. The approach can be used to victimise, ridicule and disparage other people (Ford & Olah, 2021). There is consistency between this kind of humour and superiority theory. The latter states (De Koning & Weiss, 2002) that those who make themselves appear to be better at the expense of others, so they can achieve, or be perceived to have achieved, are seen as of higher status. Martin (2019) found that this quality negatively correlates with agreeableness and conscientiousness but positively correlates to neuroticism. Mildly hostile humour, when it is presented as teasing or

bantering, has the ability to carry a strong negative message, but in a tone that is positive and somewhat humorous (Ford, 2015; Meyer 2015). If indeed it is given in a light-hearted way (Kahn, 1990), it enables someone to communicate that they disagree and that there is conflict, but without provoking an angry response.

### ***Research on Humour***

The findings of a study that explored the relationship between humour in the workplace and engagement in work, focusing in particular on the mediating role of fun, were that affiliative humour has a positive impact on fun in the workplace. Fun activities, support from management for fun and interactions with customers were all shown to mediate the relationship between work engagement and affiliative humour. It further established that aggressive humour impacts negatively on interactions with customers. However, interactions with customers alone was found to mediate the aggressive humour-work engagement relationship (Chen, Ni, Chen & Li, 2023).

The results of a mediation analysis study done by Bhattacharyya, Jena and Pradhan (2019) established that resilience serves a significant role in mediating between self-enhancing humour and work wellbeing, as well as between workplace wellbeing and affiliative humour. With regards to a further case of self-enhancing humour, using resilience as an indirect route to achieving wellbeing at work was more effective than affiliative humour. In congruence with this study, there is corroboration from various other studies, such as Martin and Ford (2018) of the relationship between the adaptive humour styles (self-enhancing and affiliative humour) and wellbeing at work. Eype and Fenn (2021) and Jauregi (2017) furthermore, guided by Frederickson's Broaden-and-Build Theory, argue that an adaptive sense of humour serves to build positive feelings and thus to strengthen resilience and enhance wellbeing. Other related literature, such as Kuiper (2012), identifies humour as an aspect of resilience that has the capacity to enhance psychological wellbeing and the quality of life.

Cognitive reappraisal is a concept worth considering in exploring the way in which self-enhancing humour plays a mediating role. This form of humour enables coping by ensuring a shift in cognitive processes towards the positive. However, McRae and Mauss (2016) report that previous research on this concept has established that positive reappraisal may enhance positive feelings and resilience in the short term,

and this raised level of resilience results in wellbeing. The authors further note that a moderated model of mediation revealed the role of self-esteem in moderating the ways in which self-enhancing humour relates to wellbeing at work through this increase in levels of resilience indirectly (McRae & Mauss, 2016).

In addition, in coping with adverse situations, it was found that resources related to the self, like self-esteem, have a major impact in promoting wellbeing (Mäkikangas, 2007). Thus, in view of this study, it has been argued that adaptive humour becomes a key player in enhancing resilience and assists individuals to cope with varied forms of adversity which then translates into wellbeing. Furthermore, since self-enhancing humour is able to foster cognitive reappraisal and is significant in building the ability to cope and personal growth, it is, according to Oosthuizen (2021), considered more effective in predicting resilience and wellbeing.

Humour was added late to character strengths, both because it is a universal trait and because the inventory was seen as overly serious and grim without this element. It has been stated that an excess of seriousness, even about virtue, is troubling and that virtue that is humourless could be associated with haughtiness and is thereby deficient in virtue (Billig, 2018). Humour and playfulness are classified as a strength that adds value and is judged to be admirable and laudable when combined with other strengths. An individual with this quality may be defined as someone who has the ability to bring laughter and at least gentle teasing, encouraging smiles, at seeing the lighter side of life, and at making jokes, although this only one part of humour. These people are capable of injecting humour into any situation by selecting the appropriate moment to do so.

There are various forms of humour, the mean types (such as sarcasm and ridicule) and others that border on them (like practical jokes). Types exist which carry out one or other kind of moral good, for example, through helping our lives become more bearable, pointing out contradictions, sustaining good cheer during times of despair, by facilitating social networks, and by creating some sort of other social interaction. This allows one to view being playful in its role as a character strength. Although humour could also be connected to negative purposes, so can other character strengths; however, humour may have many negative connotations if used wrongly.

Evidence points to the strong connection between negative emotions and disease progression and vulnerability (Wong, 2020). In understanding positive emotions and their connection with health (Wong, 2020; Fredrickson, 2001), humour is one of the positive strengths being studied, and has been found to correlate with optimism, alleviating depression, and being supportive in stress and pain management.

Humour has also been found to assist people to cope with death or thoughts about it, and it improves the immune system. Humour is considered an active, problem-focused coping style that helps to alter the emotional consequences of stressful events (Martin, 2019). Studies on the specific effects of joyful laughter as it relates to the immune system have been conducted by Berk, Felten and Bittman (2001). This parallels the results of the research of Candace Pert (1997) on neuropeptides (the biochemistry of emotions) as well as psychoneuroimmunology, which observed the positive connections to the psychological processes of the nervous, endocrine, and immune systems. Evidence was even discovered around the impact of laughter as it relates to sleep. Bellet (1989) found evidence that a 10-minute whole-hearted belly laugh led to 2 hours of pain-free sleep. In conclusion, numerous health benefits have been discovered health-wise, relating to all types of disease, such as management of diabetes; weight loss, improved management and prevention of various physical and mental disorders. The benefits of laughter have been associated with a biological basis that may even extend across species (Panksepp & Burgdorf, 2003).

#### **e) Spirituality [Religiousness, Faith, Purpose]**

Spirituality is understood as the presence of powerful coherent beliefs concerning the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where you are placed in the greater scheme of things; where beliefs are a source of comfort and are also able to shape actions (Park, Edmondson & Hale-Smith, 2013). Psychologists have begun to pay more serious attention in the study of spirituality and religiosity (having not paid much attention for close onto half a century), given that they cannot continue to ignore the significance that people place on their “faith” (Seligman, 2011, p. 261). The questions posed by these researchers, according to Seligman (2011, p. 261), have focussed on whether people have a developed a well-described life philosophy,

whether these are spiritual or secular in nature, that explains one's being in the larger universe and whether life holds meaning through being attached to greater purposes or beings than one's self. Furthermore, spirituality is associated with a consciousness in moral values and the pursuit of goodness.

It is important to note that the use of psychological strengths is more significant for cultivating wellbeing than merely the possession of it. To illustrate this, a study was held where participants were asked to focus on strengths, focus on weaknesses or focus on neutral experiences (Dolev-Amit; Rubin & Zilcha-Mano, 2021). The results indicated that the group that focussed on strengths for a 5-week period prior to examinations were able to prevent the development of negative emotions and distress and well as prevent a decline in wellbeing due to the impending examination period (Dolev-Amit et al., 2021).

Spirituality was included in the classification of strengths from the outset, but is the final entry. Authors consider it as the strength that is both the most human and the most sublime (Park et al., 2006). Those who demonstrate this strength rely on an understanding of what life means that directs how they behave and gives them a sense of comfort. A commitment to morality and ethics, and pursuing the good, can be shown to draw typically on one's spirituality and religious sense.

Gorsuch (2019) draws distinctions between religiousness, such practices as going to church and donating money or giving to charity regularly, and spirituality is referred to the meaningful psychological experiences and holding significant beliefs. The authors further draw a distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic religiousness (Gorsuch, 2019). While this distinction matters, these qualities of religiousness and spirituality are mutually present in the lives of many. In other instances, there is a possibility that some may take a stance that extends beyond the mainstream religions but that nonetheless presents coherent beliefs about transcendence and such spiritual aspects of life. This explains the attachment of spirituality to a "sense of purpose" when considering the character strength, as well as Antonovsky's (1987) "sense of coherence" as a criterion that does not rely on religion but is nonetheless spiritual (Vinje et al., 2017).

We may in popular speech describe extreme interest in one or other form of sport, or being devoted to a style of music as 'religious.' Despite their possible intensity, that are not – unless there is specific evidence – moral in nature. Thus, such examples are not included in this study. We may however make a case for including such firmly held beliefs or practices as being a vegetarian, being a humanist or holding to laissez-faire economics in the category of spirituality when it is clear that the rationale in each case is moral and also refers to the transcendent.

William James (1902/1999), who was the first great psychologist of the USA, was among the few of the profession who wrote on the significance of religious experience, though it was decades before significant numbers joined him in taking a psychological interest in the phenomenon (Seybold, 2005). In the past, psychologists viewed this area as value-laden, controversial, and non-scientific. However, more recently psychologists and social scientists generally have identified this as a significant element in the human situation and furthermore have recognised that studying this area does not require agreement or disagreement with the specific beliefs involved.

### ***Research on Spirituality***

Peterson and Seligman (2004) summarised the existing research on spiritual and religious life and identified five core domains: measurement of the spiritual/religious experience; functional significance (e.g., use for coping and the effect on health improvement); cognitive and emotional dimensions; social patterns and involvement; and neurophysiology of the religious/spiritual experience. A meta-analysis of 49 quantitative studies investigated ways of using religion positively to cope (e.g., purification, getting clergy to provide support, or spiritual connection) and using it negatively (e.g., deciding that God is punishing you or blaming illness on the work of the devil). The analysis found a moderately positive correlation between positive coping strategies and positive outcomes after adverse experiences (Zarzycka & Zietek, 2019). These researchers also noted that those who took the positive route of using religion were less depressed, anxious and distressed, while those who following the negative religious strategies had higher levels in these areas. Idler (2021) and Oman and Thoresen (2005) also describe research that connects higher religious attendance with lower mortality rates.

Researchers studying the science of spirituality and religiousness have found numerous correlations between spirituality and good physical health, psychological/emotional health, social health, and prevention; however, it was stated that these relationships reflect correlations and do not necessarily imply causation.

The measurement of spirituality has faced many difficulties, including an inconsistency in defining spirituality and a lack of theological groundedness. Religiousness has been associated with better marriages, the perception of marriage as sacred, life satisfaction, more consistent parenting, and among youth it is associated with less aggression, greater emotional regulation, increased empathy, a delay in sexual involvement, and an avoidance of drug use and other illicit activities (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

The neuroscience of spirituality is an important emerging topic, leading scholars to investigate what happens in the brains of mystics, monks, and even laypersons during the time that these individuals pray, meditate, or find themselves in a state of trance. These findings have provided indisputable evidence supporting the importance of the mind-body-spirit connection. God, universal life force, belief and faith, healing, other levels of consciousness, and spirit are some of the ways these researchers have described their findings (Sheard & Davidson, 2023; Newberg, 2022; Goleman, 2011; Pert, 2010). Quantum physics suggests that a shift in body mechanics via vibrations allows *qi* which is life force energy to change *jing*, one's own life essence, to release blockages (held energetic patterns) which promote healing, create a sense of calm, wholeness and increase coherence with external factors (Meyer, 2019).

Peterson and Seligman (2004) state that an orientation toward meaning was associated with higher levels of happiness. Fiese, Tomcho, Douglas, Josephs, Poltrock and Baker (2002) associate this meaning with that of family rituals, otherwise described as symbolic representations of collective events, and discovered that activities such as providing opportunities for meaning-making, continuity of meaning across generations, and fostering feelings that one belongs may together serve to enhance people's sense of identity.

Taylor, Kemeny, Reed, Bower and Gruenewald (2000) reviewed considerable evidence that drawing meaning from a traumatic or adverse event, such as a major

loss or serious illness, is considered as evidence of psychological adaptiveness. By applying meaning to physical illness, they noted in this study that HIV positive male participants, who were able to draw meaning from the dying and death process that could involve a partner or friend, exhibited lower declines in T helper cell counts and were themselves more unlikely to die in the subsequent period (Taylor et al., 2000).

The research on meaning underscores the importance of the connection between the individual and the social whole, particularly with family and friends. People with a sense of meaning in their life experience greater physical and mental health than those who do not. Krause (2007) found that higher levels of anticipation of receiving support from others (i.e., believing others will step in when needed) in older adults linked to a fuller sense of meaning than they received from other types of support. This is likely due to the benefit of having a plan and goal, as well as feeling secure.

The next section will discuss the use of psychological strengths by workers in the workplace and how these play out during times of challenge and stress. This discussion will link in to their performance at work, the health of the workers as well as the relationships with others.

### **3.3.5 Psychological Strengths in the Workplace**

Faced with the demands of the workplace, employees typically respond by demonstrating higher stress levels that then create a situation of weakened work performance, as well as weaken their physical and mental health, and their relationships with others. It has been said (Seligman & Peterson, 2003) that finding ways to bolster happiness may contribute to the alleviation of suffering, and that strengths and virtues may serve to protect during adverse events when suffering these psychological disturbances. By focusing on strengths (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001), in accordance with the theories of positive psychology, people may enhance their capacity to achieve self-actualisation, as against the focus on how to minimise one's weaknesses. Dolev-Amit et al. (2021) and Keenan and Mostert (2013) provide evidence of the role of psychological strengths in countering harsh experiences and in expressing people's unique talents.

There is ample evidence of how psychological strengths can be broadly applied and are valuable in the workplace and within organisations generally (Seligman, 2003).

Csikszentmihalyi and Seligman (2000) argue that interventions that are founded on psychological strengths are widely applicable and present particular value for workplaces and in organisational contexts. Therapeutic interventions based on positive psychological constructs (Csikszentmihalyi & Seligman, 2000) are shown to be as effective, if not more effective, than the therapies of the mainstream in rehabilitation (Biswas-Diener et al., 2011). Applying the theories of positive psychology has expanded beyond the context of therapy and into the workplace context. Buckingham and Clifton (2011) report how companies may benefit financially from investing in the identification and development of their employees' psychological strengths.

Dolev-Amit et al. (2021) and Caprara and Cervone (2003) report the need for companies and other organisations to adapt readily and positively to the speedily changing global context, which shapes the nature of work. Factors that bring dramatic change include innovation in technology, the restructuring of organisations, revisions in forms of work contracts; all increase the pressure on individual employees to adapt in ways that avoid intense stress and lead to new learning (Dolev-Amit et al., 2021) and these adaptations can be improved with the development of psychological strengths that build resilience and develop new strategies to cope. The point at which positive resources are most urgently needed is greatest when there are these multiple pressures and the rise of negative feelings may potentially overwhelm positive ones.

Caprara and Cervone (2003) indicate that the expectation is that workers nowadays must be competent in directing their own life-long learning. They need to have ways of adaptation towards the changed features of the society. Strumpter (2005) argues that we no longer experience incremental change but instead sudden, nonlinear and discontinuous change. Carr (2013), Fredrickson and Losada (2005) and Caprara and Cervone (2003) purport that, if we can identify and grow positive traits and actions in employees, we may enhance their personal levels of resilience, causing people to address with greater effectiveness and confidence the challenges and opportunities in their individual lives as well as in the workplace.

A model of workplace wellbeing was developed by Littman-Ovadia and Steger (2010) on the basis of their research findings into such strengths, as the results indicated that when the strengths (in this case, of both volunteers and employees) were endorsed

by others, this correlated with work seen to be meaningful. Further, when strengths were not only endorsed but also deployed, this correlated with wellbeing. Both these concepts – meaning and wellbeing – are known to contribute significantly to satisfaction in the workplace (Littman-Ovadia & Steger, 2010). Also, as per studies conducted, it was established that the capacity for using strengths when they are needed to address either challenges or opportunities is likely to enhance such outcomes as better health, whether physical or psychological, increase flow experiences and develop personal strengths (Carr, 2013).

Luthans, Youssef and Avolio (2015) provide evidence that the diverse elements of what they term psychological capital – these include efficacy, hope, optimism and resilience – relate to the pleasure orientation of authentic happiness, more specifically workplace engagement and positive emotion about the future and effective use of strength. Those organisations that promote the strengths of employees provide benefits to them and to the organisations, serving also to boost employee wellbeing.

### **3.4 POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS (PPIs)**

In the past, scientific researchers have been so fixated on fixing what was wrong with individuals that not many spent adequate effort on finding out what is going right and how to encourage it. Peterson and Seligman (2004) and Seligman (2011) argue that peak functioning requires developing the emotion of happiness. Hence the drive towards positive psychology by Seligman (2002), who posits that harnessing these positive emotions is significantly more useful as a preventative for mental illness than finding a cure for it. Wong (2011) similarly explicates that, if we choose to place emphasis on positive emotions, those that are negative tend to decline and lose their potency. Bakracheva (2020) expounds that, although leaders may use the happiness advantage as a tool to motivate their teams and maximise employee potential, this may depend on whether the employees are affected by intrinsically or extrinsically motivated predictors of happiness. It is stated by the same author that happiness is best predicted by “intrinsic stimuli, leading for life satisfaction are the extrinsic, followed by intrinsic stimuli” (Bakracheva, 2020, p. 100).

Provencher and Keyes (2011) report the developments reflected in psychological literature and suggest that therapy, counselling and other such development should

introduce happiness as an intended outcome. Similarly, it is suggested (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Smith, 2006) that a focus on 'what is right' rather than 'what is wrong' in an individual has proven to achieve greater success in a shorter period of time than earlier mainstream approaches. Seligman (2002) explains that choosing to use and build signature strengths will lead to a good, pleasurable and meaningful life. In the same way, Arslan & Wong (2023) maintain that taking a positive attitude towards counselling builds up resilience and self-esteem, and enhances happiness. Hence, Della-Porta et al. (2009) focus on PPIs and their ability to cement 'what is right' within a person and to increase positive emotion.

What various authors refer to as PPIs encompass methods, intentional activities or treatments aimed at developing positive emotions, positive cognitions and positive behaviours with the aim of enhancing people's wellbeing. These activities include those that are self-administered, group-based work, individual development and coaching (Parks, Della Porta, Pierce, Zilca, Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2012; Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005). While happiness at work is a matter of staff applying their "signature strengths" and adopting a shift in perception to view work as "contributing to the greater good" (Seligman, 2002, p. 173), studies show that leaders have the necessary influence to spark positive emotions in employees.

Biswas-Diener et al. (2011) report that the psychological strengths movement has progressed to success in applying strengths in educational, therapeutic, coaching and organisational settings. The development and enhancement of character strengths and resilience have the potential to forestall and deal with emotional challenges and to build psychological wellbeing, using such interventions as counselling, workshops, career guidance and training courses (Hutchinson, Stuart & Pretorius, 2010). The area of strengths development is one area in which positive psychology has been popularised and widely promoted, according to Buckingham and Clifton (2001). Kaiser and Overfield (2011) report that this is now accepted as a well-founded strategy for making workers happier and more engaged and for building managers to become more effective leaders.

#### **3.4.1 The Development of Strengths for an Intervention**

Biswas-Diener et al. (2011) regard the development of strengths as requiring not only the identification and utilisation of strengths, but also more holistically the introduction

of interventions that focus on specific strengths. Such intervention can be shown from the evidence to have strongly positive effects, as the time involved continues. Cohn and Fredrickson (2010) have established that the resources that become developed through implementing the interventions endure long after the end of the intervention.

Peterson, Stephens, Park, Lee and Seligman (2009) are among the American authors who have shown from workplace studies that those who capitalise on their strengths experience greater job satisfaction, as does Harter (2018) regarding job engagement. Stefanyszyn (2007), in the UK, showed that employees who utilise their strengths regularly have a decreased rate of turnover. Biswas-Diener et al. (2011) report a study by the Corporate Leadership Council that established that managers' work performance improved markedly when they were given feedback on the areas of strength. In contrast, those who were given feedback on their weaknesses fared less positively on subsequent measurement.

In South Africa, the concept of measuring the individual strengths of employees within organisations is not yet common practice (Botha & Mostert, 2014). This is not the same as conducting audits of competence and organisational skills, with the aim of determining which skills are in place that need to be developed. This idea is that of a skills gap that then leads into training and developmental initiatives. This conventional approach to address gaps in competency is to be questioned, as some employees turn out to be more successful than are others in their acquisition of the necessary skills. Spector and Reul (2017) report that understanding people's potential for learning and their motivation for learning has been shown to predict effectively the likely success of training interventions. The arguments presented by Catalino and Fredrickson (2011) and Fredrickson (2001) is that taking the strategy of identifying employees' individual strengths as the basis for design and implementation of interventions should enhance their ability to solve problems creatively, to experience positive emotions and to become more resilient employees.

Despite that, Kaiser and Overfield (2011) point out that organisations can encourage the overuse of strengths, leading to them becoming weaknesses. As evidence, they report cases in which the specific strengths identified in the people who were promoted were given exaggerated importance and this distorted the effectiveness of the system. The evidence is rather that a positive trait can be productively developed in way that

enables an employee to perform better, but only up to a point. After that, if it is not moderated, they can get in the way of effective performance.

Interventions are described by Seligman (2004) as being meaningful in those cases where they can identify and draw on the signal strengths of the individual, enabling them to make connections with things greater than themselves. This perspective on strengths development brings in the idea that the context will mediate how and to what extent a strength is applied. Biswas-Diener et al. (2011) argue that people need also to use their wisdom and discretion to regulate how they use these strengths, which will have an impact on subsequent behaviour.

There is very limited South African literature regarding on how to identify and apply psychological strengths. The emphasis remains primarily with therapeutic studies. Character strengths, in the form of individual resources, were measured in a sample of white dormitory students by Jackson, Van de Vijver and Fouche (2014). The study showed that women scored more highly than men with regard to hope, gratitude and life satisfaction, but there was no evidence of significance in gender differences regarding generalised self-efficacy and self-esteem. In another study, within a government organisation faced with the threat of job insecurity, it was found by Vander Elst, Bosman, De Cuyper, Stouten, and De Witte (2013) that positive affect buffered the psychological distress linked to insecurity. More recently, a very different study focused on a sample of male ex-offenders who had successfully reintegrated into society, where Pado and Taku (2020) discuss evidence of the strengths of hope, appreciation of life, gratitude and spirituality, as well as an apparent sense of post-traumatic growth.

Whilst there is much benefit in PPIs, as viewed above, there is an argument against content-driven interventions, in that the beneficial outcomes do not always indicate how these interventions should proceed to increase such experiences for the individual. As an example, although we understand self-esteem to be a positive emotion, teaching an individual to be special and important in the hope that this may improve their self-esteem, in a study by Marshall (2014) it is said that this may lead them to focus excessively on generating the positive effect and have an opposite effect to the one intended (Nabirye, 2023; Grant & Schwartz, 2011).

### **3.4.2 Criticisms of Positive Psychological Interventions**

According to Ciarrochi et al. (2016), the following are criticisms heralded against PPIs, which are explained as follows:

The first criticism is that content-focused interventions are decontextualized and coercive. The argument here is based on a decontextualised approach, which may ignore historical or environmental factors for an individual's behaviour, which could in essence assist them in a difficult situation. For example, an exercise to develop character strengths may not be in the best interest of an individual with memories of a traumatic history of the particular behaviour. Also, Cabanas and Sánchez-González (2020) report that having a negative attitude towards a situation that is actually unfair may in actual fact assist the individual to bring about change in the situation.

Secondly, interventions that focus on content are not effective in dealing with negative feelings and experimental avoidance. The argument levelled here is that the avoidance of negative emotions is often not in our interests, as such avoidance can be shown to be harmful to health and wellbeing (Allen, 2021; Chawla & Ostafin, 2007). In contrast, context-focused interventions recognise having to deal with adverse experience is a major aspect of a meaningful life (Ciarrochi et al., 2016).

The third criticism centres on the premise that interventions that are strongly focused on content may bring unwanted and damaging attachments. These attachments may occur as a result of purely pursuing positive emotions such as content-focused interventions (Ciarrochi et al., 2016). The basis for this criticism is that individuals would feel more positive if encouraged to focus on activities they see as having personal value, such as context-focused interventions.

Fredrickson and Losada (2005) assert that, as a result of people tending to give greater attention to what is lacking in themselves rather than what works well in themselves, they struggle to turn their negative thoughts towards a more positive focus on strengths. They label this quantitative concept as the 'critical positivity ratio' (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005). This construct has been generally accepted amongst positive psychologists and has been referred to in building strength-based interventions and approaches (Bates-Krakoff et al., 2022). Hence it is important to continue studies concerning psychological strengths and how they can be used to

create and develop strengths-based interventions, which will be discussed further in the following chapters.

As a consequence of the criticisms, the objective will encompass some content but the focus will be on context driven interventions. The outcomes of this study will enter the debate at this juncture to further contribute to this body of knowledge.

### **3.5 CONCLUSION**

The aim of this chapter was to provide an introduction to the constructs of psychological strengths in positive psychology and the development of this field as an approach that is contemporary and that complements mainstream psychology, with a focus on its doctrines, the theory, practice and research. Positive psychological interventions in relation to promoting and maintaining wellbeing, with a specific focus on the development of psychological strengths for an intervention, as well as criticisms of positive psychological interventions, were also discussed. This has provided a basis for exploring through the research process the data related to managers' experiences of psychological strengths in the automotive sector, which will serve as the basis for the guidelines for the development of possible positive psychological intervention/s to increase wellbeing, depending on the outcomes of the research.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODS**

In this chapter, the research methodology for the study is presented. First, the research strategy and research method are laid out, in their role as the procedure that was followed in answering the research questions. The chapter then sets out a full explanation of the whole research process. This starts with the aim and objectives of the study, then proceeds to the research design, sampling methods and data collection and capturing methods. The process followed for data analysis is then described. The chapter finally addresses the issues relating to research quality, which includes methods of reporting of data, storing of data and considerations regarding ethics.

The approach taken is to describe the methodology in sufficient details so as to inform the reader fully as to the ways in which findings were reached and to enable other researchers to draw on this as a basis for comparative studies.

### **4.1 RESEARCH PURPOSE**

The overall aim of the study was to explore the experiences of manager's wellbeing based on the constructs of the PERMA model, with particular focus on the psychological strengths of transcendence, with the intention of developing coherent conclusions and recommendations. The intention was to propose a set of guidelines that could be used to develop a wellbeing intervention by investigating and building on these psychological strengths that promote wellbeing and that facilitate the capacity of an individual to "flourish." This investigation was carried out to address the following research questions, and with the following research objectives in mind.

### **4.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

#### **4.2.1 Research Objectives**

- To explore the experiences of the wellbeing of managers at the workplace, according to the core elements of the PERMA model of wellbeing.
- To examine the role of the psychological strengths of transcendence in negating the challenging experiences of managers and how these contribute to the wellbeing of managers as set out by the PERMA model.

- To identify existing strengths-based positive psychological interventions for managers that promote managers' wellbeing at the company in order to further develop them.

#### **4.2.2 Research Questions**

- What are the manager's experiences of wellbeing according to the core elements of the PERMA model of wellbeing?
- How do the PS of transcendence contribute to manager's wellbeing as per the PERMA model?
- What are the challenges experienced by managers in the workplace and the role of the psychological strengths (PS) of transcendence in negating these challenges?
- What are the existing positive psychological interventions (PPIs) based on psychological strengths of transcendence for managers at the workplace?
- How do the existing PPIs help to promote managers wellbeing at the company and how can these be further developed?

The third objective as stated above requires the researcher to investigate the above-mentioned research questions d) and e), to satisfy said objective. The questions pertaining to the objective, require the researcher to investigate whether there are existing PPI's that are currently being utilised by the managers at the company based on the psychological strengths of transcendence; and that if they do in actual fact exist, how then could these PPIs be further developed to further enhance wellbeing.

### **4.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is an approach of inquiry used to explore and understand the relevant experiences of participants in this study. IPA proves appropriate in that it sets out to investigate the processes and self-reflections that make up the experiences of the individual that enable them to make meaningful sense of such occurrences (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Smith & Osborn, 2007). For this specific purpose, IPA is considered suitable as the focus is the exploration into the lived experiences of the constructs of wellbeing and the psychological strengths of managers in the automotive sector. It yields data that complements and is well-aligned

to data derived through qualitative methods and is thus highly suitable for the methodology used in this study.

Tuffour (2017, p. 2) describes phenomenology as inspired by Husserl who indicated that “access to the world is through consciousness as experienced from the first-person perspective”, being, in the case of this study, the individuals’ experiences of wellbeing, their challenges as managers and their use of psychological strengths of transcendence. Furthermore, phenomenology as an approach, according to Nigar (2020) and Alase (2017), that is employed within the social sciences with the intention of providing fully the experiences of individuals, which goes beyond simply observing but provides access to perceptions, feelings, memories and imagination. This approach is compatible with the objectives of this study. Its philosophical roots lie in theories of mind and of intentionality or mental representation. It provides a way for empirical studies to reveal significant elements of cognition through the incorporation of thorough descriptions of narratives via theoretical arguments of significant events (Tuffour, 2017).

As humans are naturally situated within the world, their consciousness has developed with an understanding of what is around them. This includes both the mind and body, both of which are in a dynamic state of interaction with the surroundings. Human beings have an intrinsic relationship with their world and consciousness allows for awareness of what is present, without excluding either mind or body but rather accepting these interactions as dynamic. The approach sets out relational principles and explores meanings that go beyond the immediate impressions of what is being observed and permits deep and meaningful discussions projecting personal reflection that allows for comprehensive and profound analysis that elaborates personal experiences (Nizza et al., 2021; Polkinghorne, 1989; Tuffour, 2017).

The methodology employed in this study was a qualitative method of inquiry. It was appropriate to use interviews as a method of data collection as it would enable getting into the full details and texture of the information from the specific sample drawn from a population of managers in their role within the automotive sector, as well as insight into the contextual aspects.

According to Mulisa (2022), qualitative studies work with 'soft data'. This takes the form of words, sentences, symbols and photos. In contrast, quantitative studies work with numbers, also termed 'hard data'. The qualitative approach allows an interpretive strategy to make sense of the soft data and of the context and permits a non-linear, rather than a rigidly pre-determined sequence. Specifically, this study used IPA - Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis – which, is according to Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011), typical of much research in the field of applied psychology.

Smith and Osborn (2007) assert that IPA requires carrying out a full and comprehensive analysis of the actual experiences of people and of the meanings they give those experiences. This is aligned to an approach of positive psychology. The use of IPA involves a dynamic exploration in which the researcher digs into the perspectives of participants, developing a meaning of how they understand and interpret their experiences. This enables the researcher to interpret in two stages, a 'double hermeneutic' (Bleicher, 2017). It goes beyond the immediate grasp of the information provided and involves deeper communication and interpretation. In the interview process, the researcher needs to be empathetic but also critical, to collect a full and accurate understanding of the life story of the participant. In IPA, the meanings given by participants are relevant to the context, whether personal or social; they involve understanding specific information as related to thoughts and feelings, an approach known as 'symbolic interactionism' (Smith & Osborn, 2007).

These authors also report (Smith & Osborn, 2007) how IPA is aligned with the broader field of psychology in the focus on how human beings understand their experiences and make sense of them. There are specific differences from the mainstream on the methods employed in studying their thinking, using an approach with three aspects (Eatough & Smith, 2017). First, the approach in IPA is idiographic, which means that an individual case is fully examined until there is closure, at which point the researcher moves to the following case (Eatough & Smith, 2017). Only after all the cases have each been explored in depth does the researcher start to search for converging or diverging themes. Secondly, it is inductive. This entails encouraging themes that were not expected to emerge in the process of analysis (Eatough & Smith, 2017). Thirdly, it is interrogative, meaning that the outcomes from this analysis are studied as they relate to scholarship in psychology (Smith, 2004). It can be readily understood that the

analysis process within IPA is appropriate in using small samples and applies across various sub-disciplines of psychology.

IPA is held by Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011) to have particular strengths in its idiographic approach, balancing the focus on particular phenomena with an understanding of universal phenomena. It is though not hugely complex to follow. The approach is to use a sample with a limited number of participants, restricting the number of questions in the interview schedule and limiting the number of major and subordinate themes when analysing. When done well, IPA generates a richness and depth of analysis, leading into significant and well-based themes. We can compare this approach to other methods used in qualitative research (e.g., thematic analysis, grounded theory) that are similarly full in terms of description but not comparable in depth (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011).

The argument here is that a qualitative approach suits such a study as it builds on existing scholarship related to the constructs; it also achieves rigour in terms of theory, concepts and methods and presents arguments with clarity and logic (Silverman, 2011). Such qualitative work can develop fresh hypotheses, whilst exploring the topics that can contribute to enhancing the existing theory.

#### 4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

**Table 4.1 Overview of Research Design and Methodology**

Overview of Research Design and Methodology	
Research Approach:	Qualitative
Research Paradigm:	IPA (Interpretivist Phenomenological Approach)
Research Sample:	Purposive Sampling
Data Collection Methods:	Individual Interviews
No. of Participants / Interviews:	Twelve (12)
Data Analysis:	Thematic and Interpretative

#### **4.4.1 Study Site**

The company where the research was conducted is publicly owned, listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. The location of its headquarters is in Johannesburg; it is the holding company for a range of subsidiaries across the world. These are all involved in manufacturing, distributing and retailing of products related to energy storage and automotive components. The group exports to roughly 46 countries worldwide. The research sites were the seven sites of the seven subsidiaries in the various provinces of South Africa, namely: Gauteng (Houghton, Benoni and Pretoria); Kwa-Zulu Natal (New Germany, Prospecton and Westmead); and Eastern Cape (East London). It is important to note that each specific site/subsidiary has its own specific culture, work organisation, leadership styles, etc. This is fully described in the presentation of data by the researcher.

The research company was formed in 1948, becoming a supplier of automotive components to a single OEM in South Africa in 1964. As it has grown, their strategy has evolved to meet the challenges of competing in the global automotive industry. Today, it is an international company with multiple OEM customers around the world, a broad range of aftermarket and non-automotive products, operations in five countries and ambitions to grow into five continents within the next five years. The group manages an international portfolio of 15 companies based in Turkey, South Africa, Romania, Kenya and the United Kingdom (UK). It comprises two business verticals, namely Automotive Components and Energy Storage – manufacture, distribute and retail energy storage products and automotive components which serve the global automotive industry. The success of the company is built on a culture of excellence in manufacturing, which is essential to meet the exacting quality and reliability that customers expect from our products. Manufacturing excellence is also critical to the company achieving the efficiencies necessary to generate sustainable economic returns. This is complemented by the marketing excellence they deliver.

From its headquarters in Johannesburg the group manages an international portfolio of companies that manufacture, distribute and retail products for energy storage and automotive components. Aftermarket Retail Customers & Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) are based in South Africa; Turkey; Romania; Russia; United Kingdom; Middle East; North Africa; Germany and East Africa.

Products and services include but are not limited to energy solutions comprising: automotive parts; solar, backup, standby and charging systems; battery distribution networks; lithium-ion batteries; mining lamps and cells; and automotive components comprising: air-conditioning and climate control systems; reserve tanks, charge air coolers, compressors; engine control units; radiators; air cleaners; electronic control units; starter motors; hydraulics, brake pads, brake discs and brake shoes; headlights, tail lights and reflectors; plastic injection moulding; plastic bins/storage; chrome plating on plastics; automotive cable, automotive wire and wiring harnesses; front-end modules, shock absorbers and struts.

#### **4.4.2 Population**

This term refers to the whole category that you wish to draw some findings about; it can apply not only to humans but any focus of study. In this research, there are essentially one population group, which is those in the employ of the holding company found in the manager level amongst the various subsidiaries of the holding company, which will be described as follows.

The population of managers in the holding company internationally is 11 392 managers and the total population of the subsidiaries based in South Africa is 8 643 managers. The holding company includes oversight over an international grouping of subsidiaries involved in the manufacturing, distributing and selling of products in the area of energy storage and automotive components. They export to about 46 countries. They include production, assembly, distribution and sales of such products as the Middle East, parts of Europe, North Africa, East Africa and South Africa (SA). The research sites for this study were across SA provinces of Kwa-Zulu Natal (Durban and Stanger); Gauteng (Benoni, Sandton, Pretoria); Western Cape (Cape Town) and Eastern Cape (East London and Port Elizabeth), depending on their proximity to the researcher.

The population of managers consists of the total composite of people in the manager band/level. It is categorised into various levels, such as managing directors, executives, heads of the departments and other high-level managers within each of the subsidiaries. The departments encompass these: Human Resources; Manufacturing; Procurement; Finance; Quality; Engineering Marketing and Sales. Managers are categorised into executives, who form part of the executive committee

at the level of the holding company; in some subsidiaries these committees include general managers; senior managers, middle managers and assistant managers. Managers from various levels were approached on the basis of those who serve in a managerial capacity in their subsidiaries, with two or more years' experience.

The roles and responsibilities of a manager at the various subsidiaries are, in general, to achieve specific departmental objectives that require the management of staff, planning activities and evaluation. They ensure the quality of operation through their roles in the recruitment, selection, orientation and training of employees. Other activities include organising, directing and controlling.

Referrals were provided by the managing director and human resources manager, as well as the group HR director of the holding company. Rather than relying on a random or probabilistic approach to finding a sample, the approach was purposive (Brewerton & Millward, 2006), as explained below. The researcher extended invitations to those managers who were judged by the researcher to have an inclination to possess certain qualities/strengths whilst having had a working relationship with the company and its various subsidiaries. The researcher had also previously administered EQ and other assessments with many of these managers, hence, it was not difficult to choose participants to participate in the process of selection of participants who would ultimately take part in the actual research process. The decision was made to sample those managers who met the criteria of the VIA Strengths Survey.

The guidelines followed for selection of the sample needed to be compatible with the IPA methodology and will now be described.

#### **4.4.3 Sampling**

As typically reported (e.g., Babbie, 2020), by the term 'sample' in the social sciences we mean the actual group of respondents from which data is to be drawn, a number that will be less than the number within the total population.

Lee and Landers (2022) describe the approach used in this study as purposive sampling, a method based on prior information about the population in the study, how this population is made up and the aims of the study. Specifically, purposive judgemental sampling was selected, which is a type of non-probability sampling where

participants are selected for a particular purpose. This uses the judgement of the researcher as to which participants will be most suitable or most representative (Babbie, 2020). The sampling method is centred around the knowledge of the population which is studied, its constructs and the purpose of the study (Brewerton & Millward, 2006). The approach here differs from the use of random sampling that is undertaken with the aim of generalization. Purposive sampling rather focuses on a smaller number of cases that demonstrate homogeneity. It ensures that the sample is relevant to the guiding questions for the research before findings are reached. According to Smith and Osborn (2007), studies with other groups would also be needed before findings can translate into empirically-informed generalisations.

The participants were chosen from the executive and manager levels, from each of the sub-divisions in the automotive manufacturing company. The managers were sent the information via email and given a set of criteria to be fulfilled. Questions were extracted from the spirituality and transcendence section of the VIA Strengths survey in order to ascertain that the participants do in fact fulfil the criteria by possessing a certain score/level on each of the strengths of this virtue before they were chosen. The inclusion and exclusion criteria are mentioned below.

#### **4.4.3.1 Sample Size**

The sample comprises 12 participants, which were selected by the researcher. The initial number was 14, however, saturation occurred and the researcher stopped at 12. Saturation, as explained by Low (2019, p. 131), is described by qualitative researchers as an instance where “no new information emerges from the data analysis” or where the researcher is confident that no additional data is being found. She goes on to argue that she finds this “problematic” and a “logical fallacy”, as she believes that there are always new “theoretic insights” as long as data continue to be collected (Low, 2019, p. 131).

The recommendation made by Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011) for doctoral level research is for a sample of perhaps eight participants upwards. A group of 14 participants in the management pool were selected based on the above criteria. Saturation occurred at 12 participants and the researcher then stopped the interview process. In such qualitative approaches, the belief is often that ‘less is more’. The

depth of analysis and its quality is preferred to the quantity of data. A misunderstanding of qualitative research means that students may feel pressured to reach greater participant numbers, given the prevailing dominance of quantitative studies, which typically require large sample sizes (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011). These authors argue that the size of samples must relate to the research questions, the relevant methodology and the context of the study.

Those identified as potential participants were sent an informative email and were asked to participate through email. The researcher then included in the study those who gave an affirmative response. Participation was voluntary and those who accepted confirmed their participation. This involved their written consent, as required by the ethical approval for the study (Walker, 2017).

#### ***4.4.3.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria***

The specific criteria for inclusion in the study were, first, being a manager and secondly, having had at least two years in the role of management or senior management. The procedures for sampling drew on the IPA methodology that was employed for this qualitative study. Only managers employed by the subsidiaries of the holding company were selected for participation. The researcher selected managers from the subsidiaries based on whether their proximity enabled convenience and accessibility for the researcher. This chosen group was given the VIA questionnaire to complete and only those who scored above an average of 7 on the psychological attributes of transcendence (such as gratitude, appreciation of beauty and excellence; hope, spirituality and humour), were chosen. All those who scored below an average of 7 on the above stated strengths were excluded. The researcher also ensured that the relevant and necessary information was provided and gathered from the participants; further, the researcher ensured that the participants had a full grasp of the aim and scope of the issues being studied (Burns & Grove, 2011; Higginbottom, 2004).

#### 4.4.4 Participant Demographics

The first step in gaining this information was to send to HR directors an explanation of the study and the managers identified were asked to provide relevant demographic information.

**Table 4.2 Participant Demographics**

DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS									
Participants	Area	Position	Qualification	Lang	Tenure	Age	Sex	Race	Status
One (P1)	Kwa-Zulu Natal	Group Executive Director	Masters in Industrial Psychology	English	3yrs	43	F	White	Married
Two (P2)	Gauteng	Human Resources Manager	BCom / Post Grad HR / MBL	English	15yrs	36	F	Indian	Married
Three (P3)	Eastern Cape	Plant Manufacturing Manager	MBA (Masters in Business Admin)	English	30yrs	49	M	Indian	Divorced
Four (P4)	Eastern Cape	Plant Manager	T3 Mechanical Engineering	English	46yrs	64	M	White	Married
Five (P5)	Gauteng	Senior Systems Manager	BCom Informatics	English/Zulu	4yrs	49	F	Black	Divorced
Six (P6)	Eastern Cape	Plant Engineering Manager	ND Electrical Engineering	English/Afrikaans	16yrs	48	M	Coloured	Married
Seven (P7)	Kwa-Zulu Natal	General Manager	Bachelor Operations Management	English	6yrs	38	M	Indian	Married
Eight (P8)	Kwa-Zulu Natal	Manager Production Development	NHD Mechanical Engineering	English	35yrs	58	M	White	Married
Nine (P9)	Kwa-Zulu Natal	Group Manufacturing Manager	NHD Mechanical Eng / MBA	English	20yrs	53	M	Indian	Married
Ten (P10)	Eastern Cape	Logistics & Supply Manager	Logistics & Supply Chain Mgt. Post Grad	English / Afrikaans.	21yrs	43	F	Coloured	Married
Eleven (P11)	Gauteng	Industrial Engineering Manager	Industrial Eng ND & MDP	English /Tswana	20yrs	43	M	Black	Married
Twelve (P12)	Gauteng	Plant Manufacturing Manager	MBA, BTech (Eng/BA); ND Analytical Chem	English	2yrs	45	M	Indian	Married

Table 4.2 presents a description of participants in summary form.

#### 4.4.5 Research Instruments and Screening Tools

VIA Strengths Survey Questionnaire

A VIA Strengths Survey Inventory/Questionnaire (Park et al., 2006, pp. 13-16) was used to inform the participant selection process.

The VIA Strengths Survey Questionnaire (Park et al., 2006), is a self-report, screening instrument used to inform the participant selection process. It is an English-language questionnaire that measures 24 widely-valued character strengths, which was used to inform the participant selection process. The researcher selected a total of 30 managers from the various subsidiaries of the company, at her discretion, and requested them to complete all sections of the VIA questionnaire, comprising 24-character strengths of six virtues namely: wisdom and knowledge; courage; humanity and love; justice; temperance and spirituality and transcendence. From those who met the inclusion criteria of the composites of spirituality and transcendence (appreciation of beauty and excellence; gratitude, hope, humour, spirituality), the researcher then selected 14 managers to participate in the interviews. Semi-structured interview schedules were created, informed by the literature on the PERMA Model of Wellbeing (Seligman, 2011), which covered the composites of positive emotion; engagement; meaning, positive relationships and accomplishments/achievements. Questions were extracted from the information provided by the author on the composites of the PERMA model (Seligman, 2011) as well as by the Spirituality and Transcendence aspect of the VIA Strengths Survey Questionnaire (Park et al., 2006, p. 119).

According to Park et al. (2006), Seligman's Values in Action Classification System presents six key values. These are the core, moral and philosophical characteristics of wisdom, courage, humanity and love, justice, temperance and transcendence (Park et al., 2006). They can be further analysed to reveal signature strengths. The personal attributes that make up these signature strengths number 24; they are linked to specific virtues. To be judged as having the requisite character, in terms of these criteria, a person should demonstrate two or more strengths in a virtue group. This is set out in the following table.

The Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS) is a self-report questionnaire with 240 items. It aims to measure the 24 strengths that are linked to the six virtues (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). It is important to note that the instrument has been tested for reliability and validity. When assessed over a period of four months, it was found that the correlations for tests and retests for all scales were high, at  $>.70$ . These

correlations demonstrate high levels of internal consistency (Park, Peterson, 2006; Park, Peterson & Seligman, 2004, 2006; Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

**Table 4.3 VIA Table of Character Strengths and Virtues (Park et al., 2006).**

6 VIRTUES	24 CHARACTER STRENGTHS
Wisdom & Knowledge	Creativity; Curiosity; Judgement & Open-Mindedness; Love of Learning; Perspective
Courage	Bravery, Perseverance; Honesty; Zest
Humanity & Love	Capacity to love / be loved; Kindness, Social Intelligence
Justice	Teamwork; Fairness; Leadership
Temperance	Forgiveness & Mercy; Modesty & Humility; Prudence; Self-Regulation
Transcendence	Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence; Gratitude; Hope; Humour; Spirituality

Of significance, it was found that the major strengths of character that follow a developmental trajectory (those that are less common amongst the young but increase with time and growing maturation cognitively) are the following: appreciation of beauty and excellence; honesty; open-mindedness and leadership. There is little evidence of a strong correlation between parents and children with regard to these strengths, except in the case of spirituality, where the convergence is thought to be substantial (Park & Peterson, 2006). Hence information gathered from the participants from the biographical data around age and family, etc., is important. In summary, the VIA Strengths Survey (otherwise known as VIA-Survey-240) demonstrates acceptably high internal consistency and test-retest reliability. In addition, there are moderately increasing levels of psychometric validity which means that there is good correlation with related constructs.

With this in mind, it should be noted that these strengths are also tied to the PERMA model of wellbeing as they relate to the factors of Positive Emotion; Engagement; Meaning, Relationships and Accomplishments/Achievements. This feature was used to guide the interview schedule. The PERMA model was discussed in detail in Chapter 2. Correlations were also found between the VIA-IS and the Big Five personality traits. According to Park, Peterson & Seligman (2006), amongst the positive correlations are the following:

- a) Openness to experience correlates with awe, curiosity and love of learning
- b) Agreeableness correlates with teamwork
- c) Conscientiousness correlates with industry and self-regulation

Investigation of the factors of the scales has led to an emphasis on five factors or categories of strengths: “Cognitive strengths (curiosity, love of learning, and creativity), emotional strengths (playfulness, zest, hope), conative strengths (judgement, perseverance, prudence and self-control), interpersonal strengths (leadership and teamwork) and transcendence strengths (awe, gratitude and spirituality)” (Park et al., 2006, p. 119). Given that evidence suggests that personality fluctuates little over the lifespan, it is very likely that the same strengths will be demonstrated over a long period of time, as well.

From those who met the inclusion criteria, the researcher selected a proposed number of 14 participants to participate in the interviews and then halted the interview process at 12, when it was judged that saturation had been reached.

### **Semi-Structured Interviews**

The advantage of this method in generating data is that it allows flexibility and the opportunity for both researcher and participant to engage in dialogue. As the discussion proceeds, the researcher may adjust a question to enable probing to greater depth. Nonetheless, it is essential to plan interview schedules carefully. One starts the development of questions through conceptualising the relevant issues and ensuring that there is a logical progression from each question to the following one. However, it is not essential to follow the sequence strictly. In this study, the researcher

developed a range of probes and prompts in response to the answers that could be expected (Smith & Osborn, 2007). This approach enables the participant to become an 'experiential expert' who is able to present their experiences under conditions of empathy, allowing respondents to raise unexpected issues (Noon, 2018, p. 75).

A valid way of using the semi-structured interview is to represent as closely as possible the views of the respondent, while simultaneously not leading them to the researcher's only perspective. In this study, generally-worded questions were followed by further prompting where appropriate, typically with a much more focused and specific question that picks up on the response to the general question. A suitable duration is roughly one hour, and interviews should be held in private with the respondent, if possible, and without any disturbance. In this study the duration was approximately one and a half hours on average. As advised in the literature, each interview was recorded using a voice recorder and then transcribed in a way that accurately reflected the discussion, including pauses, repetitions and so on (Smith & Osborn, 2007).

This study ensured that the questions used in the interviewing process were broad, open-ended and non-directive, with the intention being to avoid bias from the researcher and to achieve full and accurate understanding of the respondent's account. The interview schedule was relatively brief and began with undemanding questions that enabled the respondent to set out the ways the narrative proceeded (Nizza et al., 2021). In such research, the inclusion of further respondents would end when there is a sense of saturation, as additional interviews yield the same pattern of responses, which was the case in this study.

Also, for this study, the requirements set by the University of KwaZulu-Natal for the handling of participants were followed. Semi-structured interview schedules were used in this study, informed by the literature, Seligman's PERMA Model of Wellbeing (2011) as well as the transcendence aspect of the VIA Strengths Survey Questionnaire (Park et al., 2006, p.119).

#### **4.4.6 Process of Data Collection**

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, where open ended questions were prepared in advance. In this study, data was collected only with managers who have passed the criteria of selection via the VIA strengths survey and had at least

been managers (and had employees directly reporting to them) for a period of two years or more.

The semi-structured interviews (found in the appendices section) that were carried out with respondents were organised to develop an understanding of their psychological strengths; wellbeing and, especially, the challenges they experience in their respective roles as managers as well as how they cope with and face these opportunities and challenges. The interview questions were compiled using themes from the literature review; the interviews also included a biographical questionnaire compiled by the researcher that sought demographic information as well as other pertinent information from the interviewees. The interviews were held face-to-face and were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Planned and unplanned probes were included to supplement the main questions in the interviews.

In this form of qualitative enquiry, the open-end questions of the schedule are intended to enable engagement with a broad topic. The schedule is designed to enable the researcher to probe issues (Klenke, 2016), encouraging fuller and in-depth responses by respondents. These then lead into the identification of themes.

The researcher conducted and transcribed interviews herself, so as to allow for the opportunity to analyse, make notes and to start the thinking process of interpretation of the data whilst transcribing. The sequence of administration of the interviews was not, however, held in any sequential form and was conducted when the participants were available. This should not cause any impairment to the results. Keeping the approach flexible meant that participants did not feel pressured in terms of time, as their needs could be readily accommodated. The participants were fairly relaxed and shared their experiences openly with the researcher, as the researcher was able to create a comfortable atmosphere and put the respondents' minds at ease, as well as assured them from the outset that whatever is to be discussed would be kept in the strictest of confidence.

#### **4.4.7 Data Analysis**

The data was analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). The researcher reviewed the transcripts of each interview thoroughly to develop themes that were accurately descriptive of the group of managers in the sample. This

commonly used, flexible, detailed, case by case approach was typically taken in analysing the data from the transcripts to develop a full understanding of the actual life experiences of participants (Smith, 2004).

Using interviews for data collection is helpful to the process of analysis as the researcher is thinking through the data being provided during the interview. This requires a sharp and clear focus on what the researcher asks, on the response by the participant and on the context within which data is being collected (Klenke, 2016).

The task of the researcher is to gain a full understanding of the thoughts, perceptions and emotions of the participant, as well as to note the meanings thus created, as well as their complexity. This means going through the transcribed interviews, seeking to interpret the data in a step-by-step process, and noting what the specific evidence is that points to a possible theme (Noon, 2018). Despite some similarities, there is a difference between this approach and that of grounded theory or of phenomenology generally. It is a personal process that cannot be prescribed; instead it follows guidelines designed to ensure trustworthiness.

As reported in 4.3, Eatough and Smith (2004) argue that the IPA's idiographic approach requires the full study of individual cases before proceeding to the next case. Only after all cases have been studied can judgements be made about possible themes. This is an inductive method of analysis, allowing for unexpected themes to emerge that can then be scrutinised/interrogated against existing literature.

IPA is especially helpful in the examination of ambiguous, complex and emotionally fraught topics (Smith & Osborn, 2015). Nizza, Farr & Smith (2021) outline that data analysis, which was the IPA process followed, comprises the following stages (which includes and also surpasses that of thematic analysis) and are outlined as follows: 1. Reading and re-reading; 2) Initial noting; 3) Developing emergent themes; 4) Searching for connecting across emergent themes; 5) Moving to the next case; 6) Looking for patterns across cases; 7) Writing up the research (Noon, 2018, p. 77-80). These are described in detail, below.

#### ***4.4.7.1 Reading and Re-reading***

This idea aims to allow the researcher familiarise herself with the transcripts; it involves repeating the process of listening to interviews, or re-reading the text; the researcher

was able to pick up information which may have been previously overlooked in an earlier read. Therefore, the case transcripts should be as advised and were read and re-read repeatedly to identify and highlight significant aspects. Each interview transcript was read individually in order to start the thinking process to identify areas of interest. There is no requirement to divide the transcribed text into different sections to be analysed separately, however, the researcher found this process more user friendly, and greater attention was given to those segments where the text had fuller and more detailed information. This process, of reading and re-reading, often generates, and assisted to generate in this case, further insights.

#### ***4.4.7.2 Initial Noting***

Additional insights as well as aspects that the researcher found particularly interesting were written down whilst the researcher was in the process of reading and re-reading. Comments were made about similarities and linkages as they came into focus. At this stage, the researcher made some initial interpretations of both what was being said and how it was being said, as the process dictated.

#### ***4.4.7.3 Developing Emerging Themes***

After reaching the end of the transcripts, the researcher reviewed the notes made thus far to identify possible headings of themes – some researchers use a left-hand column for observations and the right-hand column for possible themes, which the researcher followed in this case also. The wording of these were brief and direct, as advised, and aimed at capturing the central element of what was present in the transcripts. When the end of the document was reached, the commentary was analysed for emerging theme titles, which were documented in the right-hand column. This was done with concise phrases that captured the essence of what was found in the text. The wording, as advised, was sufficiently abstracted so that the concepts could be connected both within cases and across them, and could be clearly related to the responses of each respondent. At this point the researcher reviewed the notes and developed themes further.

There seemed to be some overlapping of themes at this stage. This happened as the researcher did not exclude any specific section. The purpose was not to find quantity of themes as the quality of the process is the most crucial (Smith & Osborn, 2007).

For each theme, there needs to be substantial evidence across the different cases (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011).

#### ***4.4.7.4 Searching for Connections amongst Emerging Themes***

The researcher, having read and re-read the themes, and having recorded them, then listed them separately, identifying connections between those themes where applicable. This is a more analytical and theoretical stage. It then became evident that there were clusters of themes, and also that some themes were more over-arching. The researcher then checked that the phrasing of the themes was still an accurate representation of the words spoken by respondents.

This process was iterative; there was a need to keep reviewing the wording of themes in relation to the data and the phrases that were extracted, which the researcher did. From this point, it was possible to develop a table that presented the themes that met the criterion of greatest significance to respondents. The researcher kept a record of where the wording of the theme emerged in the transcripts, with the relevant page number. At this point it was acceptable to exclude themes that do not meet the criteria of relevance and richness of evidence.

#### ***4.4.7.5 Moving to the Next Case***

Once one case was complete as per satisfaction of the researcher and as per the above steps then the next case was analysed in the same way.

#### ***4.4.7.6 Looking for Patterns Across Cases***

Following this lengthy process, the final list of the over-arching themes was set out in tabular form. It was necessary to decide on the priorities, which required that the researcher reviewed the richness and relevance of the data supporting that theme.

#### ***4.4.7.7 Writing up the Research***

Whilst writing up the research, the researcher must ensure validity. Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez (2011) assert that IPA research requires that the research gives full attention to four principles. These are: a) contextual sensitivity, b) commitment and rigour, c) transparency and coherence and d) impact and importance. Most research studies aim to develop generalisations from their findings, but qualitative research such as IPA is more focused on how transferable the findings are; in other words, the

extent to which they are true from one case to the other (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011).

#### **4.4.8 Recording Data and Storing Data**

Data may be described as information that is recorded digitally; it could also be worksheets in its original state, original notes that may be personal or copies of such; memoranda; observations or activities of the study of a phenomenon that necessitates the evaluation and reconstruction of the constructs of a study, which could even be for publication purposes (Point & Baruch, 2023).

In this study, the researcher drew on the transcripts from interviews, from field notes and from a reflective journal that she kept, to ensure that the study was rigorous. All sensitive material, such as the actual names of respondents, have been kept strictly confidential and stored securely. Only the researcher has access to this, the purpose of this access being only for the needs of the study.

The semi-structured interviews were recorded by means of a digital voice recorder application, while the researcher also made notes in the course of each interview. She also wrote a reflective journal, to avoid relying on memory to recall what data was relevant, such as, for example, how she felt or what her intuition indicated during the process of data collection. Such a journal enables a process of reflection on one's own thought, emotions and learning in the process of research, which serves also to guide significant decisions (McGrath, 2021). The recording and transcription of the interviews were crucial to enable data analysis in effective and accurate ways. These recorded sources were essential to enable observation of the process of interview, in addition to the content of what was said (Pelser, Bosch & Schurink, 2016). The audio recordings will be deleted after the completion of the study.

The researcher used a laptop, printed copies and an external hard drive to store the data. The electronic files of transcriptions and journal entries were under password protection and only the researcher was able to access these. The researcher retrieved the electronic data at those occasions when it was required, in the course of the study. Judgements were made as to which information was relevant to the study and which was not; on this basis the researcher decided how long which data needed to be retained for greater or lesser duration and the relevant issues of intellectual property.

The data of greater significance will be preserved for five years, as it will be needed to enable the presentation of findings and publication of research findings in the form of peer-reviewed articles. After the five years period, the data will be destroyed.

#### **4.5 REFLEXIVITY**

The issue of reflexivity is addressed through a section on personal reflections by the researcher in the concluding section of the final chapter. Relevant to this is the use of the assumptions, emotions and goals, which were recorded in the researcher's reflective journal and in the field notes. This journal enabled her to think in depth on her own processes of thinking, the significance of the experiences relevant to the research topic and her own beliefs and assumptions related to the research process. Hong and Cross Francis (2020) state that using a reflective journal strengthens the effectiveness of a qualitative inquiry. The researcher engaged with her own reactions, her own views, expectations and feelings, thus enabling the research process to be free of potential bias and subjectivity (Ortlipp, 2008). The field notes taken by the researcher strengthened the process of coding as they gave access to further data that might otherwise have been overlooked, and also enabled the triangulation of data by providing an additional source (Creswell, 2009). Reflexivity draws on an important consideration in relation to these personal experiences of the researcher.

There is deliberation on researcher reflexivity by many writers (Olmos-Vega, Stalmeijer, Varpio & Kahlke, 2023; Pillow, 2010). The impression here is that the researcher may fail to consider his/her own thoughts and feelings when conducting interviews and may provide only one account or version of an event, whereas the research must allow for other potential and valid understanding and interpretations (Pillow, 2010). In these situations, the interviewer becomes the co-producer of knowledge. In this study the researcher was able to consider her own understanding, thoughts, feelings and alternate version of events in order to interpret more holistically.

Relatedly, Willig (2023) suggests that, as researchers, we are in a position of influence, or rather a position to remodel the subjectivities of participants, and this is, in a way, a form of manipulation. Hence it is of serious importance that researchers are expected to possess a reflexive awareness (which the researcher upheld) of the

perplexing position regarding the claim of a subject's knowledge and so may be viewed as the so called 'author' of the knowledge (Willig, 2023). Therefore, it is important to note that the level of interpretation of the knowledge is merely an interpretation and may not represent an accurate reflection of the actual 'reality'.

Personal reflexivity is another important consideration, which in this study involved the researcher identifying and observing the ways in which her values, experiences, interests, beliefs, social and political commitments, as well as spiritual and religious values, moulded the research outcomes (Willig, 2023). Given that the researcher has worked for a manufacturing company in the automotive sector before, or her being an Indian, a Hindu and an aspiring spiritualist may influence her interpretations around issues of, for example, what she sees as organisationally, culturally, religiously and spiritually acceptable, as well as morally correct. The researcher thus made many concerted efforts to remain neutral when interpreting the data and the manner in which her involvement with the study acted and informed the research (Willig, 2023). In some ways, participants of common work experience, racial, religious and/or spiritual backgrounds may have felt or assumed that they could relate to the experiences of the researcher's shared values.

Another point to consider was the researcher's interaction with participants in the interviews. The participants who may have been familiar with the researcher may have tried to be impartial, taking care to avoid giving accurate responses out of fear of being judged by someone they know (the researcher), having worked with her or those with the knowledge that the Company uses her as a service provider. This was kept in mind and considered by the researcher, so as to not let it influence the process.

Lastly, in view of the researcher's own reading of the literature and past studies, it may be indicated that data may be interpreted in ways that allow of one specific version of reality (Burr, 1995). In the process of this research, the researcher read widely regarding wellbeing and psychological strengths; and also worked in the automotive sector previously. These factors could potentially influence the way in which the findings were interpreted by her. The challenge was for the researcher to remain 'neutral' at all times and continuously remind herself that this production of knowledge was only one version of reality and it cannot be claimed that it is inherently superior to other forms of knowledge.

In conclusion, it is necessary to record that the subjectivity of the researcher is not a novel issue; this is a typical and necessary factor in the research process (Burr, 1995). The implication is that researchers should value their own scholarship and thinking, relying on the rigour of the research process and understanding of theories while being aware also of the potential for bias.

## **4.6 DATA VERIFICATION AND TRUSTWORTHINESS**

### **4.6.1 Reliability**

The concept of reliability addresses whether research findings are stable or consistent (Silverman, 2011). Achieving these attributes in qualitative research requires transparency and full details in the description of the process; it also requires explicit information about the theoretical underpinnings of interpretations made. To address these requirements within this doctoral study, the rigorous collection of data, in-depth interviewing, tape recording and note taking assisted in reducing any potential weakness with regard to reliability. Creswell and Poth (2016) maintain that reliability may be improved by field notes, which were used by the researcher, including a good quality tape recording application and accurate transcription of the recording. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) argue that the reliability of qualitative data is dependent on the researcher's awareness, suspicions, insight and questions probed. The researcher has ensured that she took heed of and employed the aforementioned process.

It is not possible to replicate exactly the accounts of events in the research process, as a way of establishing reliability in qualitative studies. This means that there is a need to record observations as precisely as possible, through such means as the use of verbatim recordings. This approach was drawn on in the study. To strengthen reliability in the use of the semi-structured interviews, the researcher used descriptors that were cautious in making inferences, and took care to provide full evidence from the relevant data. Silverman (2011) points out the need for longer extracts that are linked clearly to the preceding question.

As Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011) observe, IPA enables the transferability of findings from one case to another, instead of from one case to the whole population. For this reason, the VIA Strengths questionnaire was used as an additional resource

for the data collection, as this served to enhance reliability and trustworthiness of the inferences made on the basis of the interviews.

#### **4.6.2 Validity**

Validity is achieved in qualitative studies through expanding the points of reference used in determining the extent to which the proposed findings are true and certain. The need is to demonstrate that the accounts gathered in the process of data collection are indeed fairly representative of the phenomena to which they refer.

One method used for ensuring the accurate representation is that of triangulation. This requires the comparison of data drawn from different sources, often in the form of a combination of data. It is used to test whether the results from the sources cohere and are consistent with each other (Silverman, 2011). To strengthen the effectiveness of this approach, Silverman (2011) proposes that one approaches it from a theoretical perspective that checks whether the methods and data conform to that perspective. As Silverman (2011) points out, it is important to maintain a focus on the context in which the data is being generated when aggregating the data that is drawn from different sources. Instead of attempting to get to one 'truth', the researcher should use triangulation as a strategy that "adds rigour, breadth, complexity, richness and depth" (Silverman, 2011, p. 371).

Silverman (2010) states that triangulation accentuates data that is complementary in nature; data that is conflicting that may arise from research may be used constructively in the development of theory. Klenke (2016) states that five types of triangulation may be distinguished, which includes investigator, data, methodological, theory or environmental. Respectively, these may refer to the use of a multitude of data sources such as: numerous investigators, or several professional perspectives that could interpret and describe the phenomenon under investigation, as well as utilising many research methods and finally, making use of various environmental locations (Ishio & Gaspar, 2020).

This study achieved triangulation through combining as sources the literature review, semi-structured interviews, the VIA survey and the reflective journal. Where there were discrepancies in the information given in the setting of the interview, these were subject to probing and clarification. The effect was to strengthen the validity of the data

from respondents, as it drew on different methods and a process of verification. Drawing on these varied sources of information, the combined data enabled the researcher to more readily identify where they intersected, giving a stronger perspective on the key themes (Silverman, 2010). It is argued that this use of various points of reference is central in establishing the validity and reliability of findings in qualitative research, ensuring that the findings are sufficiently significant so as to be convincing and to eliminate uncertainty. Thus, a key point is the need to find intersections in the data from the different sources (Ishio & Gaspar, 2020; Silverman, 2010).

Silverman (2011) also argues the need for analytic induction to strengthen the validity of qualitative studies. As used in the study, this was a process of analysis that reviewed in depth each case with a view to finding causal relationships, then developing provisionally a hypothesis and rethinking the nature of the phenomenon. In turn one reworks hypotheses until the researcher can come to an over-arching relationship, in the process eliminating the cases that are now seen as not meeting the criteria for the phenomenon as now understood (Silverman, 2011). This process uses two procedures, one a method of constant comparison and the other the careful selection of cases that diverge from the others (Silverman, 2011).

Validity was therefore achieved in this study by the use of the method of analytic induction. Kvale (1999) advocates that the validity of qualitative data encompasses and was utilised in this research as such:

*Validity of craftsmanship* – relates to the perceived credibility of the processes followed by the researcher in the research, the data's integrity and its credibility, based on a process of questioning and checking of the research findings.

*Communicative validity* – relates to the intent to establish whether participants concur with the research findings.

*Pragmatic validity* – relates to the impact that the research findings have on the community at large and the desire to implement the research findings; this entails issues of power and truth.

### **4.6.3 Trustworthiness**

According to Grant and Lincoln (2021), in qualitative research, quality research is considered how dependable and worthy of trust the research is. This means that it is an assessment of the worth and quality of the study; it is determined by how the findings of the study are able to echo the aims of said study as per the data provided by respondents (Alexander, 2020). Key points are the methods for validation and the ethical constraints. Drawing on Mackey and Gass (2015), the study utilised four constructs that were crucial for achieving quality and rigour throughout the whole research process and in the procedures for interpretation. They are central to the process of coding, thematic analysis and reaching conclusions. The four constructs are credibility; transferability; dependability; and confirmability.

#### **4.6.3.1 Credibility**

The concept of credibility is fundamentally about whether the research community can agree that the findings of qualitative research can be believed and can demonstrate veracity (Mackey & Gass, 2005). One element in achieving this is whether it can be shown that the respondents were at ease in interactions with the researcher and these interactions were in line with their normal behaviour. Since the researcher had an existing relationship that was sufficiently relaxed with the company and many of the managers involved in the study, this enhanced the credibility of the study.

#### **4.6.3.2 Transferability**

This concept contributes also to validity (Mackey & Gass, 2005). It concerns how relevant the study is to related areas of scholarship, its ability to demonstrate that it is practically relevant and the extent to which the phenomenon studied and the conclusions of the study can be applied or are of use in other contexts, in practical application or in future research projects. Where there are similar contexts, it should be possible to transfer some findings from the context of the study to other similar contexts. This was enhanced in this study by the use of multiple perspectives on fully described evidence, enabling readers to see the relevant factors that applied both in this study and in their own contexts.

#### **4.6.3.3 Dependability**

In qualitative research, dependability is a concept that corresponds to reliability (Grant & Lincoln, 2021). This concerns how consistent and reliable the findings are, based

on the reliability of the processes for collection of data, for analysis and for the process of reaching findings based on that data (Shufutinsky, 2020). As triangulation was used in this study, this process enhanced dependability through the ability of the researcher to find multiple supporting evidence and inferences that were drawn by the researcher.

#### **4.6.3.4 Confirmability**

According to Mackey and Gass (2015), confirmability concerns the extent to which other researchers could use similar procedures to verify and confirm the research findings. In this study, what was done to enhance confirmability was to provide in fullest detail the procedures for gathering and storing data and for analysing data and reporting it. This would enable a critical researcher to replicate the study if needed.

## **4.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Guidelines for ethics in research were adhered to during the research process. Full ethical clearance was obtained by the researcher from the research office of UKZN on 17 October 2022. The elements required included the care in handling participation, ensuring that participants were fully informed of the procedures for example, keeping names anonymous and data confidential, ensuring no harm to participants, for obtaining consent from informed participants and providing opportunities for participants to get feedback. These are key considerations that were adhered to by the researcher, and are described in the following ways.

### **4.7.1 Voluntary Participation**

Those invited to participate in the study were fully advised that their involvement was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from it at any time. Further, that if they did withdraw, there would be no penalty or loss of benefit that they would typically expect to receive. Each participant was asked to sign the requisite form to demonstrate that their participation was voluntary and not forced. The researcher also ensured that the participant understood that he/she was free not to respond to specific questions if he/she felt uncomfortable answering them. He/she could also choose to end the discussion at any time during the interview. In the case that the participant may have opted to withdraw information given after the interview, he/she was advised that he/she may contact the researcher directly to do so. The participants were made aware by the researcher that they would incur no charges or fees through their

involvement in the study. The researcher also informed respondents that neither incentives nor reimbursements would be provided to the respondent for participation in the study.

#### **4.7.2 Protection of Participants**

The study in no way exposed respondents to any physical harm or psychological harm. The researcher was aware that the risks of involvement in the study should not exceed the normal risks of everyday life. The literature advises that, should the topic or processes of the study risk creating some degree of psychological discomfort, the researcher should inform participants in advance and ensure that there are ways to debrief or counsel participants immediately thereafter. Given this first rule of “do no harm,” in this study, the researcher proceeded cautiously by contextualising the data and continuing to question the respondents in order to determine whether the processes used in the course of their work and the experiences relayed by these respondents were helpful or not (Ciarrochi et al., 2016).

#### **4.7.3 Informed Consent**

The researcher communicated fully to participants what the study was about and their options for participation or non-participation, and advised them that, if they agreed to take part, they were fully free to withdraw when they chose. All the information pertaining to informed consent was included in the informed consent document (found in the appendix section), which the researcher ensured each participant signed prior to commencing with the process of conducting the research.

#### **4.7.4 Right to Privacy**

The specific details of interview responses and notes on their quality were kept under conditions of strict confidentiality. It was at no point possible for other participants or non-participants to learn how one or other respondent had spoken or acted. The only case where this might be possible was where a participant had given permission for this in writing.

#### **4.7.5 Honesty with Professional Colleagues**

Care was taken to report findings completely and honestly. The researcher neither misrepresented what she had done nor set out to mislead others about the research

process of its findings. There was no fabrication of data to achieve the study results. The results of the research have not been made public and will not be made public without the explicit consent of respondents; the researcher is obligated to grant the confidentiality request. A letter of consent from the management of the company granting permission to carry out the research was obtained by the researcher. Informed consent was also acquired from participants, prior to commencement of the interviews, in response to a formal letter explaining the reasons for the research and signed by the respondents. A signed declaration on the policy on research ethics of UKZN was submitted.

#### **4.7.6 Anonymity and Confidentiality**

All information provided has observed and will observe confidentiality. Data from participants and all notes have been stored with the researcher, who alone has access to it. Such data can only be utilised for research purposes and, at the conclusion of the whole project, there will be destruction of all raw data. The researcher has not used the names or designation of participants in the reports on the study and its findings and participants are to remain anonymous to ensure that no one is able to release information or relate an individual to any data provided.

### **4.8 POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS**

Qualitative research is often accused of reduced reliability and poor generalisation (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2015). It is also time consuming to collect, interpret and analyse data and there are also cost implications for transcribing data. Sensitivity is a challenge when collecting information in a qualitative approach and participants may easily feel inhibited when they realise that the interviews are being recorded. Participants may also feel that their jobs or positions may be threatened should they divulge too much regarding personal or job-related stress factors and inability to cope at work. Researchers need to be aware of their own subjectivity as well as personal and/or professional reflexivity (as discussed earlier in this chapter) which may come into play.

Despite these possible limitations, the qualitative approach is deemed to be the most appropriate for this type of in-depth study, as it was hoped to provide rich and

comprehensive data, new insights and better understanding of the phenomenon to be investigated, which cannot be obtained with quantitative research.

#### **4.9 REPORTING OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

Findings of this study are set out in Chapter 5 (Presentation, Description and Analysis of Results/Findings); followed by Chapter 6 (Guidelines for the Development of the Positive Psychological Interventions) and finally Chapter 7 (Summary of Main Findings, Recommendations, Limitations and Conclusion).

#### **4.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter explains how a qualitative research approach was followed in this empirical study, and the methods used to describe and interpret the data. The study is described as having focused on the subjective thoughts, beliefs and experiences of respondents. The chapter has also reviewed the context of the research and how the aims of the study flowed into the research purpose, research objectives and questions, research paradigm and research design. It has also covered the population, sampling strategy, research instruments, data collection and analysis, as well as details of how the data was recorded and stored. A section on reflexivity was discussed, including data verification and trustworthiness. Specific information was set out to explain the qualitative methods of IPA and how these were used to ensure that the findings were reliable and valid. Following from this, the chapter discussed ethical considerations, potential limitations, and reporting of results and findings.

The next chapter will present the findings developed from the research methods. The results are reviewed from the interviews that were carried out using an interview schedule that included open-ended questions aimed at revealing constructs that were assessed. The outcomes of the systematic thematic and interpretative phenomenological analysis will now follow.

# CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed in detail the methodology of the study. In this chapter, the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews are presented, analysed, described and interpreted in an integrated and systematic manner in order to build and shape a coherent interpretation of the data as the next step of the research process. The findings from this chapter are used as a basis for the conceptualisation of guidelines as they relate to psychological strengths (PS) and wellbeing (WB). The collection of data included the participants' experiences, perceptions, thoughts and feelings, as the purpose was to obtain insight into their understanding of the PS of transcendence, their experiences of the use of these strengths when facing challenges as managers in the workplace as well as how they relate to their sense of WB. These insights were used to identify related themes and sub-themes during the interpretation process. The twelve participants are identified in this chapter by code numbers P1 to P12.

To restate, this study had three objectives. The first objective was to explore the experiences of the wellbeing of managers at the workplace according to the core elements of the PERMA model of wellbeing; the second objective was to examine the role of the PS of transcendence in negating the challenging experiences of managers and how these contribute to the wellbeing of managers as set out by the PERMA model, and the third objective was to identify existing strengths-based positive psychological interventions (PPIs) for managers that promote managers' wellbeing at the company in order to further develop them. In addressing these objectives, I examined the participants' responses in terms of their experiences and perceptions and formulated arguments using the literature and theoretical framework.

As discussed in the literature, the ongoing and accumulative challenges and complexities in the South African automotive sector have impacted managerial wellbeing (Indradevi, 2021). In an attempt to address these, the (re)-construction of wellbeing has become a fundamental focus in South African organisations. This is being done to effect desired changes to enable managers to endure the multiplying

demands of the work environment. Bridging this gap requires the creation of a more humanistic work environment, with more meaning and purpose and a connection to something greater than the self, to be able to provide a basis for managers to cope with these amplified challenges and complexities. This chapter presents the key findings of the study, which aimed at exploring and understanding the experiences of managers' wellbeing (as based on the PERMA model); the use of psychological strengths (PS) of transcendence; managers' experiences and perceptions of the challenges in their role as well as the positive and negative factors encountered and other contributory factors.

Through the process of analysis four key themes were identified in this study and these will be discussed in two parts. Part one will discuss the first two themes. Theme one is the managers' experience of wellbeing (based on the PERMA model of wellbeing). It focuses on the understandings, perceptions and various experiences of managers associated with wellbeing (WB), as per the model. Theme two is the experiences and contribution of the PS of transcendence in relation to WB of managers as per the PERMA model. This illustrates the use and frequency of the various PS in relation to WB. The intent of examining these two areas of research was to establish that managers do in fact understand and experience wellbeing and utilise PS in their experiences. Part two will discuss the second two themes. Theme three is the challenges experienced by managers and the role of PS of transcendence, negating the challenges, which emanate from the experiences and in which meaningful consideration should be afforded to find resolve within the workplace. The fourth theme examines the existing PPIs in the workplace based on the PS of transcendence, how these help to improve managers' WB and how they may be further developed. The intent of examining these two areas of research was to establish that managers do in fact understand and experience wellbeing and utilise PS in their experiences and how they contribute as coping tools for managers.

The central arguments related to the themes from the findings according to the participants' subjective understandings, experiences and perceptions were that:

1. Wellbeing was experienced by the participants in terms of the PERMA model, i.e. the elements of positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships and accomplishments were all experienced by the participants in

their respective roles in the workplace. However, these experiences may still be enhanced to enable managers to experience a more heightened sense of wellbeing.

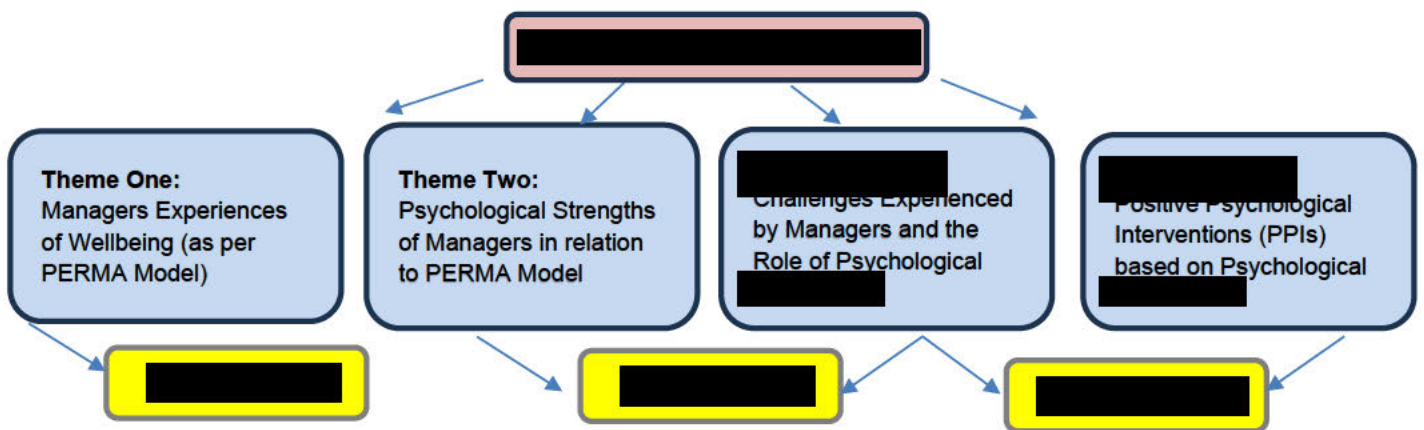
2. The PS of transcendence were experienced and utilised by managers in their experience of wellbeing as per the PERMA model, however, these were not adequately utilised due to managers not having a holistic knowledge and experience of the strengths.
3. Managers are able to utilise the PS of transcendence to a certain extent to cope with challenges, however, these practices were found to require more work.
4. It was established that the implementation of existing PPIs is not standardised and customised for each of the subsidiaries.
5. PS of transcendence are utilised by managers in the PPIs to a certain extent, however, these are not fully developed and do not adequately suit the unique requirements of each subsidiary in order to address the specific challenges experienced as noted in the findings.

My interest was raised as a result of most studies emphasising the possession of PS rather than its use, especially with regard to PPIs. Furthermore, I could explore whether experiences of the challenges of managers can be overcome by the use of PS.

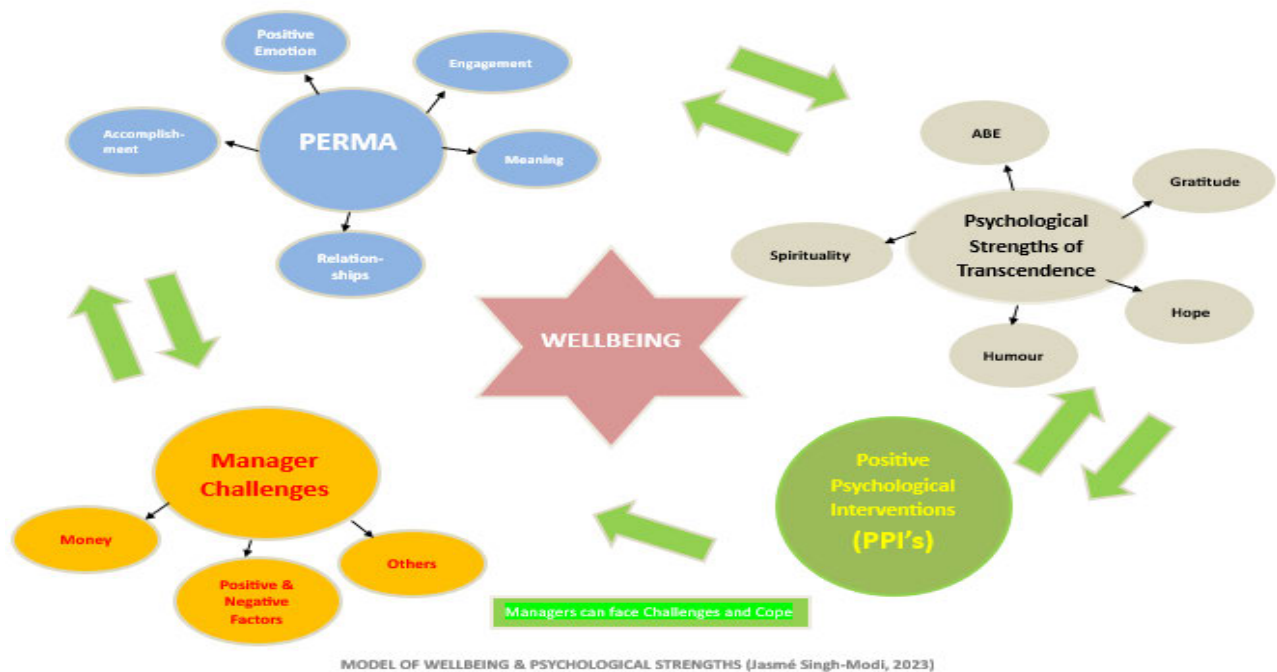
The Broaden-and-Build framework was implemented in this study as a lens through which to view and analyse the data to address the broader objective of this study, which was to present recommendations for guidelines of PPIs to enhance, promote and sustain workplace wellbeing for the managers and the organisation. This objective extends to building existing knowledge and literature on constructs and their various components, with the intention being to develop further knowledge of interventions that promote PS and enhance WB. The implication of this framework is that I am particularly focusing on how the elements of ABE, gratitude, hope, humour and spirituality are able to create positive experiences for managers and lead to positive changes in their lives. As evidenced from the literature, these elements do contribute to positive change, however, the focus of this research is of particular interest to the managers who have experience of this industry and wish to build their characteristics

to develop coping skills and resilience, which is a by-product of the PERMA model of WB as well as an outcome of the framework.

The findings are presented in relation to four main themes that emerged out of participants interviews, where the responses were similar as well as dissimilar. The varied answers relating to participants' experiences and perceptions of the constructs from the interview material will be presented. A full, detailed breakdown of the process of theme selection is outlined in the methodology chapter. A more succinct breakdown may be found in the figures below:



**Figure 5.1 Breakdown of the Findings**



**Figure 5.2 Model of Wellbeing and Psychological Strengths of Transcendence (Singh-Modi, 2023)**

The results of this study and related arguments will be discussed in accord with the inter-relatedness between the composites of the PERMA model of wellbeing; the psychological strengths of transcendence, the challenges experienced by the managers and the psychological interventions used to cope with these challenges, as depicted in figure 5.2. The literature on the constructs as well as the Broaden-and-Build framework will provide the lens for the analysis and discussion.

## **5.2 PART 1: MANAGERS' EXPERIENCES OF WELLBEING (AS PER PERMA MODEL) AND PSYCHOLOGICAL STRENGTHS OF MANAGERS IN RELATION TO THE PERMA MODEL**

### **Theme One: Managers' Experiences of Wellbeing (as per PERMA Model)**

The first theme of wellbeing will be discussed now in terms of the PERMA model. As discussed in the literature, the first theme is on the understandings, experiences and perceptions of managers' wellbeing with regard to the PERMA model which comprises the elements of: positive emotion; engagement; meaning; relationships and

accomplishment / achievement. These sub-themes are discussed as per participant responses in the interview relating to their experiences in the workplace.

### **Sub-Theme One: Positive Emotion/Pleasure**

As noted in the literature review, pleasure is represented by the hedonic conception of happiness. This means that individuals want to maximise immediate pleasure in order to feel pleasant emotions and they avoid unpleasant ones (Tamir, 2009). This is described by P6 as he displays his passion for work and excitement to go to work when he says: *“I have a passion for engineering and for the job...it’s not a schlep coming to work...there are very few days that I don’t wanna be at work...so I’m excited doing my job. I’m happy in my position.”* Similarly, P1 advises that she derives pleasure and excitement when she achieves a task and dealing with people: *P1: “I derive pleasure when I achieve a task and I get excitement in projects and energy from dealing with people. However, it does drain me at the end of the day... because I want to help solve problems.”* P9 does not perceive the work environment as being positive but he is up for the challenge and states: *“I’m not sure if I think of my day pursuing and outcome of happiness or joy. It’s a very challenging task... happiness or joy to me is a sense of accomplishment, like a tick box, but it’s not like I start my day thinking I’m gonna go forth and conquer and I’m going to be happy and satisfied.”* This is not dissimilar to the experience of P5 who requires more assistance to be happy: *“I pray that God makes it a pleasurable day, by giving me the wisdom... This has been my survival skill into having a peaceful and successful day.”*

It is clear from these examples of diverse responses that the capacity to experience pleasure differs among individuals. This is in keeping with Hanley (2007), who explains that it is important to understand that the capacity to experience pleasure differs among individuals, and that some individuals have a much lower capacity for pleasure than others. As evidenced from the findings, although some individuals have a much lower capacity for pleasure, there are some who find much pleasure in their tasks, some anticipate a good day, whilst others do not derive any happiness or joy from tasks. Some perceive their environment as a ‘war zone’ requiring an ‘armour of strength’ and others pray for a pleasurable day. This illustrates the variable nature of pleasure in that experiences or activities that can be deemed as pleasurable to one

person may not be necessarily so for the next person. Research also shows that having positive feelings is a psychological capability and is an effective management technique related to intrinsic empowerment of an employee (Gupta & Mitra, 2017). From the responses, the evidence shows that some participants are able to display the characteristics.

Further to this, the Broaden-and-Build Theory of positive emotion (Johnson, Nadler & Minda, 2021; Fredrickson, 1998, 2001) suggests that positive emotions such as happiness, enjoyment and joy broaden one's awareness and our enduring intellectual, social and physical resources and build up reserves that may be drawn from when a threat or an opportunity arises. Hence hedonism, the pleasure orientation of happiness, involves the maximisation of pleasure and positive emotions and minimisation of painful experiences and emotions of displeasure. The primary focus of pleasure, being anticipatory and consummatory components, even though emphasis has been on the latter (Gard et al., 2006), is discussed as follows.

#### *Anticipatory Pleasure*

When we consider anticipatory pleasure, we think of a positive state that is characterised by positive emotion (Van Hooff et al., 2011). The analysis of the data revealed that, in the main, participants reflected on various experiences whereby the anticipatory pleasure is at play. For example, P1 reflected that *"I get excited about thinking how I will achieve a project, planning for it, etc. It is getting new challenges, going through the new areas knowing or having the feeling that will grow me."* Similarly, P11 notes that *"It's a highly stressful environment, a highly stressful job, and when I am performing my functions, I must say I am a bit assertive but I also make sure I get my emotional intelligence in check, so that I don't get overwhelmed by emotions before attempting my important and challenging tasks."* What this reveals, having regard to the literature, is that there is understanding that there exists an anticipation brought about by certain signals. These signals may indicate a possibility of rewards which then may increase positive affect, otherwise known as arousal. This may then promote or direct behaviour (Yan et al., 2011). The crux of this is that anticipatory pleasure, as a result of probable benefits or rewards, is considered to involve a sense of 'wanting', and hence may direct behaviour towards the opportunity of achievement or attainment. Anticipatory pleasure is closely linked to motivation and behaviour which is goal

directed, leading an individual to have experiences of wanting more (Gard et al., 2006; Hanley, 2007). This is portrayed by P1 and P11 above.

Interestingly with regard to the broader context, when we then consider the theoretical framework, of the Broaden-and-Build Theory, the negative symptoms that are anticipated are especially vexing and discussed as being resistant to treatment, which greatly diminish quality of life. Ann Kring, a schizophrenia researcher at UC Berkeley, has proposed that individuals with schizophrenia experience normal levels of positive emotions, or consummatory pleasure, when they directly engaged in enjoyable activities, yet suffer disturbances in the experience of positive emotions in relation to future activities, or anticipatory pleasure (Kring, 1999).

### *Consummatory Pleasure*

Consummatory pleasure, on the other hand, has a deeper association with satiety, realisation or yearning of desire (Gard et al., 2006; Hanley, 2007). It can be said that consummatory pleasure may involve the feeling of positive emotions one experiences after having obtained the object of desire. P1 described her experiences of consummatory pleasure as having achieved something when she states *“I derive pleasure when I have achieved a task and get excitement in projects as much as in dealing with people. When you have done the correct procedures, you’ve done the tedious task... and you do everything accordingly, and when you place the person... it brings great pleasure to actually have achieved that, especially when the person comes in and succeeds.”* In a similar vein P5 explained that she derives pleasure from achieving positive outcomes of her work, and states that she derives positive emotion on completion of her tasks: *“Good work for me means that which has produced an expected outcome. That actual process of getting to that state might not be pleasurable but seeing the completed picture, indeed gives me all sorts of positive emotions.”* Similarly, P12 described that he derives pleasure from a successful outcome or result: *“There are very specific outcomes or objectives that need to be met and the element of pleasure after having found the ability to meet them. That is something that is very meaningful and brings me a lot of pleasure to my role as a leader.”* Often a lack or deficit of these two components of pleasure is reported to explain a condition referred to as anhedonia, which is defined as the inability to experience pleasure, a condition considered as a key symptom in depression (Gard

et al., 2006; Hanley, 2007; Horne, Bernstein & McNally, 2021; Yan et al., 2011). As the concept of anhedonia suggests that scarcity of positive emotion may lead to depression, an extension of this concept stresses the importance of experiencing positive emotions as a route to obtaining happiness, as happiness can be viewed as the opposite of depression.

The Broaden-and-Build Theory of positive emotion argues that positive emotions broaden individuals' responsiveness to the environment, increase awareness of the physical and social context, unlock creative practices and ideas and assist in the inducement of a feeling that something positive is happening to them (Carr, 2013).

In the context of work, pleasure has been reported to have a positive impact on the individual's ability to recover after a period of hard work and stressful work situations. This is perhaps best exemplified in a study done by Van Hooff et al. (2011) that explored the daily recovery from work through the role of activities, effort and pleasure. P10 and P12 describe the off-job activities that assist them at work. P10 related her experiences of great pleasure that energises her to meet expectations: *"So, when I entered this new church... I'm residing in those seven holy spirits of the Holy Spirit to actually open doors and touch other people, to pray with other people, to allow people of the same faith to pray for me and I exercise that in the workplace...So, when I come to work, I am all prayed up and energised to face the day and whatever may come."* P12 described his experiences of mountain-biking and the subsequent process of detaching that helps him gain fresh perspective when he returns to the workplace: *"Every time I've had some form of a detachment, and primarily maybe after cycling. I found that I was I was able to see things differently."* Whilst P5 described her process of achieving pleasure from on-job practices which enables her to attain anticipated outcomes: *"I derive pleasure from fully understanding the current processes and having a clear idea on how I'm going to design the desired solutions."*

#### *On and Off the Job Pleasure*

In relation to pleasure, the study expressly explored the pleasure experienced while engaging in on-job and off-job related activities. What the researcher found was that both on-job pleasure and off-job pleasure were favourably related to the employee's recovery state. It has been stated that the more pleasure an individuals experienced

during their working day (on-job) or during their (off-job) time, the greater the levels of vigour they experienced and the lesser were their levels of fatigue (Seligman, 2002; Van Hooff et al., 2011). The stance is that continuous experience of positive emotions can have long lasting and positive effects for the individual, especially in recovery from challenges.

### *Work Role*

*In the study* by Money, et al (2009) pleasure was described to be measured by actions such as “in choosing what I do at work, I take into account what is pleasurable” and “in work I love to do what excites my senses” (Money et al., 2009, p18). These were a few of the measures, amongst others, where the focus was on pleasurable experiences at work. P1 described the pleasure she experiences in the work role by stating that it is important to love what you do and that it poses a challenge if you do not: *“If you don’t love what you do, life is too short to do something that’s miserable.”* Similarly, P2 defines pleasure as being vital to love what you do: *“...it depends on the work ethic you subscribe to...the old view that work was simply there to provide you with the pleasure that comes from leisure activities. It was never a case that you can derive pleasure from your work, but I believe that we’ve moved into a different work ethic where people seek pleasure and fulfilment from their working life...because if you’re not deriving pleasure from it, then what’s the point of doing it?”* These responses are in keeping with the authors view that pleasure is derived from what one does, one’s work role, and that taking on a positive mindset can assist one to experience one’s life more positively (Seligman, 2011). This would indicate that, to an extent, individuals would be able to begin to love what they do if they take on a positive mindset regardless of their work role.

Later the role of the managers will be discussed and explored in detail, with respect to their experience of the challenges of their role.

In light of this, the Broaden-and-Build Theory of positive emotion (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001) suggests that positive emotions, such as happiness, enjoyment and joy broaden one’s awareness and may encourage varied, novel and exploratory thoughts and actions (Fredrickson, 2004). Positive emotions may also broaden attention and thinking, which emerges and assists to promote indirect and adaptive personal

resources (Fredrickson, 2005). Also, in terms of this theory, it is said in cultivating these positive emotions, personal resources can be built that assist individuals to cope with stressors (Johnson et al., 2021).

In summation, the experiences related to this element were hedonism, anticipatory and consummatory pleasure, pleasures gained from on the job and off the job activities as well as pleasure derived from the managers' work role. Many participants described diverse experiences of pleasure or positive emotion, some reported to have a much lower capacity for pleasure, some experienced pleasure in their tasks, some anticipated pleasure, whilst others reported not deriving any happiness or joy from work. This illustrates the variable nature of pleasure, where experiences or activities that can be deemed as pleasurable to one person may not be necessarily so for the next person. More importantly, in relation to pleasure, the researcher found that pleasure and positive emotions were favourably related to the employee's recovery state and in some instances assisted the individual's ability to recover after a period of hard work and stressful work situations, which is associated with resilience.

The next sub-theme is engagement, the second element of the PERMA model.

### **Sub-Theme Two: Engagement**

Engagement is discussed in terms of managers' understanding and perceptions of their experiences of engagement at work, in terms of vigour, dedication and absorption, self-awareness and consciousness.

#### *Vigour*

Bakker et al. (2008) describes vigour as characterised by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working; the willingness to invest in effort in one's work; and persistence in the face of challenges. P3 stresses a need to maintain high levels of vigour in order to attain targets to please customers and stay competitive in a challenging environment: *"In order for me to attain that customer satisfaction, I need to have that high vigour. I need to put on those energy levels that take you to 18 to 21 hours work a day... but what keeps the momentum is the attainment of objectives... so, you are a nervous wreck cos you think the customer is gonna call you and bang*

you over, so that adrenaline keeps you pushing. I've been doing this for 30 years now, as long as I have been in automotive manufacturing." P9 also related the high level of vigour he displays with his team to encourage and motivate them to strive to attain goals: "We don't manage by iron fist, so we're very open, but it's a hard charge...how we push each other." P12 like P3 described his experience of vigour as an adrenaline rush, a feeling he associates with mountain biking: "It's a beautiful state because your ability to work, focus, get right to the heart of something. I find it was always that heightened state. It's sort of like you are running on adrenaline. The closest I get to that is like I do a lot of mountain biking. When you're on that bike and you travelling quite fast or you're going down the mountains or you can't actively think about everything, you have to anticipate. It's like muscle memory. Your body knows what to do before you could even figure it out sometimes." In the experiences of vigour as related by the respondents the association with adrenaline is evident. However, it is important to draw a distinction between vigour and burnout. One of the respondents associated his high levels of vigour in enabling him to sustain his long working hours which could in actual fact be detrimental if continued for long periods of time. This needs to be monitored.

### *Dedication*

Schaufeli and Bakker (2010) describe dedication as a sense of involvement with one's work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm and inspiration. P4 described his dedication to his work through his knowledge, experience and ability to teach and motivate: "I have a lot of experience and knowledge to offer, which I'm in the process teaching the people below me how to make the process more successful. I can show them why it works this way and doesn't work that way. There is a lack of knowledge and skills, and it's easier to show them and make them understand. If they make a mistake, I don't reprimand them straight away...and they appreciate it. So, there's more job satisfaction from their side when you show them something and they succeed." P12, like P4, also described his dedication towards his responsibilities: "I have a dedicated responsibility besides the legal and financial requirements and obligations business...I do feel a sense of purpose, responsibility, but at the same time, there's a lot of passion for what I do. There's definitely reward. A lot of it is internally driven, especially in those roles." From the examples, the respondents indicated that their display of dedication in the work environment leads to appreciation

and job satisfaction, employees are better able to understand and learn lessons, as well as being dedicated provides them with a sense of purpose, where they are able to display their passion.

### *Absorption*

Absorption has been characterised by being fully engrossed in work, however, one must be aware of the “dark side” that could impact work-life boundaries (Halbesleben, 2021, p. 91). P5 described her experience of being absorbed and the self-confidence and self-assurance she derives from her interest in certain work tasks: *“I feel totally absorbed in my work only when I’m designing and implementing a solution that I fully understand and that I’m self-confident about. If I’m not fully confident of the task I’m performing at that time, then I get easily distracted by office chit chat, or some trending topic etc. I lose focus because of lack of interest. My response to distractions is dependent on my level of confidence on that task.”* In a similar vein, P6 described his experience of absorption, feeling engrossed and immersed in his tasks which he associates with his level of commitment: *“So, I can without a shadow of a doubt tell you that most days I don’t even have a tea break or lunch break. In the sense of the normal 9 o’clock is tea, or 1 o’clock lunch comes, you wipe your eyes out and it’s like 3 o’clock, and you’ve been too busy to take a break. Not that I’ve been overwhelmed. It’s just that, you need to get the next thing going. I’m totally absorbed in in what I do.”* P9 similarly expresses that he feels totally self-absorbed and continues to work undisturbed in a busy environment: *“I think my day is characterised by a lot of disruption. It is about having to juggle highly disparate situations in highly disparate locations. I have a little open-door policy where people and teams congregate to my large office to sit... as a result, I tend to handle a lot of stuff, while being distracted. There are times when you so focused and yes, time flies, bang 4 hours have gone because you totally self-absorbed and you have to stay in the flow because you trying to find a problem, ...nobody could distract us in that meeting, because we literally didn’t turn and look at the door if somebody knocked.”* From the examples it is evident that the display of absorption provides the respondents with a feeling of commitment and they are able to accomplish tasks without being distracted.

The participants’ responses reflect the conceptualisations that associates engagement with vigour, dedication and absorption. However, for other authors such

as Jones and Harter (2005), engagement was considered multidimensional and often portrayed to be associated with burnout. P3 mentions in his response to his experience of dedication that he is fully committed to working 18–21-hour work days, this could be associated with burnout; however, he remarked that he has been working in this vein for close on 30 years, so it has become a norm in his life. This aspect will need to be further explored, however, it was not in the scope of the research. Burnout may be established by assessments and addressed in the workshops as an area of focus, in case that others may be experiencing similar issues, especially in light of a demanding environment.

In the literature, Kahn (1990) extends the definition of engagement to incorporate the physical, cognitive and emotional dimensions.

### *Cognitive, Emotional and Physical Dimensions of Engagement*

The definitions of engagement justify the position of engagement within the positive psychology framework as it involves a positive state in relation to the self and also work-related roles. The cognitive, emotional and physical dimensions of engagement capture this view.

### *Cognitive Engagement*

The cognitive dimension to engagement refers to an awareness of one's mission and role in the work environment (Luthan & Peterson, 2002). This relates to a sense of purposefulness and understanding of the part that one plays in their work context. P1 described cognitive engagement as her awareness, understanding of her tasks: *"If I really enjoy doing something like the OD interventions... I'll get so absorbed in it that I won't be practical enough. So, the impracticality is like... this is how the textbook says it, this is what the other companies are doing in terms of job rotation... and then at the end of the day we are a manufacturing site, so how do I do that?"* P12 described his experiences of cognitive engagement as the understanding of purpose and the need to prioritise in order to avoid distractions and attain goals: *"Because I start off with that purpose and because I understand the consequences and what I need in order to achieve that, there are many distractions, but I always look at my priorities in terms of how I work with that."* He advises that delegation works for him to be able to avoid these distractions, and to assist him to focus on the important and prioritised

tasks, ensuring focussed engagement levels: *“I try and very quickly work out the level of priority and whether I can delegate it, whether if I have to deal with it,... but I still don't lose track of what I need to achieve, because that is an unwavering number one goal to meet that particular requirement,... that's my thought processes, to be able to ensure that my engagement is aligned to an outcome that has already been defined as a high priority.”* From the examples, it is evident that respondents experience cognitive engagement, however, more direction is required to streamline these types of engagement practices to allow them to focus practically. Some are able to find solutions, for example delegation and prioritisation of tasks, whilst others get lost in their thoughts and are swayed from their immediate tasks.

### *Emotional Engagement*

Emotional engagement refers to how an employee feels about working conditions, the ability to form meaningful connections with other individuals and to experience empathy and concern for their feelings (Kulan et al., 2008). P1 related where she is able to provide an appropriate response or service accordingly through engaging emotionally: *“I think there's this self-awareness that comes in my engagement with people. I'm very conscious of my presence around people and reading body language. If can see that I am not understood... it's also how they're reacting, what their needs are, I know how to behave at that point in time... If somebody's too lenient and they don't really look like they care, then it requires a different tone... I'm quite self-aware and conscious, perceptive and also quite intuitive.”* In a different way, P9 described his experiences as being able to have a healthy and open engagement and open discussions: *“I'm generally strongly aware of myself, how I conduct myself, my temperament, my manners, my verbalisation... it's very important to me how I create an environment for others to learn, and they must not be scared, they must feel empowered, they can engage me robustly because I will engage robustly, but we understand, there's a mutual feeling that you can express yourself with me... And when my managers express themselves ...then we get results... So, one of the key things that I drive is that we trust, respect and help one another... we support, we get work done. Trust is important, to be reliable, dependable... come forth and tell us we got a problem.”* The respondents have provided evidence from their responses that they are able to observe, react to and intuit the feelings of their employees to enable them to appropriately handle people and situations whilst engaging with them and

ensuring they understand what is expected of them, which leads to a learning and empowering environment. The resultant self-awareness assists them in their interactions with employees and creates empowerment, trust and respect in the team.

### *Physical Engagement*

Kulan et al. (2008) defines physical engagement as the physical energies that an individual exerts in the accomplishment of work-related goals. In essence, engaged employees are those who happen to know their expectations, understand their individual roles, and form relationships (Luthans & Peterson, 2002). P2 described her physical engagement as an exchange of energy: *“I like to get a sense of everybody’s opinion and COVID unfortunately limited to the amount of engagement that people would have in person. It doesn’t matter how effective a collaborative tool may be that you could do online, there’s something about just feeling a person’s energy or seeing body language or whatever it may be... Being in a room together, you’re getting it in 3D and all your senses are engaged.”* P10 also described her experiences of physical engagement in a similar way. She stated that the workplace demands much of her time to physically and actively engage with her teams for purposes of meeting targets; however, it comes at the expense of her family life, which brings about a feeling of guilt: *“I don’t have the balance at home... sometimes I come home and they’re actually asleep... I feel to certain extent, guilty because I’m not there... as a present parent... the workload is so much with the problem... one person will have to do 5 people’s work.”* It is the nature of the work of the automotive manufacturing sector to have to spend the number of hours being physically at work after working hours to be able to accomplish all the tasks required. In managerial positions, it is especially taxing in the demanding environment, as the role requires managers to self-motivate, be attentive and responsible for the work of others, and to ensure effectivity.

Engagement is therefore undeniably a multidimensional construct (Kulan et al., 2008) and the responses from participants are evidence of this. In this study, engagement is seen as encompassing cognitive, emotional and physical dimensions, as well as the elements of vigour, dedication and absorption. This means that there is an understanding of one’s role at work, the ability to form positive relationships with co-workers, having a positive feeling about one’s work, as well as being able to exert a significant level of energy and focussed attention in order to achieve work related

goals. Hence, within the work context, engagement has been reported to have positive effects. Closely related to the construct of engagement is the concept of flow, which will be discussed next.

### *Flow*

Flow is characteristically measured by summing up ratings of an individual's concentration, involvement, and enjoyment during a particular activity (Vella-Brodrick et al., 2009). Flow is experienced when there are high levels of challenge and individuals have the significant level of skills to cope with these challenges (Taukar et al., 2023). P2 described her experience of flow when her team and herself is fully immersed and engaged in work activities which she associates with purpose: *"If you don't get into those moments of flow, then you've chosen the wrong career for yourself... when we run conferences and you put two hours aside,... you look at the time and it's not only that you you're two hours already down but like, if no one's moving and we're at almost at three hours and the whole room kind of still wanting to talk and kind of not giving you that kind of feeling of... let us let us out, we've had enough...you kind of realize that you're in your sense of purpose."* P3 also shares that it is the energy (vigour) that gives one the impetus and energises one go forth and achieve tasks, however, it is the 'flow' or feeling of being so absorbed to sustain the momentum which comes from innate passion: *"The vigour keeps you going, but the flow, the flow is the magic! And then the more you see the magic...You stay in it because it's absorbing...if you don't keep the flow, it's gonna break somewhere and you don't wanna stop the flow. You want it to be fluid continuously. It energises you...because you won't do it if you don't enjoy it like it's not something you can't sustain if you don't enjoy it...if you love something, you never work a day in your life. Now in manufacturing, a lot of people don't love, because its hard work. But for me, it's in my blood. I can understand it backwards, forwards, centre, anyway anything that they can't figure out. I just enjoy it because it gives me reason to explore."* It is evident from the responses that when individuals are in a 'flow state' very little awareness or conscious control is necessary for action (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004). This means that individuals experiencing a sense of flow are seen as being so engrossed and immersed in their work that their actions do not stem from conscious control. They are viewed as losing a sense of consciousness about the self as they are immersed and deeply involved in a task or activity.

As P4 described, in the process of becoming deeply engrossed with his tasks, he experiences flow, when attempting to solve a problem: *“...when you eventually sort the problem out, then you find out it’s like 3 or 4 or even 5 hours later and you don’t know where the time went, you can’t account for it. You don’t think about how time passes until you solved... I get so engrossed in it that I don’t get distracted and I’m not conscious of how the time has gone.”* This type of optimal functioning that emanates from flow, as observed from the responses, is what positive psychology refers to as the conditions and processes that initiate flourishing through the focus on positive life experiences (Gable & Haidt, 2005; Peterson, 2006; Seligman, 2011). By inculcating positive qualities, a state of flow results which may lead to a meaningful and joyful life in the personal arena as well as the workplace (Seligman, 2000).

This idea is expanded by the Broaden-and-Build Theory, indicated in the upward spiral model of lifestyle change where “nonconscious motives” are sparked by positive emotions and behaviours associated with wellness, where individuals become more socially engaged, active, curious, mindful and “ultimately healthier and more resilient” that by being able to moderate these positive emotions it predisposes certain people to “successful long-term lifestyle change” (Fredrickson, 2013, p. 37).

In summation, participants’ responses in general show compliance with the conceptualisations that associates engagement with vigour, dedication and absorption. A majority of the participants described the ability to have healthy levels of engagement at work; however, one of the participants described his over-zealous amount of dedication as burnout. Jones and Harter (2005) comment that engagement is considered to be multidimensional and is often portrayed to be associated with burnout. Regarding the multidimensional definition that incorporates cognitive, emotional and physical dimensions of engagement, participants indicated no issues regarding the cognitive aspect; however some participants indicated that they were struggling to cope with the emotional and physical aspects of engagement, especially that managers are expected to work many overtime hours. Relatedly, in a study conducted by Money et al. (2009), it was deliberated that pleasure together with engagement and meaning creates a more significant influence on wellbeing. Meaning will be discussed next.

### **Sub-Theme Three: Meaning**

Meaning is the third element of the PERMA model and is associated with a sense of purpose and significance experienced by people in the workplace. The concept of meaning will be discussed in terms of the managers' understanding and experiences of meaning of work, meaning at work, and meaning in work, as well as how it aligns to one's higher purpose and personal values. In the literature, the authors argue that a meaningful life is expected to consist of belonging to and serving something that one may believe is bigger than the self (Lee Duckworth et al., 2005).

According to the Broaden-and-Build Theory, in difficult life circumstances, positive emotions have also been found to assist people who are considered resilient to find positive meaning, "buffer against depressive symptoms and fuel postcrisis growth" and also effectively assist in the recovery from daily stress as well as in times of bereavement (Fredrickson, 2013, p. 12). Positive emotions are also noted to initiate "broadened, curious, and optimistic patterns of thought" in combination with an increase in "spontaneous and energetic behaviour" (Fredrickson, 2013, p. 34). These thought–action propensities are believed to increase the chances that people may discover positive meaning in their future that elicit further positive emotions which in turn lead to decreased stress levels, emotional upliftment and resilience (Fredrickson, 2013). Within the broad domain of work-meaning there are three major distinct but overlapping facets of work meaning that will be discussed as follows:

### *Meaning of Work*

This domain reflects the meaning that individuals attach to work, which may be shaped and informed by how work is viewed in society. The reasons for work could be as a result of societal expectation; obtaining a sense of status; prestige and income and five surrounding constructs are defined: work centrality; societal norms regarding work; valued outcome; work goals; and work role identification by the Meaning of Work Research Team in 1987 (Harpaz & Fu, 2017). Participants described their experiences as follows:

P2 related that she derives meaning by assisting existing employees to develop skill sets and thereby contribute to the community: *"...if you're giving people leadership skill sets that they then can apply in the communities that they work in or that they are*

a part of, then you are playing a bigger societal role in that regard. And I also think that I'm very privileged that the subsidiaries that we own also see their role in terms of improving their communities." P2 explained that they do this by improving the community via "...recruiting community members; upskilling people; green manufacturing, career advancement for current employees and opportunities for retirees to become contract workers and coaches and mentors to existing employees so as not to lose the accumulated years of industry/company knowledge and experience, which is essentially mutually beneficial, which makes a big societal difference." P7 is also of the view that he derives meaning from creating opportunities for growth in the community: "We help society from a sense as those people around the organisation can earn a livelihood... directly influences the community... employees... earns income... distributed to all the community... schools... clinics... shops... it contributes to the turning wheel. Also, our ecosystem is based on the supply chain of every individual that is attached directly or indirectly to our company." P6 described that he derives a sense of meaning from his part in contributing to the environment: "I play an active role in ensuring that we limit damage in terms of carbon emissions. We are ISO 14001 certified, which means we subscribe to the efficient use of energy and always looking at how we can limit our energy usage, which has a direct impact on the environment." In this way meaning is derived from activities and relationships as a result of values, cultural and societal norms and organisational requirements, be it financial, quality, customer service, or recruitment. From this view it can be understood that individuals are inherently meaning-making species. Since work plays such an important and central feature in human's lives, it often becomes an activity or environment through which individuals derive a sense of meaning or significance. Related to this is another view on how participants derive meaning at work, discussed as follows.

### *Meaning at Work*

Meaning at work, on the other hand, relates to the relationship that exists between the individual and the organisation in terms of commitment, loyalty and dedication (Chalofsky, 2003). This domain encompasses the work meaning that individuals have whilst at work, e.g., relationships with his fellow co-workers. Meaning at work was expressed by various participants. In the example, P3 explained how he derives meaning at work by being able to create opportunities for the employees to be

developed in the company: *“I’m grooming people in the department to be supervisors and helping them grow into different roles in society. So, if I employ 30 of them today, they should be able to employ 300 in 2 years’ time.”* P9 also states that he is able to make a difference to people by developing his employees: *“So, here we build an incredible business and everybody is focused and people’s careers were built... we trained them... they put down degrees... became managers and today, one is the head of Toyota Boshoku and one is the head of Samsung. We’ve built beautiful careers... creating excellence and building teams... and that for me defines workplace, the ability to make a change.”* In a similar light, P12 described how he shares his knowledge, vision, and purpose to create excellence and meaning amongst his staff: *“Through that process of sharing what my vision was, what excellence, what standards are needed and how they could improve their work by applying certain tools... I received a lot of recognition and gratification. That alone aligned to reinforcing my purpose and the meaning that I have for my work.”* The evidence derived from meaning at work by the respondents was expressed in terms of assisting fellow employees, for example to take up prominent roles in society, build relationships and create successful employees. Related to this is the idea that it is not only the relationship, commitment, loyalty and dedication that is important to the creation of meaning, but also the purpose that is derived, which then leads to the next section on meaning in work.

#### *Meaning in Work / Meaningful Work*

This domain is of particular interest to this study as it directly reflects the conceptualisation of meaning as involving a sense of purpose and significance. According to Chalofsky (2003), meaningful work is an inclusive state of being; it is the way that individuals express purpose in their lives through work activities. P6 is an exemplary example of this as he related that it is through his love and passion for his work and being able to augment his innate exploratory nature, which brings him meaning in his work: *“I’m an engineer by trade, I love the sciences, I love technology, I’ve always loved it since school days. I’m lucky as I have the perfect job, but I’m always sort of exposed to my passions... I have the freedom to explore different solutions to the challenges experienced in the manufacturing processes.”* Related to the sentiments presented in this excerpt, De Klerk (2005) argues that meaningful working conditions include aspects such as autonomy, task responsibility, task significance,

identity, complexity, challenge and variety. Here, work is experienced by individuals as an extension and expression of the self. Among these, is stated the rise of 'identity', where more people start to ask 'who am I', where people are defining themselves by their work and purpose. P9 is a good example of this as he related that work brings him purpose and defines him: *"I'm probably a person whose first priority is work. It's just how I am, it defines who I am. And that was about a higher purpose because for me it's about the ability to make a difference. It describes my ego, maybe describes my sense of accomplishment, achievement. I give everything to it."*

For many people, work is meaningful in that it serves some greater social or communal good, they report better psychological adjustment, at the same time possess qualities that are desirable to the organisation (Duffy, et, al., 2012) and endorse self-actualisation (Alshawmar & Tulu, 2021; Maslow, 1965). This idea is described by P9 where he is able to bring value to the lives of others: *"...because of the focus I put in my job... a sense of purpose in my job... it's about how to bring value to other people's lives is the first priority and second is how to create beautiful organisations."* Relatedly, Steger (2016) argues that work is defined as meaningful when the subject perceives his work as having a purpose, goal, value, or significance. Similarly, P12 described the sense of purpose achieved from his work: *"It is a sense of responsibility, power, maturity, and use of psychological strengths which contribute to my ability to make good decisions that creates meaning for me and a meaningful work environment for my team...make the world a better place."* This sense of purpose and meaning that individuals derive from work is not just for the enrichment and self-actualisation of the individual performing the work, but that the individual uses his or her virtues to benefit other people as well as their contribution to the spirit of community living, according to Chalofsky (2003). This is supported by the statement by P12 when he mentions that the use of psychological strengths assists him to make his work more meaningful: *"...so having the right type of psychological strengths, helps align your ability to make the right decisions so that the world is a better place, in essence."* The meaning attached to work was a domain of particular interest to this study as it involves a sense of purpose, goal, value and significance, according to Chalofsky (2003) and Steger (2016).

In summation, most participants expressed an experience of meaning and purpose from work; however, some noted that they derive no meaning from being a manager in this particular industry as they cannot behave autonomously as leaders. They mentioned that the directives of the company are set out for them and there is no room for their own strategic abilities. Relatedly, Marsh and Dik (2021) describes work that aligns with personal meaning and is motivated by prosocial values and that arises as a result of a transcendent directive, where one associates work or one's career with aspiring to or serving a higher purpose, a calling, which creates work meaning or enhanced work-related wellbeing. In essence, there is a high probability that individuals who are engaging in meaningful work will be committed to and also satisfied with their work (Duffy et al., 2012).

According to Wong (2016), a meaning making mindset can facilitate a striving for wellbeing and also for overcoming adversities. Hence, through adopting this mindset, workers can have a greater potential of achieving wellbeing and also overcoming adversities related to work. It is evident from the expression and narratives of participants that meaning is essential to the wellbeing of workers as it creates a sense of belonging and identification, and, more importantly, provides them with a sense of purpose. Hence this sub-theme should be explored further in the manager development process.

The next sub-theme deals with relationships, the fourth element of the PERMA model of wellbeing, which is a follow on from the element of meaning just discussed.

#### **Sub-Theme Four: Positive Relationships**

Relationships will be discussed in terms of the managers' experience of the profound meaning and purpose found in positive relationships and the feeling of being supported, loved and valued by others. Workplace relationships are considered personal relationships between people who work together. Employees' enjoyment of positive workplace relationships is thought to be beneficial in that it may positively impact the wellbeing and morale of employees and the organisation.

From a broader perspective, the Broaden-and-Build Theory, as well as building resources in individuals that initiate physical health in individuals and positive psychosocial development, also speaks of improved relationships and communities. It was noted that when one experiences positive emotions daily, it predictively increases trait resilience, associated with an improvement in life satisfaction (Cohn et al., 2009). Relatedly, positive emotional interactions in close relationships predict an increase in relational resources over time (Don, Fredrickson, & Algoe, 2022; Gable, Gonzaga, & Strachman, 2006). In a study sample of multiple sclerosis patients, it was found that positive emotions predicted an increase in one's ability to derive benefit in adversity (Hart, Vella, & Mohr, 2008). There are various aspects to relationships that have been documented in the literature. This includes, for example, that having relationships that are strong with co-workers may assist in stimulating creative thinking abilities (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023) and that collaborative teams and more experienced workers may be more likely to share and transfer knowledge and skills to workers with less experience, and in so doing they are able to bring about positive results in the long-term (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023). With this in mind, the following experiences with regard to meaning and purpose in relationships were reported.

#### *Profound Meaning and Purpose in Relationships*

P3 described that his relationship of respect with his co-worker encourages meaning and purpose: *"I have an elderly person that accepts the fact that I am the one responsible, that makes decisions and he respects me even though I'm much younger than him and he assists me to be successful. That how I find purpose in the relationship. He shares through his life, wisdom and knowledge...they take the pain away, and that's the relationship that I have...."* P12 also recognises that through his relationships he is more effective at work as well as saves him from a state of loneliness: *"I recognise that relationships are fundamental to me being effective in my work, but not just in my work...being effective in my thought process. As you mentioned, being in a solitary state is very difficult."* It is evidenced here that not only do positive relationships assist to bring meaning and purpose but also the formation of bonds brings support and company as opposed to feelings of loneliness. Interestingly, research in this field has also explored the negative effects on wellbeing of poor social relationships at work, like low levels of social support, conflict, hostility and abuse, which were found to be negatively associated with hedonic, eudemonic

and evaluative wellbeing (Warr, 2011). It was noted that very high levels of social interaction at work may have negative effects on wellbeing; however, there is limited evidence in this regard. In fact, some exploratory studies found that wellbeing with respect to social relationships at work is lowest at very high and very low levels of social interaction (De Jonge et al., 2000). The running theme of assistance and support, however remains vital and is linked to the next aspect, helpfulness in relationships.

### *Helpfulness in Relationships*

During difficult and challenging times when colleagues seem to feel overwhelmed at work or with certain tasks, asking for or offering to help others may strengthen these bonds or these relationships. For example, P10 stated that it is her belief that 'God' bestows gifts on people to be able to help others in times of need: *"I love helping people... I don't think it comes from myself, but it comes from God... He doesn't have to give us all these good gifts that he actually entrusts us with, ...I'm very humbled by that, I love to tithe into other people to make a change and make a difference because you don't know what their circumstances are like at home."* She states that it is a blessing to be able to help others, despite one's own challenges and that it adds to her managerial value and feelings of positivity: *"We will have our own challenges, but it's good to give. It opens up your heart. It opens up your mind. It just makes you feel good inside that you can actually help a contribute in a small way, and when you actually see their faces, you actually soften up."* Similarly, P5 advises that she is helping God when she helps others, which brings her peace and purpose and helps build relationships: *"I have several instances of helping others as I thrive to help at least one person per month. Helping others make me feel like I'm helping God, and that invokes great inner peace and a sense of purpose, as if that's all I actually came to this world for."* It is thus indicated in these responses that respondents who enjoy good relationships and help one another brings positive feelings of peace and happiness which has been described as linking to a spiritual aspect of gratitude from others. The gratitude aspect of relationships is described as follows.

### *Gratitude in Relationships*

The influence of gratitude on wellbeing has expanded to include the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and social health (i.e., personal wellness) of individuals

(Portocarrero, Gonzalez & Ekema-Agbaw, 2020) and research on personal relationships has acknowledged that gratitude can promote relationships (Van Cappellen, et. al., 2023). This stream of research has influenced the study of gratitude in romantic, platonic (Gordon et. al., 2012) and workplace relationships (Sun & Huang, 2019). P6 clearly described the impact of gratitude he has found in the relationships with the people around him, and for the people who have assisted him on his journey: *“When I look at that the state of our economy, when I look at industry, there are always people that are more fortunate than yourself, but there are also people that are less fortunate than yourself. So, for me it's about being grateful for what I have and what I have achieved, and also knowing that the journey that I've been on, I haven't done it all on my own. So quite often I look back at my life and think of the positive people that have played a role in my life.”* From this is it noted that building robust relationships is more probable with people who appreciate each other, and who actually show their appreciation and gratitude. Although there will always be ongoing challenges with fitting in with an already well-established team, working with a group and enjoying relationships that are positive creates a positive environment (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023). Leading from this, it has been found that there is much evidence on the association between positive social interaction at work and wellbeing (Stoll et al., 2012). Building strong and long-lasting relationships also provide hope and optimism (Warr, 2011; Indeed Editorial Team, 2023) and link to appreciation, which will be discussed as follows.

#### *Hope, Optimism and Appreciation in Relationships*

The increase of the strengths of hope and optimism have been described by P6 through the acknowledgement from co-workers, by investing time in people and the development of relationships: *“I think people always invest in one another, in some way or the other... it definitely is important just to acknowledge where we come from and the roles that those individuals have played... this increases hope and optimism knowing that we always need to look at the bright side of things. I am an optimist. There's never a challenge that's too big to be solved for myself, and if there's something that I can't solve or resolve... if you have a good base of friends and colleagues and a good support base, one can always call on those people to assist you.”* P10 expands this discussion by asserting that operators must be acknowledged as it is them who are responsible for the company's survival: *“I wouldn't say someone*

*on management level, I would rather say the operators should be thanked and acknowledged, the people physically doing the work, ...I actually look at them with a deep hurting within because these are the people that are actually contributing to building the Mercedes car.*" Hence the importance of appreciating each other and building relationships with these employees, as these facilitate improved working environment, as well as improve the psychological state of the workers, which has a positive effect on professional output, boosts morale and productivity. When people are comfortable and accustomed to the professional styles and attitudes of co-workers, they feel connected to each other and to the company, less likely to leave and this improves retention levels of the company due to a deeper sense of satisfaction. Also, having a manager who builds trust is appreciated by employees. This aspect will be addressed further below.

### *Trust in Relationships*

Studies in the USA and Canada found that the impact of having a manager that one perceives to be trustworthy, has a greater impact in terms of both job and overall life satisfaction than increasing income (Helliwell et al., 2015). Trust is considered a vital component of any type of interpersonal relationship and when co-workers perceive others as trustworthy, there is a likelihood that they may form bonds with them. The most effective methods such as delivering on promises and the value of commitments assist in this process. Following from this P9 described the relationship of trust between him and another co-worker that enables him to deal with difficult challenges through their relatedness: *"I think because Rajah and I have worked together previously, so I understand his troubles... you have an affinity for what someone is going through and relate and then help him accordingly, because you understand him and you trust his judgement that he's doing the right thing."* Thus, it is argued that having positive bonds assist to alleviate difficulties as these relationships may aid in improving job-related skills for other and therefore productivity. People who enjoy working together also experience increased understanding, and consciously or unconsciously work harder, it adds to the enjoyment of their current situations and in turn the wellbeing of the individual and the organisation. Hence it can be understood that, if a relationship is lost, this may impact the person negatively. The impact of loss in relationships is discussed next.

### *The Impact of Loss in Relationships*

Social connections have been thought to become especially important as one ages (Seligman, 2011). P6 and P8 shared their experiences of loss which made them focus on the value, meaning and purpose relationships bring. P6 described his need to make things right with others after the loss of a close family friend *“Unfortunately, ...a very close friend of mine has passed... so, I went to a service... I think when it comes to weddings and funerals, it's an opportunity just to relook at your life and to gauge where you where you stand in terms of relationship with people... take time to really think and to put things in perspective... things have been left unsaid for instance and sort of patch up relationships across the board really.”* P8, like P6, related that the loss of a close person made him also re-evaluate the value he attaches to his relationships: *“I think that I sense value in family relationships with work colleagues that are so profound, it adds meaning and purpose.”* Although this applies to one's personal life as well, having social interactions and relationships that are positive at work may help one to maintain physical and mental health.

Similarly, P2 expressly noted that having a healthy social life helps bring more meaning to her work and explained it in the context of having lost people in her life: *“So we tragically lost friends of ours... they were incredibly charitable individuals and the question that was put to us by our religious leader was what are you going to do to continue the charity work... I sat back and thought, well what could I do to honour them?... I said that my commitment was to bring more joy into my life.”* P2 set about finding activities that consciously brought her joy: *“I've really made a far more conscious effort to spend time with people that bring me joy... by ensuring that you got people coming over so you entertaining and you're cooking....”* Having strong social support is often widely regarded as being an important factor for physical health, while social isolation has typically been associated with a higher risk of developing serious health issues (Seligman, 2011). P2 further explained that these attempts to bring more joy in her life made her more effective at work: *“I think making that conscious decision has allowed me to feel a lot lighter. So, I think that I'm certainly spending far more of my weekends laughing and kind of a more joyful state and I think it's really positive because I certainly come into the office... feeling like I've got more joy to add to my work because I feel I've nurtured that part, so I've got more to give.”* The strength of humour that P2 touched on here is another very prominent strength

component that sometimes get overlooked and will be discussed in terms of its value in the experience of positive relationships.

### *Humour in Relationships*

It is thought that working in an environment where people feel relaxed to display their individual personality may provide the inspiration and support needed to produce innovative ideas that may lead to a more efficient manner of carrying out tasks. By utilising a style of non-hostile and affirming humour, one may reduce interpersonal tensions and aid in building relationships (Martin et al. 2003). P10 indicated that she uses this type of humour in her experiences at work: “...it was like where were you, we missed you, and I would just laugh out of my stomach...sometimes it's good when other people are also missing you, like think maybe I do make a difference.” Humour has been noted to help people cope and boosts the immune system; it is considered an active, problem focused coping style that helps to alter the emotional consequences of stressful events and may assist with alleviating depression (Martin, 2019). P6 described how humour can improve moods and lift depression: “Well, I think you know, everybody sort of enjoys laughter. Laughter is good. Joy is good. You know that sort of, it lifts depression.” Hence relationships are seen to be strengthened through humorous interactions which increase positive feelings with co-workers. Humour thus viewed as one such behaviour that facilitates and encourages relationships. It has been noted that individuals who exhibit humorous behaviour are more well-liked and are usually perceived as non-threatening (Peterson et al., 1988).

In summation the element of positive relationships was experienced well by managers at the company in terms of the value, meaning and purpose relationships bring. Most participants also indicated that helpfulness, trust, gratitude, humour, hope, optimism for the future and appreciation for others were also experienced as a result of positive relationships at work. It is said that individuals who enjoy positive workplace relationships are thought to benefit as this positively impacts the wellbeing and morale of employees and the organisation (Seligman, 2011). The evidence in this section of the study thus corroborates the research in the literature that co-workers who have positive relationships are considered more likely to perform well together, improves collaborative effort, facilitates respect, motivation, increases levels of communication, task and role clarity and workplace efficiency (Stoll et al., 2012).

The next sub-theme is accomplishment/achievement, the last element of the PERMA model.

### **Sub-Theme Five: Accomplishment / Achievement**

Accomplishment or achievement is the fifth and last dimension of the PERMA model of wellbeing (Seligman, 2011), which will be discussed in terms of the managers' experience of the meaning that it brings and how the participants indicated they acknowledge and celebrate this element.

#### *Accomplishment is Different for Different People*

Kern (2022) describes accomplishment as entailing a perceived mastery of daily responsibilities and goal achievement. P2 described her experience of accomplishment at work, and the sense of success she has felt, especially of being the youngest manager, more qualified than others and also a female in a man's world: *"I'd like to think that most people strive towards achieving something, whatever their definition of success is, because I think that you got to be careful not to judge people by your standards... I've often been either the only female on team or the youngest on a team and there's always been like a hurdle you've always got to try and overcome... or you've studied a degree that no one cares about... I have always accomplished things in a so-called 'man's world' and before my time."* P6 on the other hand described his achievements as always having a passion to achieve his engineering competency exams which was not a pre-requisite for his job: *"I passed the engineering board exam after the third attempt. It is a certificate of competency... it wasn't a work requirement. So, I was driven, internally driven to do my government certificate of competency."* This contributes to wellbeing because individuals can look at their lives with a sense of pride. It includes the concepts of perseverance and passion. The next section related to this one looks at respondents who feel free to acknowledge and celebrate their accomplishment.

#### *Accomplishment that has been Acknowledged and Celebrated*

P2 described her ability to acknowledge and celebrate a great achievement and takes it further to negotiate a good reward for herself with her boss: *"I was gonna help*

*transform the business and the board approved all eight projects and the full budget... I was maybe a little bit overly ambitious and I came back to my boss and said here's my deal, if I deliver on these eight projects, under budget, and in less time than what we anticipate... can that budget then be used to pay for me to go study at Harvard?* P2 also described her ability to reflect though her accomplishments: *"I made the decision to go study at Harvard at their expense... that was really an amazing accomplishment because I often reflect now, I don't know what came over me that I had the foresight... I don't know where I came up with that."* She then related how she celebrates by sharing her successes and utilises her rewards to thank her family for their sacrifices: *"I'm very lucky... that I am able to share those successes and celebrate them with people that I love. I'm also one for trying to find balance, where there's financial reward... I really try and do something that like you celebrate with, I always try and do something quite tangibly show your successes."* Similarly, P6 similarly described his intention to acknowledge and celebrate his success with his family: *"...so the Friday I took my family out for dinner and we had a bit of a spread at the company's expense because the company offered to pay for it."* In the same vein P11 related his acknowledgement of his milestone and need to celebrate with family: *"...the best for me to celebrate is I throw a braai at home, that time it was sponsored by my wife as it was a big milestone to achieve."* Whereas P5 described that although she acknowledges her achievements, she celebrates in another way by praising 'God' as form of gratitude: *"I celebrate on my own, in my prayer closet at home, where I dance, singing praises to God, giving thanks, after which I pour myself a glass of wine."* Even though the various respondents celebrate their achievements differently, the importance of acknowledging the achievement and celebrating it creates positive emotion. Some of the benefits of celebrating and acknowledging achievements are that it enables learning, resilience and self-respect, which will be discussed as follows.

#### *Accomplishment: Learning, Resilience, Self-reward and Self-respect*

P2 related that through accomplishing difficult tasks, she is able to realise and develop a high sense of commitment, work ethic and resilience, which allows her to face challenges and make better and bolder future decisions: *"...that achievement made me realise that actually my own fortitude will get me through a lot of things in life and it doesn't matter if there's adversity, I've got the ability to navigate my way through... and it feels hard at the time, but you come out on top at the end of the day... it's been*

*an amazing learning opportunity because it's allowed me to maybe make riskier decisions since then, whereas, before I probably would have been far more risk averse...it's been a good learning curve."* Similarly, P5 related her learning and development through her accomplishments, despite negative talk from others, she was able to gain self-esteem, self-respect which assisted her to face future challenges: *"When I designed a new module... all by myself from beginning to end...experience really boosted my self-esteem in my ability to understand and design a new solution... Despite all the negativity from other managers, my team and I pushed through, and our end product left them dumbfounded. They give us a great deal of respect."* P2 similarly described how her achievements have helped her realise her own fortitude and resilience in the face of challenge, which provided her the impetus to repeat her excellence in the future: *"So, I love and collect art... when I'm spoiling myself, I always buy a piece of art... it's an everyday reminder in a very beautiful way around your accomplishments... So, everything's very symbolic in that regard."* These responses provide evidence of the benefits of acknowledging and celebrating accomplishments, however, some respondents acknowledge and do not celebrate for various reasons which will be discussed next.

#### *Accomplishment that has been Acknowledged but not Celebrated*

P7 described how he was able to acknowledge achieving his goals, despite the setback of 2020 lockdown due to Covid: *"I was overall company leader in South Africa for development and implementation of the new Toyota Cross... project... a new vehicle/model takes between 4 to 6 years from start to launch. So, in 2020 COVID hit us... finding different alternatives and still being on time for the launch of the project... the launch of the project was one of the best achievements that I had in a long time."* P7 advised that he could not see it as a celebration and the only feeling than emanated was relief that he did not fail: *"When I finally completed the project, it felt like a sigh of relief, there's no failure...looking back at the results, it wasn't me, it was my president who... informed me saying do you know what you have managed to do? You went through what you've been through that is when it really hit me."* P7 explained that he was not able to view it as an accomplishment, but merely as an expectation of the job: *"I didn't do nothing much. Just took some time off to rest because I was quite tired, mentally and physically drained. So, no, not from a personal capacity nor from a work capacity, so no, there's nothing special."* P8 similarly related that he sees his

accomplishments as being part of his job responsibility and not a reason to celebrate, but to rather focus on the next goals: *“You’ll say to the guys, well done, and people would know that, but celebrate, I don’t recall celebrating in anyway. So, it’s just basically part of the duty, just be happy for the moment and carry on.”* From these examples, respondents indicated that they do not feel the need to celebrate their achievements. For them achieving the goal is part of the job and not a special feat.

These are sentiments shared by P12 who stated: *“I don’t celebrate it because I live it in the moment. I’m not somebody that walks away with a mark or a medal... Some of these things are intangible that have given me the biggest success, not the tangibles... So, for my celebration it’s that I’ve acknowledged for that point in time and it gives me the sense of knowing that I’m on the right path and I have the right approach. That’s the biggest value I take away and I move forward. I’m constantly looking ahead. So, I don’t really celebrate that. It’s nothing formal.”* The examples above are of participants who do not need to celebrate accomplishments nor do they require anything tangible to mark their accomplishments, however, there are some participants who are fulfilled enough to be able to acknowledge their achievements through others. This aspect is discussed as follows.

#### *Acknowledging the Achievement through Others*

P12 described the feeling he experiences of achieving a project and the importance of rather acknowledging other people through it: *“The biggest value for me is achievements through my team or through people. When someone tells me, thank you for sharing something, or it was a conversation that has brought value to them or they’ve used something that I shared or something that was attributable to me, that for me has been the biggest factor.”* P4, similar to P12, explained that achieving is simply part of his job and it is nothing special to be acknowledged or celebrated but rather he placed importance on the happiness of others which brings him contentment: *“To me, it’s just part of the job...I’m happy that they happy...I don’t celebrate as I don’t see anything as an accomplishment or achievement. Even like my hobby was motor racing and even though I got trophies and that to me it was just part of the racing. I don’t, can’t make a big thing out of it.”* What has been found interesting as evidenced here, is that these participants almost display the experience of guilt at celebrating an achievement. These are examples that relate to participants who are able to

acknowledge their achievements through others, however, there are some who cannot acknowledge nor celebrate accomplishment; this aspect is discussed as follows.

#### *Accomplishment that has not been Acknowledged and not Celebrated*

It has also been found that there are those who are unable to acknowledge nor celebrate achievements. P1 related her feelings: *“I don't do that, it's so difficult to give you something that I'm proud of. Yes, I know I've achieved... but I don't rant and rave about it... I think it's linked to pride for me. I have the drive and the motivation to achieve but when I do, I don't celebrate it. I go to a counsellor, well psychologist and she has put me on medication, well anti-depressants and she has told me that I need to start celebrating even the little things, the milestones and that not celebrating accomplishment is not good. Apparently, it's very important for people to start celebrating even little things, give yourself a little reward for every step that you do, that I actually don't do.”* This respondent shared her feelings of been unable to celebrate as she does not believe that she has anything worthwhile to be proud of, nor worth acknowledging nor celebrating. She described her reason for this to be that her achievements are short of spiritual and associates the act of celebrating with acting irrationally of having self-importance. However, there are other participants who value the accomplishment or work toward a goal for the sake of the pursuit or to make an improvement, discussed as follows.

#### *Accomplishment and Evidence of Internal Locus of Control*

It is believed that achieving these intrinsic goals (such as growth and connection) may lead one to greater advances in wellbeing than external extrinsic goals (Seligman, 2011). In the following excerpts the respondents explain that having an internal locus of control has driven them to accomplish in their lives. P1 described achieving her goals as a determination that stems from something spiritual and associates celebrating with an excessive sense of self-importance: *“For me like having maybe a spiritual or an intrinsic accomplishment is maybe something that will give me more motivation, but I don't rank myself high... I see it as maybe gloating but I don't know if it's that extreme.”* P6 also explained that his drive to achieve stems from his innate passion: *“So, it wasn't a work requirement, I was internally driven to do my government certificate of competency... and even before I joined this company, I was already studying....”* Similarly, P12 explained that, even though the company has not

rewarded him for his achievements, his drive emanates from wanting to help people: *“My biggest goal or accomplishment was to be able to get the plant ready for launch... but it came at a huge personal cost... A lot of people reach mental breakdown... where they really were prepared to give up. But I think it was my commitment that enabled them to want to go on, it was through our relationship, their commitment to me... That for me was one of the greatest achievements in my professional career... it helps my confidence... reinforces my work ethic. It's kind of the achievement that keeps on giving... it refines my purpose... how I think... maybe it's that virtual pot of wellness that helps on the tough days to drive my internal cognitive insight... it keeps away any self-doubt... knowing that I've made a difference... So, I reflect at that point in time.”*

From the responses indicated here, is it obvious that these respondents derive meaning and purpose via an internal drive to mentor and assist their teams. This internal strength, cognition, self-reflection and resilience enables them to face adversities with courage and confidence. It is said that ‘flourish’ and wellbeing occur when one strives towards goals with an internal locus of control or motivation (Seligman, 2011).

To summarise, almost half of the participants reported they were able to acknowledge and celebrate their accomplishments, however the other half of the participants reported being able to acknowledge their achievements but expressed no desire to celebrate them. Further to this there was one participant who indicated that she was unable to acknowledge nor celebrate her accomplishments. It was also found from the participants who expressed no desire to celebrate nor acknowledge their achievements. Some experienced feelings of guilt whereas others considered their achievement to be part of the job or not worthy of celebrating. Important to note is that those from the group who were able to acknowledge and celebrate achievements, were also able to reflect on these accomplishments and develop abilities of self-confidence to face future challenges more bravely. Upon reflection, one participant also indicated that she developed a more risk averse nature through successful achievement of goals. From the evidence of this section of the study, we can conclude that accomplishment and reflecting on it builds positivity, strengthens resilience and proves the ability for excellence. Reflection on achievements past or the consideration of possible future accomplishments, encourages a sense of contentment and a cycle of self-esteem and positivity.

Relatedly, the Broaden-and-Build Theory states that the purpose of positive emotions is to initiate the development of resources, that place individuals in a positive growth trajectory (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001, 2005). People who experience these positive emotions are able to express them more frequently than other people and are considered more resilient, resourceful, socially connected, and expected to achieve at higher optimal levels of functioning and achieving, this is consistent with the build hypothesis (Fredrickson, 2013). Following from this is the discussion on findings from the PS of transcendence as experiences by managers and how they relate to the PERMA model of WB. From the discussion we can establish that participants portrayed these PS and the next section will provide this evidence in detail.

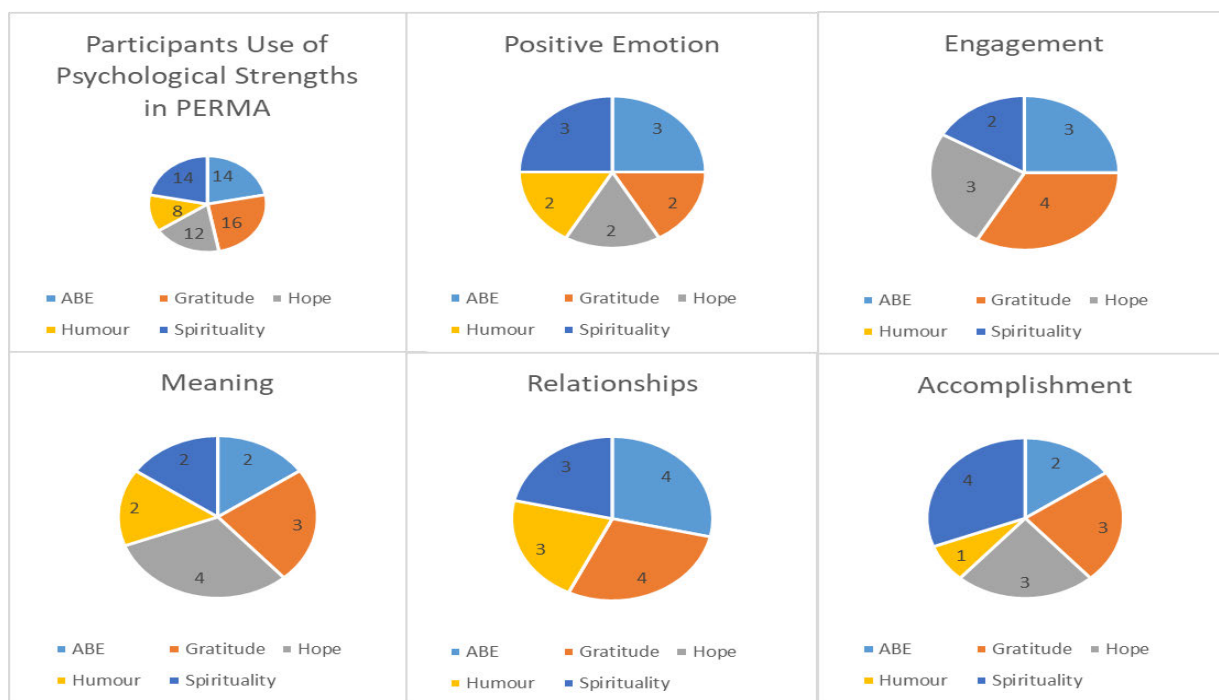
## **Theme Two: Psychological Strengths of Managers in Relation to PERMA Model**

This theme speaks to the utilisation of the psychological strengths (PS) of transcendence that managers experience in their role in the workplace. Here we will look at the understanding, experiences and contribution of the PS of transcendence in relation to WB of managers as per the PERMA model. As reflected in the literature review, psychological strengths and virtues have been shown to buffer against difficult experiences and psychological disorders (Seligman & Peterson, 2003). The evidence further suggests that psychological strengths – specifically as it relates to transcendence – may help individuals realise talent that they may otherwise have not known (Dolev-Amit et al., 2021; Keenan & Mostert, 2013; Van Woerkom, Meyers & Bakker, 2022). In addition, as indicated by Buckingham and Clifton (2001), drawing on psychological strengths is believed to capacitate individuals with resources they need to self-actualise. The findings in this study, as it relates to the theme of psychological strengths speak to what was found in the literature. Analysis of the data revealed that, as indicated by Figure 6 below, participants reflected on a range of psychological strengths including the Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence; Gratitude; Hope; Humour and Spirituality.

Evidence of the participants' use of the psychological strengths of transcendence can be found in the graph provided next. As per the figure below, the participant responses as per the PERMA model of WB are graphically represented according to their

experiences indicated in the interviews. It is evident that the most well recognised and utilised strength by the participants was Gratitude, following a close second was the strength of ABE and Spirituality which were equally utilised by participants, the strength of Hope was in third place, and lastly it was found that overall the strength of Humour was utilised least by participants in the workplace. This indicated for the researcher that Humour is a strength that is mostly overlooked as a psychological strength in the workplace.

Also, according to the graphical representation, each PS was depicted for each element of WB. For Positive Emotion, ABE and Spirituality were the most widely utilised, the other three strengths were equally used to attain Positive Emotion by participants Gratitude, Hope and Humour. For Engagement it was Gratitude which was considered the most appropriate strength to help them increase engagement levels, while Humour did not feature at all as a strength that was utilised for this element. For Meaning, Hope mostly used to bring meaning to participants and again Humour was the least used strength. For Positive Relationships, ABE and Gratitude were most used and Humour and Spirituality were least used. Interestingly for Accomplishments it was the strength of Spirituality that participants latched onto to help improve their accomplishment and achievements levels and again Humour was the least used strength. Remarkably for every element of PERMA, the participants indicated that Humour was a strength they utilised least.



**Figure 5.3 Participants' Use of Psychological Strengths of Transcendence**

The participants use of the psychological strengths of transcendence will be discussed now with the examples provided.

### Sub-Theme One: Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence (ABE)

ABE may be described as an ability to observe and appreciate beauty, talent and virtue the world, that being in the physical as well as the social worlds involves experiences of self-transcendence in the way of admiration, awe and elevation (Diessner, 2022). Because of its implication with self-transcendence, ABE is clearly relevant to individual wellbeing, but is also capable of promoting sustainable wellbeing and pro-sociality (Kjell & Diener, 2021). In the literature it was established that people high in ABE were more likely to be open to experience, being agreeable, being extrovert, being more conscientious, being generous and trustworthy (Martínez-Martí et al., 2016). The various reflections by participants demonstrate how ABE is drawn on in an attempt to increase participants' sense of WB.

#### *ABE and Positive Emotion*

P3 related that his experience of positive emotion was acquired through the use of ABE and views beauty as a function of excellence: "So, appreciation for excellence is

*the want to attain in the level of excellence, so, let's say if excellence is measured at the scale of 100% and your standard deviation is like 5% from whatever the measure point is... So, then beauty is part of that excellence because attaining such high levels of activity means everything attained is beautiful and it's better than your expectation...."* He advised that this attainment gave him a satisfied and positive feeling. Related to this, P12 notes that excellence cannot be achieved without understanding that ABE is aligned with one's purpose, motivation and result, all of which bring positive emotions for him: *"I think appreciation of beauty and excellence helped because it sets the tone of our purpose... why we need to perform at a certain level, why a standard is needed... so those three elements are the key elements that I would use in terms of the psychological strengths as part of that process."* These responses are in collaboration with the literature where an association between ABE and positive feelings or emotions and wellbeing has been drawn by Martínez-Martí et al. (2016). These relations have been further strengthened through corroboration from empirical studies demonstrating a high correlation between our ability to appreciate beauty which aids in balancing the negative and positive (Martínez-Martí et al., 2018) as well as enhancing engagement and positive relations.

#### *ABE and Engagement and Positive Relationships*

P2 reflected on how lovingly one performs one's work or an activity which is in some respects equivalent to achieving excellence. She reported that, *"So, I think you have to love what you do... you must want to do because that type of strength pulls you towards it. It... allows you to engage, and then like excellence, is a standard because you want to work to a certain standard...."* Relatedly, P11 reflected that excellence for him is quantifiable in terms of engaging with others and working as a team: *"...if someone is doing good... achieving quality results... and they working as a team... and hard work that I always appreciate and I make sure that I make noise about it when people do good."* These responses draw a parallel to the literature which applies not only to individual wellbeing, but also to ABE, which could, through self-transcendence, be related to longer-lasting kinds of social wellbeing; as Pratscher (2020) points out, ongoing happiness requires flexibility in one's sense of self but is closely connected to the context and other people within it.

#### *ABE and Achievement*

P3 described that excellence is linked to a sense of self-worth and the achievement of excellence is difficult to attain by virtue of his race. He explained that being Indian comes with a unique set of difficulties in SA history, therefore achieving excellence according to race in this society, as well as having people realise and value that level of excellence makes it that much harder: “...so appreciation for excellence, nobody gets to that kinda level, I will be straight out, being Indian, and in the society, we living in! And so, only excellence can do that. So, people realise their worth, and then you realise their worth because they worked with other people who tried to do what they did, and they didn't survive.” This response ties into the literature where people who are high in ABE are described as less material, achieve greater self-transcendence and more readily think through ways to attain their aims in life (Martínez-Martí et al., 2016).

These participant reflections mirror, in some respects, what has been found in the literature in terms of the association between ABE and wellbeing and the associated positive feelings (Martínez-Martí et al., 2016). Evidence-based knowledge indicates how ABE positively correlates with, inter alia, feelings of enjoyment, improved and regulated mood, increased creative activities, increased positive emotions, increased meaning and decreased levels of anxiety (Trupp et al., 2023; Fancourt et al., 2020; Myszkowski, et al, 2014). Further to this the Broaden-and-Build Theory of positive emotion (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001) suggests that positive emotions, such as happiness, enjoyment and joy, broaden one's awareness and our enduring intellectual, social and physical resources and build up reserves that may be drawn from when a threat or an opportunity arises.

Having regard to both the personal reflections of participants as well as the literature and theoretical framework, the current study finds value in accepting the position that ABEs bears positive outcomes for managers, and organisations alike and therefore a good case is made for including ABE in WB interventions. This is corroborated by the study by Martínez-Martí & Avia (2018), where ABE was found to be effective and important in wellbeing interventions.

Another key feature of the PS of transcendence, as reflected on in sub-theme two below, relates to what Seligman (2003) refers to as *gratitude*.

## Sub-Theme Two: Gratitude

Gratitude can be described as an emotion it is a “sense of wonder, thankfulness, and appreciation for life itself” (Seligman, 2011, p. 260). As indicated in the literature, there is compelling evidence to suggest that gratitude has an effective and measurable impact on emotional, physical and mental wellbeing (Emmons, 2007; Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Gratitude is therefore considered a valuable emotion that serves to strengthen our coping mechanisms in dealing with stress and in building resilience (Fredrickson et al., 2003). This bears not only positive associated outcomes as they relate to the experience of managers, but also reflects on the positive work-related outcomes. What this then suggests is that in terms of the ways in which we intervene in organisations, meaningful considerations in relations to the role and impact of gratitude become salient in our points of departure. There is emerging research in gratitude research in organisational behaviour, in promoting prosocial behaviours, encouraging personal wellbeing, and fostering of interpersonal relationships (Locklear et al., 2022). As evidenced by following participant reflections, we can infer that the participants’ use of gratitude is reflected in their experiences.

### *Gratitude and Positive Emotion*

P4 expressed that it is gratitude following from his exchange of appreciation and respect with fellow workers that allows him to experience positive emotions at work. He related an incident of worker resentment that when handled appropriately and effectively enabled the worker to change his behaviour positively: *“So he actually said to me thank you for approaching me this way and making me understand what it's all about and it changed his whole attitude towards you... So, it's the way I spoke to him and he was able to show gratitude to me. I see it as that brings about gratitude both ways, it's gratitude that they feel for me speaking to them well and also my gratitude for showing my appreciation to them in actually thanking them.”* P10 related a similar experience of positive emotion via an ability to express gratitude to her team which was appreciated by her workers and was also a catalyst for change: *“...to have gratitude and say a simple ‘thank you’... What's important to me is that my heart is in the right standing with God. I think... in this world we forget these small things that actually mean so much... it's the little things in life that actually makes you prosper...”*

*feel good... that might just change their mind and how they see things the next day.”*

These responses are evidence that the behaviour of gratitude has the ability to positively impact the lives of people, that is significant for wellbeing and prosperity, which are often overlooked, and that brings utmost value and positive feelings that are associated with the literature as well.

### *Gratitude and Engagement*

P6 related that gratitude enables him to experience engagement through acknowledging others and for being afforded the opportunities to engage with the positive people in his life: *“...when I look at that the state of our economy, when I look at industry, there are always people that are more fortunate than yourself, but there are also people that are less fortunate than yourself...it's about being grateful for what I have and what I have achieved, and also knowing the journey that I've been on, I haven't done it all on my own. So quite often I look back at my life and think of the positive people that they have played a role in my life... I think people always invest in one another... it definitely is important just to acknowledge... the roles that those individuals have played.”* P7 also related that his experiences of engagement are as a result of a style of gratitude he adopts to avert disagreement: *“...irrespective of who I engage with, I always say thank you, basic politeness because I do not know the mindset of the individual at that point in time and I like to show gratitude in whatever action that they do... I may not agree with what they share with me, however, I will never say to them, upfront, I disagree with what you say.”* These responses show that the acknowledgement the appreciation of others through being gracious brings positivity.

### *Gratitude and Meaning*

P8 described that gratitude brings an experience of meaning in his work, in terms of purpose, a sense of belonging, feeling appreciated and in this way significance to the lives of workers as well: *“If you approach work with appreciation and gratitude it complements a meaningful work environment. Then meaningfulness is the sense of purpose and significance... it's how employees understand their experience in the organisation.”* In the same light P12 expressed his experience of meaning at work that comes through the gratitude of his team, reinforcing how he meaningfully impacted their lives, he reports, *“I think the one that stands out clearly is gratitude. You know*

*whether it's from those that I've worked with and they were impacted by the decisions that's helped to reinforce that you are on the right path."* From these responses one can glean that people want to belong, feel appreciated, give gratitude and want to be thanked for good work. Gratitude brings increased meaning for people at work through feedback and appreciation.

### *Gratitude and Positive Relationships*

P3 advised that he acquires positive relationships through his sense of humility and gratitude to God that enables him to uplift his team, which gave them hope and reinforced their relationships: *"I have gratitude to God for giving me the ability to take them to the levels... I am a man, I can do very little but the spirit of God, ...it is all you got and taking them to where they are, gave them hope and optimism and that makes us good friends."* P7 related similarly that shared gratitude solidifies his relationships: *"...showing me that that sense of gratitude to getting them over their hurdles, it is in a sense like I fit in or I'm still needed and I'm not obsolete... a footbridge, like I still got it in a sense... especially in the environment when it comes to processes and understanding... it tends to happen often and it brings a sense of satisfaction... it's great."* P8 also related how the strength of gratitude enables the enhancement of relationships between the manager and the employee: *"I think that enhances the relationship between the boss and the employee... people don't often say no, but we never get thanked for what we do... and I always try to do things differently and give people expressed appreciation for what they've done and their work, understand where they are in life... and that relationship grows because... you spend time and appreciate them over years..."*. These responses elucidate the idea that reality we do not receive gratitude, but it makes sense to give it. It has been found in this study that people are lacking in the receiving of gratitude especially in the face of the challenges in an environment where people are in survival mode. From these responses we can see that a manager's sense of capability and adequacy in the ability to assist employees in their challenging and demanding environment may create a 'footbridge' or link to build better relationships with others.

The data thus reflects that the expression of gratitude bears positive outcomes for positive emotions, the meaning attached to work, the levels of engagement as well as the contributions to work engagement. Having regard to both the personal reflections

of participants in terms of gratitude as it relates to the elements of the PERMA model of WB (as per the sub-themes in this section), together with the literature and theoretical framework, the current study finds value in accepting the position that gratitude bears positive outcomes for managers and employees alike. This is corroborated by the Broaden-and-Build Theory, where this gratitude was described as being a valuable emotion that serves to strengthen our coping mechanisms in dealing with stress and in building resiliency (Fredrickson et al., 2003). Thus, a robust case is made for including this strength in WB interventions.

Another key feature of the PS of transcendence, as reflected on in sub-theme three below, relates to what Seligman (2003) refers to as hope and optimism.

### **Sub-Theme Three: Hope and Optimism**

Hope can be explained as an attitude one adopts around the good the future may bring, not only expecting the best, but also being able to take action to attain it, and paying attention to the future, with a positive mood and mindset. Future-mindedness, optimism and hope form a family of strengths that has been described a “positive stance toward the future” (Seligman 2011, p. 261-262). In other words, it is expecting our wishes to be fulfilled and having confidence in our efforts to be impactful. In terms of the Broaden-and-Build Theory, hope enables individuals to develop further their repertoires of thought and action, thus serving to extend their personal resources for coping over time (Fredrickson, 1998; Richman et al., 2005). The following participant responses provides accounts of the role of hope in optimising wellbeing.

#### *Hope and Positive Emotion*

P3 described his experiences of positive emotion at work through hope on the backbone of spiritual teachings of the bible which described hope in relation to faith. He advises that if people are able to communicate faith in their plans, they will prosper: *“hope is not a plan, it is the faith behind the plan, so with faith all things are possible... once you have hope you can share that vision... I studied management but when I read the Bible, which was written over 2000 years ago, it is said ‘write the vision, make it plain’... people are writing visions today but they still can’t make it plain, so that everyone can understand.”* P8 also related that by instilling hope and optimism in

workers, it brings positivity and growth opportunities: *“If you approach work with hope and optimism, they might definitely think that there’s hope for the future for themselves, meaning it would be very limited if there was no hope or future growth opportunities.”* It can therefore be gleaned from these responses that hopeful efforts can keep us buoyant and encourages us to continue on with our activities with a positive approach expecting an optimistic result. In the literature, optimism is regarded as an adaptive characteristic involved in anticipating the future, counteracting fear and preparing for dire consequences (Tiger, 1979, discussed in Peterson, 2000).

### *Hope and Engagement*

P11 related his experience of engagement at work is created though being hopeful and optimistic, advising that optimism is a self-fulfilling prophecy: *“I think, if you very optimistic, then good things will happen, meaning that results are always there and you are hopeful that the team will bring their A game so that we can achieve, it will make things much easier to achieve.”* From this response we can see that by instilling that hope and optimism in workers, engagement and motivation increases and positive results are achieved.

### *Hope and Meaning*

P2 related that her positive hopeful approach (as opposed to a negative one) brings about a positive attitude to cope, which is meaningful for her: *“I think if you can approach every situation thinking that there will be a positive outcome... it really helps you keep your head above water because if you go in with this is a negative situation, the outcome is going to be negative, etc., then it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.”* Similarly, P7 related that being hopeful and optimistic about the future helps him to build his legacy: *“...if I look at hope in simple terms, hope is like wishing... I'm always optimistic in anything that I am pursuing. It brings a sense of like butterflies in your stomach, that emotional feeling... dopamine comes into your brain because looking at how it can grow into something much bigger is what drives me. I have this passion for legacy... for this generation, the community and the environment.”* In these examples hope is associated with positivity which drives passion and a positive outcome, which further brings meaning to these respondents.

### *Hope and Positive Relationships*

P3 advised that having hope helps him experience positive relations at work, enables successful teams and increases team cohesiveness: *“I said deliver and you'll see that the rewards and God will get them through everything else... they put in the energy into being hopeful and looking forward with more positivity and look what it has done for our team cohesiveness and being able to work together.”* P6 also reports that his optimistic and hopeful attitude inspires positive relations at work,: *“Knowing that we always need to look at the bright side of things, I would believe I'm an optimist, there's never challenge that's too big to be solved for myself... if there's something that I can't solve or resolve, if you have a good base of friends and colleagues and a good support base, one can always call on those people to assist you.”* P12 infers, similarly to P3, that hope emanates from spirituality: *“So for hope and optimism, what sticks out is obviously spirituality... this comes from that... it's a depth of understanding... if you're left on your own, it's not good because your mind can play games. So, the more you have these relationships, the more you can voice your thoughts, the easier it is to keep away the bad thoughts.”* From these responses it is evident that being hopeful creates a positive atmosphere that is conducive to having a good support system to help deal with challenges as in the examples above. Also having these relationships and expressing oneself through relationships prevents isolation which may alleviate negativity.

#### *Hope and Accomplishment*

P11 advises that if one is hopeful and optimistic, one's work becomes less effortful, there is more of a sense of enjoyment towards one's work: *“If you're given a task and you are not in love with that task, chances you gonna struggle mentally and psychologically to achieve the task because the optimism is not there and also you're not realising the end result. So, you need those two key factors, being hopeful you will achieve that task within a certain deadline, and being optimistic you are able to face also the failures.”* P12 voiced a similar notion of hope and optimism: *“...that little “pot of wellness” is there... to keep hope, to keep positive and resilience. You need that, you only as good as what you've achieved... So, hope and optimism helps because it creates value.”* The responses regarding the association of hope and accomplishments, according to the participants in this study, enable resilience, create value, develop people and provide courage to overcome problems, which results in

positive outcomes and achievements. It is also stated here that if one is hopeful, one is more motivated to face failures without falling apart.

These responses above are in keeping with the literature around the coping styles of optimists which are said to include active, problem-centred planning, where negative factors are attributed to external factors (Carver & Scheier, 2002). Also, in terms of the Broaden-and-Build Theory, hope is said to enable individuals to develop further their repertoires of thought and action, thus serving to extend their personal resources for coping over time (Fredrickson, 1998; Richman et al., 2005). Hence, from the evidence of this study as well as the literature, hope and optimism have been shown to have multiple benefits, including better task concentration, better performance, maintenance of health, higher self-worth, lower levels of depression, enhanced positive emotions, an expanded circle of friends, and more perceived social support and competence (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Snyder et al., 2002).

Having regard to both the personal reflections of participants in terms of the strength of hope as it relates to the elements of the PERMA model of WB (as per the sub-themes in this section), together with the literature and theoretical framework, the current study finds value in accepting the position that hope bears positive outcomes for managers in the workplace and thus a strong case is made for including this strength in WB interventions.

Another key feature of the PS of transcendence, as reflected on in sub-theme four below, relates to what Seligman (2003) refers to as humour.

#### **Sub-Theme Four: Humour**

Humour and playfulness have been described as the ability to break into laughter, to elicit smiles from people, to focus on the lighter side of life and is considered fun, playful and funny (Seligman, 2011). The types or styles of humour found as described in the literature are affiliative, self-enhancing, self-defeating and aggressive. To re-iterate, the first type is to amuse others as a means to facilitate relationships and these people are well-liked and non-threatening (Peterson et al., 1988). The second is used to elicit amusement during life's hardships and remain positive which helps one to deal

with stressful situations and keep a positive attitude. The third type is to make amusing comments that are not self-inflating which could include self-ridicule to defuse conflict, entertain and gain acceptance from others (Bringa, 2023; Zelizer, 2010). The last type includes disparaging others as a way of manipulation which is done at the expense of others, which is found to negatively correlate with agreeableness and conscientiousness (Martin, 2019). The most common types found in this study is affiliative and self-enhancing. These will be discussed as per the participant responses.

### *Humour, Positive Emotion and Engagement*

P8 related his experiences of being able to share a sense of humour with his team,: *“...people have a good sense of humour, they understand they can make mistakes, and laugh about it... they could learn... in their comfortable environment... it becomes a creative environment where people can work with more enthusiasm and they've got a keenness to do more and to do better... they can ask questions... they're not gonna get shot down, so they're more likely to engage and learn in that environment.”* P10 also shared that by using her own type of humour with herself, she is able to get through the day in a more relaxed way and keep her spirits high: *“I have my own type of humour. I have like a dry type of humour where I will actually joke around with myself in my own mind, and sometimes I will just giggle and laugh, although I'm still working... makes me happy for a while and it makes me relax in some way.”* These respondents related their experiences of self-enhancing humour in the first instance, which creates a learning and engaging environment where one feels at ease to make and learn from mistakes. The second displays affiliative humour where amusement is used to facilitate relationships, as stated in the literature (Martin et al. 2003).

P3 spoke of the connection between humour, hope and religion in the attainment of goals: *“Joel, Osteen when he preaches, he starts his sermon with a joke. That's his adaptability... he preaches joy, hope! He teaches you victory in life, through being lighter and trusting God more than anything else. So, you can see that people want to laugh. People don't want to be serious all the time... sometimes the activity that you engaging in creates a spontaneous moment of laughter... not about forcing the moment... sometimes that the moment exists, you must appreciate and capture it, because if you miss it, you're gonna regret it.* Relatedly, P8 advised that humour keeps

the team engaged: *“So when you work with people for years, you spending so many hours in the day with the people, you get to know the people and how you bring humour into your work. It makes your day lighter and it builds relationships... just makes it more pleasant experience and I think that promotes engagement.”* In these responses the participant described the ability to include humour to enhance adaptability and that the appreciation of joyous moments in life can bring triumph and pleasure. Also gleaned from the responses is that humour is able to create a pleasant environment, which facilitates the building of relationships and promotes engagement.

#### *Humour, Meaning and Achievement*

P3 related that instilling a sense of humour in his team brings meaning, as long as it is moderated in the workplace: *“I think you have to balance everything. I mean they say laughter is the best medicine for all cures of life, so humour is a huge factor and sometimes humour is not just practical in all areas, but it silently spills a little bit of fun, because you can't act like you're a comedy show, but you need humour...you can see how people live from a lighter side of life with light humour and they are happy people.”*

P3 links humour to achievement: *“So, humour is not like I'm Trevor Noah or something. You don't go to work for that purpose. We go to work to achieve goals, and in achieving the goal, there may be light-hearted moments, maybe not intentional, but those moments come about for you to engage them, participate in them and enjoy them, and only when it happens can you really have the fun of it.”* From these responses it is gleaned that these participants view is that happy people are generally the ones who find humour in their day and that a display of humour may offer respite from negative experiences. It is also evident that respondents feel that a balance must be created between having the ability to include humour in the workplace and still maintaining an environment, which is generally deemed as serious or sombre.

#### *Humour and Positive Relationships*

P12 reported that it is his opinion that including humour may change the mood positively at work: *“...as well as elements of humour, especially when you're working with people, I found that the right type of humour was something that was able to change the mood for the team as well.”* Similarly, P10 related an incident where she experienced heart-felt, belly-laughter through interactions with her team: *“...when I walked into work and it was like ‘where were you, we missed you’, and I would just*

*laugh out of my stomach, and I said I wasn't far away, I was actually just under the desk... sometimes it's good when other people also missing you, like think maybe I do make a difference.*" Interestingly and related to this, Cousins (1979) found evidence that a 10-minute whole-hearted belly laugh led to two hours of pain-free sleep, the kind of laughter that P10 described as having experienced with her team. Later studies on the specific effects of joyful laughter as it relates to the immune system show evidence of a strong connection between humour and positive emotion as a positive strength that correlates with optimism, alleviating depression, and being supportive in stress and pain management (Berk et al., 2001).

Amongst its other benefits, humour has also been considered as an active, problem-focused coping style that helps to alter the emotional consequences of stressful events (Martin, 2019). In the literature, there also exists a strong positive correlation between positive emotions and good health and vice versa (Danaher, 2022; Pert, 2010; Taylor et al., 2000). As per the research on humour and together with the findings of the data, as it relates to the elements of the PERMA model of WB (as per the sub-themes) in this section, this strength is considered as an important component of wellbeing. This, together with the understanding in terms of the Broaden-and-Build Theory, highlights the connection of humour with health. In particular, the act of laughter was thought to have a positive effect on physical, mental and emotional health, thereby positively impacting wellbeing (Danaher, 2022; Fredrickson, 2001; Taylor et al., 2000). For these reasons, a solid case is made for including this strength in WB interventions.

Another key feature of the PS of transcendence, as reflected on in sub-theme five below, relates to what Seligman (2003) refers to as spirituality.

### **Sub-Theme Five: Spirituality**

As described in the literature, spirituality is defined as the presence of powerful coherent beliefs concerning the higher purpose, the meaning of the universe, where beliefs are a source of comfort and are also able to shape actions (Park et al., 2013). Spirituality is also associated with a consciousness in moral values and the pursuit of goodness. As per the literature, psychologists advise that they cannot continue to discount the significance of the "faith" that people place in their lives (Seligman, 2011,

p. 261). The main question posed by researchers, according to Seligman (2011, p. 261), entails whether life holds meaning in the universe through attachment to a greater purpose or being, which is “larger than one’s self.” It has been found in this particular study, as well as by others that by incorporating the spiritual aspect in the work experience, creativity and improved problem-solving abilities increase and stress levels decrease (Indradevi, 2021).

### *Religion versus Spirituality*

P9 discussed the difference between religion and spirituality saying that his experience of religion is more spiritual rather than religious or ritualistic. He stated that his parents’ beliefs on religion were impactful on him and his family and were a catalyst in this respect. He said: “...so *although we were Hindus, and we practiced Hinduism, we were brought up to make our own decisions, so when it came to the religion, they didn't define religion for us. Faith was an important thing... there was no religious stranglehold in our home... my parents took my sister and I to travel the world with them. That developed our knowledge, experience and understanding... like I said we will visit a temple, a mosque, a church, a basilica.*” In this response, the distinction between religion and spirituality is clearly defined and, because religion was not imposed but expressed as a means to experience the world and explore various approaches of religion, the respondent was able to gain a broader perspective. He further indicated that his perception of the science of religion highlights the commonalities of the various religions by stating: “*Hinduism is a way of life. It's not like, a doctrine or something that you need follow... faith is important, not the medium which is religion... and really speaking it's a language difference.*” The respondent shared that his view and learning of the science and the origins of documented religion helped him find the commonalities rather than the differences. This is a very important aspect of spirituality which highlights the view that religion may be perceived as a separating force when one focuses on the differences rather than being perceived as a unification force if one focuses on the commonalities.

### *Spirituality and Positive Emotion*

P1 discussed her view of spirituality as having a sense of self-awareness, ability to meditate, introspect, listen to and trust in her inner voice which ignites positive emotion within herself. She states that intuition which comes from her ability to meditate is her

best divine guide that is sometimes overlooked and states: *"I would meditate, ...try to speak to my inner self... that's just the self-awareness... get the best expert advice from your inner self...Your gut's always right... we ignore it or we don't pay attention to it as much as we should, ...which I believe comes from God, the universe or a higher power... you have your morals and values that will guide you as well... how you illicit your positive emotions."* Similarly, P2 discussed her view of spirituality that guides her to be non-judgemental and view life from someone else's perspective: *"If you link spirituality to maybe moral grounding and values... and ethics certainly determine the types of decisions... see it from the perspective of the other... how do you suspend judgment... if you understand their reference point."* These respondents express their experience of spirituality as talking to one's inner self as a link to 'God', having the correct morals, values, ethics and grounding that brings them positive emotion.

On the other hand, P5 described spirituality as her ability to accept and take control that creates a sense of tranquillity: *"Controlling my internal environment to focus on the task at hand. Accepting that this is all that there is right now that will put food on the table. These thoughts lead me to a tranquil inner environment, thus allowing me to experience pleasure in what I do."* The response of P6 is an extension on this thought, as he described spirituality where he experiences music as a spiritual tool: *"...definitely the music, I think especially the gospel music is, or any type of soothing music with meaningful words, or even the instrumental... it sort of repairs yourself, if you've had a bad day or if you're going through some issues, the music... can make you happy; it can make you sad, it can encourage you... find comfort knowing that there's a there's a higher power than yourself. And you find strength not facing the day and its challenges all by myself."* The above respondents described acceptance, tranquillity and music as the spiritual tools used that provide strength and uplifts the spirit. They also described these spirituality tools as impactful and being able to alter one's emotions, to repair the soul and associates it with a source of comfort in the face of challenges.

Relatedly, P10 shared that her prayer is how she experiences spirituality as an activity instilling positive emotion within her, relinquishes fear and provides a sense of security and guidance: *"Well, the word does say that you should not be fearful... but instead pray about everything. So, I live by that because if I have given it to the Lord and I've*

*left it at his feet, then I command Him to go ahead of me... and I will wait for feedback... for him to sort out.*" Prayer also provided a source of protection or a "bubble' and trust in the divine that creates happiness for her: *"It does instil a stance of happiness, because I feel there's a certain amount of protection, I feel my kids are protected, our homes is protected, my workplace is protected... and at times I say, God that was you, I was actually a bit fearful here and there, but you really stepped up."* Whereas P12 explained his experience of spirituality happens in various way such as exercise and cooking, which allows him to quiet the mind, detach and return to work feeling relaxed, renewed and positive: *"One is mountain biking, the other one is trying to cook. You have to find some way to be able to detach... and move from frustration into a positive mindset... actively moved us away into a different state where we could be a bit more relaxed, see things differently, it was a bit more relaxed...I want to share this with someone, this different mindset."*

### *Spirituality and Engagement*

P3 related that his perception of spirituality is linked to forgiveness and the ability to be non-judgmental, a trait also mentioned by P2. P3 also sees a value of spirituality in that lends itself to opportunities for re-alignment and growth: *"...if we don't have forgiveness, that means we become judgmental... one of the scriptures in the Bible, says that when a man is overtaken by sin, ...a group of adults or elders... must get together and go and sit with the individual and make it known of his sin, so that he can have an opportunity to re-align himself and understand his weakness and grow."* P8 perceived spirituality as defined by having respect for different groups of people and their beliefs as well as the acknowledgement in the role it plays to help people overcome their difficulties: *"There's a lot of spirituality and religiousness in the work environment... they sometimes are having difficulties in home... in their lives you just respect others point of views and morals. It's nice for some people to feel that their particular religious beliefs and spirituality are respected."* P12 associated spirituality with mountain biking, a form of physical exercise as a way to temporarily detach, which then provides him with a fresh perspective and increased engagement at work. He stated that this allows him to return recharged and renewed: *"So, the purpose of even going out on the mountain bike route is to detach yourself. It is a physical detachment from the phone, from work for that period of time. But I also noticed that I was able to see things differently. Initially you are still engaged... it's very difficult to totally*

*disengage, so you have to try and actively do something.*” These are examples of the strength of spirituality that brought them more engagement in the workplace: assisting others to work on their weaknesses; respecting each other’s differences and activities to detach.

### *Spirituality and Meaning*

P5 associated spirituality with her personal values of being helpful, tolerant and patient as values of spirituality: *“I’m naturally a helpful person. With my work comes many human problems... personal values of being a blessing and a help to others. I am patient with them and I tolerate temporary discomfort if it will lead to proper solution and achieve a meaningful goal.”* P6 related that spirituality is linked to gratitude, appreciation and forgiveness, spiritual tools that he adopts as a Christian in order to ensure that the team is kept in a good stead: *“I think because I’m a Christian and because I’m a spiritual person, I know what the meaning of forgiveness is... prevent conflict and put the next person ahead of me.”* Similarly, P10 associated spirituality to her gratitude to ‘God’, respect, kindness, generosity of spirit and compassion towards others: *“They carry so much of the Holy Spirit with them, that it actually makes me cry sometimes, brings me back to reality to say we’re not better than anybody else. If your daughter can show you that she can touch somebody dirty on the street, whether it’s Covid... tap back into reality... immense emotion, kindness and compassion.”* P11 advised that he believes his spirituality comes from ‘God’ which brings meaning to his life: *“Everyone has got a purpose set out by God... I believe that it must come from within if you want to achieve your purpose... It’s all about spirituality... for me, I’m so grateful... enabled me to help others...”* These are examples of the strength of spirituality that brings more meaning in the workplace for these respondents who associate spirituality with a sense of purpose, internal motivation or strength to help others.

### *Spirituality and Positive Relationships*

P5 described her perception of spirituality as being empathetic, generous with assistance and praise, with no expectation of reciprocation: *“I feel I am a good manager and spiritual, I bring steadfastness, great listening skills, unpacking details to get the correct understanding and empathy. I try my best to make people feel great about themselves, which I think is the glue in the team, even though I hardly get that*

*same treatment in return.*” Similarly P9 advised that his idea of spirituality is linked to his egalitarian perspective which aids him in seeing everybody as equals, acknowledging, accepting and respecting the elements of diversity in the team: *“I think it's not only learning to work with diversity, it's about respecting other people, being able to look at things in that we don't see race, colour, creed, or religion... diverse experience... diverse knowledge... diverse insight, the human spirit... People learn when I build some intrigue that helps them remember.”* P12 shared his perceptions of his spiritual experience which he associates with appreciation of beauty. He encourages his team to step away from their usual environment and connect with nature or engage in activities that bring them joy to replenish their soul: *“...during mountain biking... I took some absolutely beautiful pictures and posted showing them; guys this is what I am doing on a Sunday morning. Whatever you are doing, I hope it's giving you the opportunity of detaching even if it's only for a couple of hours, enjoy it... I shared... and everybody then started to share what they were doing... as an element of spirituality, an element of relationships, and an element of humour.”* These are examples of the strength of spirituality, i.e. understanding, empathy, selflessness, respect, acceptance, intrigue and sharing, that brings improved relationships in the workplace.

### *Spirituality and Accomplishment*

P3 impressed that a sense of spirituality for him is achieved through his gratitude to ‘God’ which is his main motivator for success: *“I said deliver and you'll see that the rewards and God will get them through everything else. Specifically, with religiousness, you understand how very strongly I feel... spirituality... the key driver of success.”* Similarly, P5 advised that is her belief and trust in ‘God’, and devoted prayers which is her main spiritual strength: *“My main psychological strength is my strong belief in God... I remind myself how my prayers have never let me down, how solutions have popped out of nowhere after praying... thus exceeding expectation and meeting the deadline. Then I pray again showing gratitude.”* P10 related that her accomplishments in life were also as a result of her gratitude and trust in ‘God’: *“So I believe that God will bring to you what you deserve and what you ask for... I am grateful to Him for everything I have achieved and accomplished in my life.”* Similarly, to the sentiment of P10, P11 related that he is grateful to his supportive and patient partner as well as “God’ who provides him with the strength to achieve: *“I'd say I'm*

*grateful that I've got a partner that supported me through the journey... I'm grateful to God... derive our strength from the Lord.*" These respondents expressed their experiences of spirituality as gratitude to 'God' that produced a positive outcome, solutions, growth, learning and success.

On the other hand P9 stated that spirituality for him is associated with appreciation of beauty and excellence of a achieving a beautiful business model that brings hope for the people: *"This sense of spirituality is not like the religiousness like people think, to me it links to appreciation of beauty and excellence... it's about what is the beautiful model, the best business model and what is excellence and what are the awards and what are the learnings of people developing."* Like P9, P12 also associated spirituality to the appreciation of beauty: *"You've got spirituality, religiousness which to me is an appreciation of beauty. For me, the appreciation of mountain biking."* P12 further shared that these activities, which he perceives as his spiritual practice, enables him to achieve progress, new discoveries and new solutions to old problems. He stated: *"And it was through one of those breaks, I actually had a bit of a breakthrough when we were having a challenge on our planning side. So, I did some cycling and during that process, I found afterwards that I thought about planning differently. I thought about some intervention...."* P12 explained the outcome of sharing his 'spiritual' experiences with team: *"We got other people engaged in it... I promise you, we left with such a step change... that it is it formed the fundamental approach. It was really rewarding...."* These are examples of the strength of spirituality which were related by the respondents that bring them accomplishment in the workplace.

Following from the above, on the topic of interventions P12 expressed his view that a manager is required to be flexible and should implement types of interventions that encompass spirituality, diverse methods and skills in recognition of this association of spirituality. He stated: *"That's the value of having these other approaches in your toolkit. You can't be rudimentary and regimented in your leadership style, you have to open the other interventions."*

There is overwhelming evidence in the literature as well as from the participant responses that workplace spirituality is a strength that impacts managers quite positively and has gradually been recognised as a sustainable response to various

human resources challenges (Indradevi, 2021). It has been noted that, by incorporating a spiritual aspect in the work experience, organisations have noticed increased levels of creativity, reduced stress levels and improved problem-solving capabilities (Daniel, 2014; Daniel & Jardon, 2015). Also observed is that workplace spirituality has resulted in an increased level of satisfaction, rewards and its related activities; resulting in enhanced job involvement, levels of honesty, commitment as well as the improvements in job performance (Duchon & Plowman, 2005, as cited in Indradevi, 2021). In light of this literature, together with the findings of the data, as it relates to the elements of the PERMA model of WB (as per the sub-themes) in this section, this strength is considered as an important component of wellbeing. For these reasons, a solid case is made for including this strength in WB interventions.

Further to this, the study of human strengths is believed to be critically important, considering that the historical focus of psychological research has been on weaknesses, syndromes or deficits and therefore the shift in emphasis to “positive qualities that help people flourish” is beneficial (Disabato et al., 2019, p. 65).

The reason for the focus on spirituality and transcendence for this particular study is to further examine the significance of the use of psychological strengths for cultivating wellbeing than merely the possession of it. Hence, the drive to create and improve on interventions to be able to enhance these strengths will have a significantly positive effect on the wellbeing of the workforce. Therefore, with regards to the research on psychological strengths of transcendence in the literature, together with the findings of the data, these psychological strengths will be considered fundamental components of wellbeing interventions.

### **5.3 PART 2: THE ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL STRENGTHS IN CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY MANAGERS AND POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS (PPIs)**

#### **Theme Three: Challenges Experienced by Managers and Role of Psychological Strengths**

This theme speaks to the challenges that managers face in their role in the workplace. Here the examination of the role of psychological strengths (PS) of transcendence in negating the challenging experiences of managers in the workplace will be discussed. The various challenges experienced by managers in their roles relating to positive and negative factors, as well as those relating to money factors in the workplace, will also be addressed. The following sub-themes are discussed below with examples from the participant interviews.

### **Sub-Theme One: Manager Related Challenges**

The challenges experienced by managers at the workplace were listed as follows: difficult employees (performance/non-conformance issues); role expectations/responsibilities; work-life balance; capacity; delegation; leadership; disrespect for authority; lack of commitment; disruption of authority/power; no recognition/reward/appreciation for managers; managing employees with psychological conditions/mental health issues; managing diversity; manpower/capacity issues; managers and criticism; managers and an emphasis on technical skills as opposed to strategic abilities. Examples from the respondents regarding these issues will be discussed.

#### *Difficult Employees*

“Difficult employees” was the response given by many of the participants when asked about their challenges in the workplace. P1, a manager in HR at one of the subsidiaries, described issues with departmental managers being unable to address performance issues of difficult employees who report to them. She considered this the most challenging aspect, as the department managers avoid dealing with performance management issues and pass the blame to HR. She said: *“Difficult employees is a result of performance issues. The most difficult thing here is that no one deals with performance issues. As an HR practitioner, I get challenged because of the performance issues. I have to change to a police officer and... nobody wants to pull out the whip... because the other managers leave it to us in HR to do it, so it's like shifting blame, it's wrong to do that.”* P1 advised that that her belief is that these issues need to be dealt with via values aligned to the role such as honesty, good values and

ethical behaviour etc. She explained: “...*talk to your policies and procedures and those are the guiding factors... with the values aligned to being in this role. If you don't value that honesty and ethical behaviour and give out punishment... there is a right way to do it... that's the only way.*”

P4 also indicated that managing the performance and personal issues of difficult employees was most challenging for him, especially those with attitude problems. He said: “*Managing people with very different performance issues, personal issues and so for instance I want somebody to work the weekend and they don't want to work. Their attitude is no, you didn't notify me before time... I'm available, but just because you didn't give me enough notice, I won't....*” Similarly, P4 advised that he deals with these issues via coercion or attempts to lead by example. He said: “*I have to force the issue... then I lay down the law. But being a manager that's where my shortcoming is, I'm not hard enough... I climb in, I do it... I expect that from everybody else as well... I will commit to my work... why can't everybody else do it as well? So why can't you follow my example.*” This participant realises that he is not a strong enough manager and many other examples like this have surfaced where assistance is required in terms of assertiveness, which is a component of emotional intelligence (EQ). As noted in the literature, Hosie et al. (2012) advocate that, for managers, increased performance levels are determined by intrinsic factors inherent in the job such as challenges, job complexity and control, utilisation of skills and responsibilities, whereas, for lower-level employees, performance levels are determined by extrinsic factors such as pay and security. In these situations, it is important to understand the type of motivation and assistance required as coping tools.

P8 also described that he has a tough challenge with having to manage difficult employees who seem to be problematic. He explained that in his attempt to cope with this he found that trying to understand them, their strengths and weaknesses to be able to delegate effectively helps and said: “*So how you overcome that, is you need to be very focused and sometimes you need to delegate more to people and amazingly you'll find people, they take more than what you thought... and they try... So how to overcome this is to understand people better, understand how they work, understand their strengths and weaknesses and work with them.*” This is a perfect example of a

manager that has good EQ skills, is able to understand people well and how to use their PS to the advantage of the team. In the literature, Seligman explains this practice well, by saying that by deploying one's highest positive psychological strengths to meet one's highest challenges, we are able to go into what he describes as "flow" (2011, p. 24).

### *Roles and Responsibilities*

Many participants have advised that another noteworthy challenge experienced is when employees do not understand their specific role requirements and shirk their responsibilities. P6 advised that a major challenge he faces is when managers refuse to accept their responsibilities which he attributes to lack of role clarity and said: *"...maintenance always sees that the production guys aren't taking responsibility for their machines...They say production doesn't have the resources...it's not my responsibility... but going forward, you need to take responsibility."* As noted in the literature, Hosie et al. (2012) stated that the use of skills and responsibilities is an intrinsic factor that certain managers are motivated by. In this case the managers discussed are not driven by intrinsic factors but rather experience self-limiting beliefs which they are required to unlearn in order to achieve their highest potential and, in so doing, assist their employees to do so as well (Maheshwari, 2021). Similarly, P12 also related his experience of this challenge of role effectiveness and extended this thought to described the assistance required by managers regarding mental, emotional, work-related matters in terms of coaching and mentoring. He explained that sometimes he needed to adopt a parental role: *"I've had to work through their challenges mentally, be the coach, mentor. I have had to be that father figure to get them there, deal with the individuals' parents phoning me... people are in tears... I've had to be responsible enough to know that I've got a team that I have to ensure that needs to be effective."* P11 described that he is not averse to delegation in his resolution to this particular challenge of not having the 'specialist' skills required and said: *"There are all masters in certain fields so... I delegate to my meteorologist... and strategize together, because since he is the master, so for me delegation works."* P10 also related the importance to acknowledge and delegate saying: *"Yes, we manage. Yes, we delegate. Yes, we micromanage."* This is another typical example of managers struggling to cope effectively and are further experienced by a director who found difficulty in dealing with her NDEs (non-executive directors), described as follows.

P2, being a director herself, advised that she had a tough challenge in dealing with opposing opinions relating to role definition and boundaries with regard to the functions that are part of the director's role and those that are the role of the NDE. She explained: *"In this level of seniority there are power dynamics of a board and your NDE's... it's not always easy because sometimes you have to listen to what they are asking... it is the role of the NED or are they trying to run the business, because actually I have to ask what is their job... not committing political suicide, and actually pushing back and saying ask me the difficult question, don't try and do my job."* In her attempt at resolving this, we can infer from the conversation that she felt the need to seeking clarity without being offensive, which requires great EQ skills. Hence, it is obvious that some managers are capable to handle certain situations, whilst others are not.

#### *Work-Life Balance (WLB)*

Inducements such as work-life balance, financial rewards and career opportunities are promises made to employees by their leaders that are tangible (De Vos & Meganck, 2008). In other words, it is something that they use to lead or persuade employees with, in exchange for them fulfilling obligations to the organisation. P2 explained the challenge she faced when she became a new parent, having to juggle multiple roles and the importance of 'self-preservation': *"...for me the hardest was becoming a new mum and coming back into a workplace, who expected you to kind of work like a machine and suddenly realising you juggling multiple roles... Because if I take that on, then I just can't get to something else."* P2 further described how her family life suffered: *"I've definitely felt the adversity because suddenly you have so much on your plate and typically...my family were the ones who were suffering because I was just working till all hours and then just feeling like a basket case the next day because I'm so tired."* She related how she has learned to manage her time more effectively: *"...certainly over the years I've learned to better manage... At the beginning of every year, I kind of put that down as my intent for the year of like just doing more deeper work on fewer things, as opposed to kind of lots of initiatives all going at one go."* According to Tansley (2011), highly skilled and talented employees seek work-life balance and thus the importance that HR departments ensure that it is in place, in order to retain these key people in the organisation.

P7 also described that his biggest challenge is work-life balance, and said it was as a result of working in a demanding automotive industry. He related: *"...because we work in automotive... if the plant stops, everything stops... it is a challenging environment to work in... we need to assist and get things done within a certain time in order to have a continuation in the process basically."* He advised further that he is required to juggle multiple responsibilities to sustain his effectiveness as a plant manager and family man. In a similar vein, P11 described his challenge with capacity and work-life balance: *"...work-life balance is the dominating one... there was only one solution to it, so I looked at my KPI then I looked the structure, there were some gaps in the structure in terms of headcount issues. We needed extra hands to close some of the gaps... compressed some of the duties in those open vacancies so that we can relieve people and balance the work-life across all the departments."* He advised that in his resolve he attempt to prevent workers from spending long hours at work was to become pro-active in a strategic drive to restructure and recruit where necessary. P12 also explained his challenge, relatedly, to WLB: *"So I've had to take on some of their work just so that they can be OK. They can have a time off, they don't have to come on a Saturday because they've got a child, that's a problem, they need them."* It is indicated here that P12 was unable to utilise the strategic skills displayed by P11 in responding to this challenge as he advised that he attempted to rather take on the extra responsibility of his staff to ease the pressure off them, to enable them to balance their work and home lives. He believed that in this way they will return to work more rested, which will result in increased productivity. From these examples, it is evidenced that different managers cope differently with similar challenges. In this instance of P12, he became overwhelmed by taking on too much and has subsequently left the organisation due to burnout.

#### *Leadership, Support, Trust, Respect and Criticism*

The practice of good leadership is considered an effective retention strategy in the manufacturing environment and leadership styles should support the retention of talented managers (Doh et al., 2012). The following challenges related to leadership were indicated by respondents.

In this regard P2 explained that her greatest challenge, as a requirement of her job, is to effectively lead her team. This includes an adaptation of the power dynamic that is

received sceptically by managers in their fear of relinquishing control. She explained: *"I think my biggest challenge is always power...I come in and I disrupt the power and it's really hard for people...They just don't like to relinquish power and actually change... my role is actually just one of influence where you try and influence them to think about things differently."* P2 described her efforts to persuade these managers and to effect mindset change, from the transactional to the transformative, as presenting difficulty for her. Similarly, P3 related his experience with his managers who are unable to receive constructive criticism positively in his attempts to coach managers to become more transformational. He stated: *"When you try to do the group coaching and you try to make people understand where they've gone wrong, they take it as being negative and then they feel you are kind of like exposing them, so to speak."* He related that his attempts to alleviate this problem and help develop them by engaging them with other managers on the same level failed as a result of their ego: *"...because of ego, people don't really wanna see, but it's more for development rather than exposing the failure. We rather use managers on same level from other departments... a neutral party, because sometimes their direct manager may not be the most influential person..."* Ego is another EQ factor for transformation and in terms of the literature, a transformational leadership style is thought to influence job satisfaction and performance; commitment, employee's attitude and outcomes (Siyal & Peng, 2018) and, as evidenced by these examples, this is an area that needs attention.

P8 described his challenge of leadership in his workplace, where the behaviour of higher ups is unacceptable to him, and said: *"...there's such a positive vibe and communication where people are talking and then suddenly, you'll get another person or a manager at a higher level, just walk in and completely make statements and you can see that person is trying to totally disrupt that environment... start talking loud and shouting, like directing, demanding... reprimanded the guy... that definitely adversely affects everybody's work efficiency and productivity."* P8 advised his attempts to handle these situations: *"...I would respond and say it's not appreciated what they're doing or I would encourage the affected people by saying no he's just joking. I would try and downplay it... and have a word with the person and say please don't do that in our office environment because you just breaking morale."* In the literature it is documented that leaders should show appreciation, prioritise retention and provide

executive support; they should also display trust and ethical behaviour (Sharkie, 2009; Tu, Lu & Yu, 2017). This is not being shown by some of the leaders in this organisation, as expressed by these examples.

P12 expressed similar challenges in that his higher ups bypass him to give instructions to his direct employees which he views this as a sign of disrespect and it creates an environment of distrust as it undermines him. He stated: *“The negative states have been contra to my state of mind... elements of distrust, miscommunication, disrespect for authority, and disrespect for my position. Those are things that have also manifested itself... I don't think that I've been led by those that have that level of maturity. People have chosen to bypass me, go directly to individuals and give instructions... forsake my responsibility... start to undermine me....”* P12 advised that he handles the situation in a responsible way even though it destabilised his sense of wellbeing: *“...those are some of the challenges... that have destabilised my elements of wellness....”* It is the belief of P12 that he has a mature approach to leadership, and his higher ups do not and advises that they should focus more on the people aspect of the business: *“As I said I bring a very mature approach to leadership. I know tomorrow is a function of people, not the robot...You know AI is coming, but this organisation doesn't have that. So, I reckon that I'm reliant on people, and that's where I've had to focus. So that's why I'm saying those that don't know how to lead me, unfortunately, that's been my biggest frustration.”* This behaviour of some leaders in the organisation is contra the ideal behaviour expected of leaders, as indicated in the literature, where some authors propound that leaders may be considered as partners who are responsible for supporting their teams by enabling the management and resolution of problems that affect and negatively impact the people and the organisation (Baker, Perreault, Reid & Blanchard, 2013). Factors such as effective communication and work engagement may also contribute to happiness in the workplace (Field & Buitendach, 2011; Swart & Rothman, 2012)

#### *Managing Employees with Psychological Conditions/Mental Health Issues*

Mental health is described by Warr (2011) as subjective wellbeing, aspiration, competence, autonomy and integrated functioning. Physical activity and healthy behaviour have a positive impact on health outcomes and mental health indicators linked to subjective wellbeing is recognised by the Department of Health. These

studies have determined a positive association between regular physical activity and outcome of sustained wellbeing, including improved mood, life satisfaction, mental and subjective wellbeing (Marquez et al., 2020).

Following from this, P5 maintains that her most daunting challenge is to manage her employees with psychological conditions, due to her lack of professional knowledge, experience, skill and patience. She is afraid that could be possibly worsening the situation as she stated: *“Colleagues with subtle psychological conditions are the greatest challenge to me overall. I dismally fail to deal with, for example, bipolar patients that work amongst us, or people struggling with past traumas. Although these are not their fault, but I personally struggle or lack the skill to deal with them professionally. I end up bursting up in anger, and maybe damaging them further I don’t know, but an encounter with such scenarios really spoils my day.”* Similarly, P12 related his challenge of having to deal with people who have experienced mental breakdowns such as anxiety, panic attacks, etc. He explained: *“I have had people that...have had mental breakdowns that have left because of mental wellness issues, nobody understands how difficult it is... This site operates so far away from its home... there is no HR support or attention. I don't even have the clinic on site... I have had people fainting. I've had people going into hospital. I have had people having panic attacks, anxiety.”* P12 advises that he handles these situations himself, with no HR support, which tested his mental skill and fortitude: *“As a leader, I have had to carry people, put them into the car and take them home... I've had people who were put into jail... I had to go to a police cell and find people. Everybody walked away and said. No, we can't get involved... I had to go take food. I had to rush from meetings... What level of fortitude and mental skill do you need to have to operate like that.”* Improving and protecting the wellbeing of employees at work is an initiative with specific focus on the mental and physical health of employees and there is robust evidence, as indicated in the literature, that the presence of illnesses, self-assessed health and mental health all strongly impact subjective wellbeing (Marquez et al., 2020). It is evident here that these are real challenges that managers struggle with and require assistance in terms of employee wellness interventions.

*Managing Diversity (Gender, Race)*

Lloyd and Mey (2007), in their research at a renowned motor manufacturing company in SA, noted that the male employees enjoyed more progress and development than female employees. Also noted were the prejudices and stereotypes around the promotion and promotion strategies of females (Lloyd & Mey, 2007). In another SA study by Mayer and Viviers (2014), it was stated in a post-apartheid context, that awareness needs to be increased around matters concerning differences such as religious, cultural, age and race, in order to increase levels of wellbeing. On this note, P10 related her challenges of being a female of colour in a male-dominated work environment, she stated: *"I think there are challenges in every job that I come to because there's always this male orientated stance where they feel that women should not be dominating in this industry, especially in the automotive, probably because it's more male orientated and dominated. So, I have had challenges of colour, where employees feel that they should have been appointed in this position as the one that I'm currently residing in."* P10 advised that this situation had proved extremely difficult, where female managers are scarce, especially ones of colour and in her only source of comfort and resolve was to pray: *"And I said to God, I know the workforce inside is not happy... So, I actually prayed... and I said to the Lord, I hope this is not going to be a challenge for me...."* The support for female managers is very much required as these issues are more rampant. More evidence would have been provided if more manager in this situation were interviewed.

#### *Technical skills versus Strategic Abilities*

Prewitt, Weil and McClure (2011) state that leadership may be defined as the capacity to be an inspiration to others by virtue of example, motivating them to achieve goals, and that the responsibility of a leader is to have a positive influence on workers and to create strategy for the future of business and the individuals.

With this in mind, P9 described his challenge being the level of emphasis placed on technicality as opposed to strategy. He stated: *"What is lacking here is the strategic development of managers... in my previous company, they developed a strategic ability... which is what we need here."* He explained further that the heavy focus on technical aspects creates a wastage of certain important resources: *"...they have no grasp of technology... It's manufacturing... and you cannot strategize, you cannot resource and you cannot use the toolset, it's a loss... gonna be an absolute mess."*

P12 also expressed that a challenge for him was presented by an emphasis on technical skills as opposed to strategic skills, which negatively impacts the organisational culture: *“It seems the modern leader here is not focused on people... no organisation today can exist without a strong fundamental organisational culture and that culture defines things like leadership... and that toolbox doesn't exist. When you want to recruit people that are modern managers that have the technical skills, plus the ability to lead, they also need to be an organisation that has strategy and culture, and they need people to lead them.”* It is evident here that there is a requirement for leadership from the top to be more interactive on the personal side, and not just on technical issues. In the literature (Madi Odeh et al., 2023) explain that these leadership styles and adaptive behaviours enable leaders to manage more effectively and transform organisations positively.

#### *Recognition for Managers and the Link to Motivation*

Brick, Bosshard & Whitmarsh (2021) describe recognition as the celebration of the success of the employee or organisation that enables support for internal as well as external customers. It is believed that when recognition is encouraged, it creates a positive climate for individuals to flourish. P12 in particular raised his interpretation experiences and said: *“The lack of recognition and respect are factors that have been significant in destabilising my approach, my purpose, and I've got zero recognition... That's why I take away the rewards and recognition from the people that I've interacted with, not from how I was measured, not from somebody telling me about you didn't achieve this KPI, you didn't achieve this profitability...”* He then related a specific experience where someone was to be recruited into the company on a lower level at a higher salary than himself and described the impact on him in terms of his perceived diminished value in the organisation: *“Somebody who's got... only experience, only matrix, was commanding 20% more than my salary and I was asked to recruit. It was rejected by the HR but was being pushed through by the higher echelons of this organisation. How do you think that makes me feel? You think it motivates me knowing... I can go and do that job for less responsibility and more money... It has the impact of wanting to diminish what I do, my value... it's my standing, and how I am viewed in the organisation, so I am viewed less...”* This example exemplifies how receiving no acknowledgement, no recognition nor respect is a destabilising factor for him. However, this could also be viewed as an outcome of pride where approval, social

standing or the status of an employee and thought to regulate the interpersonal behaviour of the employee (Van Osch, Zeelenberg, Breugelmans & Brandt, 2019). Also noted by other authors is that pride may be exaggerated by recognition (Bolló, Bóthe, Tóth-Király, & Orosz, 2018), although it may still be concluded that pride could have a positive connection to goal attainment. These examples are linked to the element of motivation, which is described in the literature as an intrinsic factor that has positive effects on employee job performance, and motivators such as recognition (considered basic human need) is required for psychological growth (Yusoff, Kian & Idris, 2013). Hence positive attitudes that are experienced by employees who are motivated, recognised and rewarded are thought to create an atmosphere of growth, and these motivators could also be linked to responsibility and self-development (Alshmemri Shahwan-Akl & Maude, 2017; Hur, 2018)

In summation, the challenges experienced by managers at the workplace were found as listed here: difficult employees; role expectations / responsibilities; work-life balance; capacity; delegation; leadership; disrespect for authority; issues regarding recognition and appreciation for managers; managing psychological conditions; diversity and an emphasis on technical skills as opposed to strategic abilities. The most significant and most challenging factor presented by managers was difficult employees. Some indicated this factor was as a result of employee performance issues that managers could not handle; others reported personal issues and employee attitude problems. Some managers described that learning to understand the strengths of their employees was crucial in order to assist and alleviate these challenges. One participant indicated that upholding laws, values like honesty, ethics and doing the right thing are imperative in dealing with challenges. Other participants attempt to lead by example, exhibit coercion and some were noted to possess weak managerial capabilities presenting further challenges and ineffectiveness when attempting to resolve challenges. Work-life balance, managing people with psychological issues, lack of managerial experience, skill, knowledge and patience were indicated to be challenges of leadership. About half of the participants reported a lack of HR support for some subsidiaries. The least emphasised challenges, albeit still challenges worth addressing, pertained to diversity issues, lack of strategic leadership and the shift from a transactional to a transformative mindset. A sense of maturity, emotional intelligence and proactive capabilities were also found lacking,

where some participants indicated that they do in fact possess and utilise these characteristics, whilst the majority did not. The next section will describe the positive and negative factors as perceived and experienced by the managers in their workplace as well as the role of PS in addressing these factors.

### **Sub-Theme Two: Positive and Negative Factors**

According to Lyubomirsky et al. (2011), it has been said that people who focus on negative emotions are likely to be more aware of both their skills and their shortcomings, they are good at recollection of positive and negative data, can see risks that may arise, are more narrowly focused and practise critical thinking and decision-making. In contrast, those who focus on positive emotions are found to be more optimistic regarding their abilities; they remember information that is more positive and make decisions that are more positive for their lives (Seligman, 2011). The term 'flourishing' is often employed to describe those individuals who usually experience positive emotions, engage positively with their surroundings and succeed (Keyes, 2007).

These positive people also internalise positive emotions and develop what are termed broaden-and-build effects (Catalino & Fredrickson, 2011; Keyes, 2002). They tend to respond favourably to daily activities that trigger emotion-based mechanisms that serve to maintain their wellbeing over time. This notion is consistent with the premise of the Broaden-and-Build Theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001, 2005). The broaden hypothesis, emanating from this theory, explains how positive emotions, in relation to that of neutral states and negative emotions, enable the expansion of a multitude of action urges, thoughts and principles (Frederickson, 2013). Amidst these mediator variables, both the negative as well as the positive affects were found to be correlated with stress in a significant way (Johnson et al., 2021). Resilience was one of these that was found to have a positive correlation with positive affect and stress and a negative correlation with stress and negative affect (Johnson et al., 2021).

Among the positive and negative factors experienced by respondents in this study, it was noted that more experiences of negative factors were related by the respondents than positive. The following descriptors such as attitude to work, teamwork and

relationships are an indication of positive factors experienced. These will now be discussed.

## **Positive Factors**

### *Attitude to Work and Wellbeing*

It has been noted by certain authors that work performance could very well be more favourably affected by a manager's positive attitudes and that negative attitudes may have an opposite effect (Holston-Okae & Mushi, 2018). This factor is displayed in the example by P2, where she described her change of her attitude towards work to a more positive one due to having realised that she can balance her work-life and home-life in her multiple roles: *"I'm almost less apologetic...It's just me being completely authentic, that I'm more than just this person that shows up to work and I've got multiple identities."* Relatedly, P3 noted that in his experience, the more one strives and attains, the more positive one's experiences of work becomes: *"So increasing good feelings, so wellness, morale, improvement, work satisfaction, that is all in goal attainment right, so you want to attain the goal, the more you attain the goal, the more drive we have in the process."* As the evidence describes the experience of positive emotion, in literature it is noted that the display of positive attitudes by a manager has positive effects on others and demonstrates improved attitudes with others and regarding the organisation (Puni, Agyemang & Asamoah, 2016).

### *Teamwork*

Work efficiency is thought to be as a result of employees having a good understanding and a realisation of the vital roles that teamwork plays in the organisation, where workplace spirituality plays a pivotal role in transforming the impact of adversity and boosts performance (Mousa, 2020). P5 described an example of the positive factors she experiences with colleagues and customers that boost her levels of optimism and described them as a 'God-send': *"Having a destiny helper or angel raise up from among work colleagues or even from customers, where this person ushers me to the desired outcome. A true God-send. Such situations really boost my optimism in life and humans generally."* Similarly, P6 described that working together to achieve similar goals as opposed to working in isolation is a positive factor he experiences: *"...people need to acknowledge, encourage and support each other... We here as a team... I don't function alone... I'm here to provide a service... we sort of work hand*

*in hand... and we need to realise that at all times and quite often, we sort of get isolated in our bubble, without realising that.*" From these examples it is noted that team functioning is improved through appropriate channels of communication with others and collaborative efforts. This is in keeping with the literature, where teamwork is identified as when employees value and appreciate each other to build stronger supportive relationships, which is also considered to influence and contribute to overall happiness at work (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023).

### *Relationships*

Robertson, Cooper, Sarkar and Curran (2015) established that work relationships are an important factor in an organisation and are related to a sense of purpose, having positive emotions, increased morale, work satisfaction and motivation levels. P8 described that the new company takes efforts to implement strategic change through a mindset change which improved employee relationships and stated: *"It's improving... this new company way is actually bringing everyone together. It's this whole new mindset that the strategy intervention that is being implemented."* He further described the interactions experienced with diverse people as a positive factor that assists in building relationships: *"So, I've always experienced really great relationships with other people. I've always really paid attention to the people, who they are, where they come from, their background and where they are in life, how well they are... and I've always experienced amazing interactions with all people of all different races, religions, spirituality, which has been really positive."* From this example, it is gleaned that employees who consider work relationships as imperative and who value and rate good relations very highly experience more positive emotion (Clark, 2010). There is also a high correlation between positive relationships and personal wellbeing (Stoll et al., 2012).

In summation, the positive factors as experienced by managers in the workplace are attitudes to work and wellbeing, teamwork and positive relationships. Two respondents advised that attitude to work was important for wellbeing. Two also advised that teamwork was important for building relationships which led to happiness. One reported that teamwork boosts levels of optimism, and the other reported that working together to achieve similar goals provides a sense of belonging and prevents feelings of isolation. Positive attitudes by means of positive relationships experienced by

respondents were indicated to assist to improve personal and organisational wellbeing. Alongside the positive factors, negative factors were also experienced, unfortunately more extensively. These will be discussed as follows.

### **Negative Factors**

The following descriptors: disillusionment, uncertainty, anxiety, isolation, morale, conflict, tension, distrust, instability, blame-shifting, bullying, hostility, lack of accountability, responsibility, retrenchment and difficult communication, are all an indication of the negative factors the respondents experienced at their place of work. These will be described as follows.

P1 described the negative factors experienced by her as her levels of disillusionment; uncertainty; unable to see the bigger picture; feeling of isolation; anxiety; lack of involvement from other departments and a low state of morale and work satisfaction. She stated: *“When I joined here... my engagement was high, I had positive role models... eventually that level of disillusionment came in and it did create that uncertainty. So, when I couldn't bring the big picture, it would break me a little more, give me bad feelings. I was low on morale... Now with correct and good structures and new vision that negativity has changed to a lot of positive interactions and it's also where you don't feel alone. It's the sense of involvement that helps... the anxiety and... focusing... company vision is the glue that is bringing...higher state of morale and work satisfaction as well...”* P1 advised that, although she experienced negative challenges initially upon joining the organisation, since then HR interventions and strategies were implemented to combat these challenges, instil positivity and provide vision for the company, to assist to transform the business and employees towards positivity. This would mean extra effort for performance matters, transforming and encouraging leaders who could build creative and innovative solutions to complex problems. P3 explained that the negative factors he experiences are anxiety, tension and disillusionment. He stated: *“The negative states that is continuous... team collaboration, we formed the team... you think it's gonna norm quickly but sometimes the storming just goes on for longer than you expect. So, that brings anxiety, tension...”* Unfortunately, at his subsidiary there are no interventions in place, unlike those mentioned by P1, hence the implementation of interventions is required at his workplace.

Relatedly, P3 described the negative factors experienced by him in terms of hostility and lack of discipline in the workplace: “...*the environment was pretty hostile... coaching also helps, and also, I'm trying to create more awareness... of acceptable and unacceptable practices.*” In order to address this, P3 advised that he attempted to implement coaching practices and create awareness and ensure compliance of policies and practices; however, these were not effective in addressing these challenges. P9 described his negative perception of the environment, as one ridden with erratic outbursts, bullying, distrust, inappropriate behaviour and blame shifting: “*If you dealing with less informed people but if they are rational, they're mature and less prone to the erratic outbursts, just not being a bully, you can win in that environment, especially if there's no trust... I don't trust my colleagues... I'm aware of inappropriate things being done and how do I address this... there's a trust deficit... You can't find the cognitive resonance with distrust, or untrustworthy behaviour... my job is to change a culture positively... but if that culture is rotten...*” He stated that he tried to influence the culture positively and failed as a result of the negative behaviour being too overwhelming for him. The example from this participant indicates that assistance is urgently required to address all these concerns. Trust is considered an essential leadership, a trait that is earned by authentic and forthright leaders who are able to communicate openly and honestly (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). It is also considered to be a concept that is built, promotes a more harmonious environment and alleviates conflict and tension (Skeepers & Mbohwa, 2015).

P6 also reported his experiences of negative factors to be distrust, blame shifting, lack of accountability and differences of opinions that lead to conflict. He stated: “*I think of distrust, and responsibilities. We had a situation last week where I had a difference in opinion... there's a bit of conflict.*” He stated the importance of resolving conflict respectfully: “*...we need to respect and acknowledge people, keep emotions out... we spend a lot of time here... we need to make it work... it's important when you've said the wrong thing... that you do go back and apologise...*” Similarly, P5 described the manner in which distrust set into her work environment resulting in wariness and tension, and her withdrawing from others: “*Discovering that one of my upline managers whom I trusted is actually two-faced. This has made me shrink into my shell, I go to work, sit at my desk, do my work, and go home. It makes it hard to safely share*

*your views with anyone, after such a discovery.*” The promotion of trust, good working relationships and respect for fellow team workers are evidently a grave challenge to attain in many of the subsidiaries, which could be facilitated by honest and open communication of managers (Skeepers & Mbohwa, 2015).

P6 described his negative experiences due to the lack of accountability of responsibilities of others.: *“I think effective communication is one of the ways and we need to respect the person for who he is, irrespective of his position. So last week I was engaging with the supervisor on the line and I was trying to explain to him the importance of being responsible for his area...”* He described his attempts to rectify the situations in a respectable manner. The idea of healthy communication and respect is also thought to foster a culture of safety and a decrease in turnover rates (Chang et al., 2013). Certain studies have found that trustworthy managers, as perceived by employees, may create a more positive effect on employees even more than does higher income (Helliwell et al., 2015). A transformational leadership style, through increased levels of trust, is also believed to decrease employee turnover and improve job performance (Ariyabuddhiphongs & Kahn, 2017).

P4 related that the negative factors in his plant were retrenchments and replacement, that created a huge problem; added to that were cultural differences, financial instability and morale: *“...it was all a different cultural set up, the Zulu culture... and Xhosa culture... you had a lot of people, even though they were trained, weren't used to this kind of work... there's been an unstable situation in this whole plant financially and I think that's what has broken the morale down ...”* P4 advised that he attempted to motivate the employees using a transformational approach to alleviate the problem: *“So, you got to turn all that around and try and motivate people, but it'll take time, it will get there, but it's gonna take time to undo...”* In an unstable economy it has been noted that leaders who are able to adopt a transformational leadership style give the organisation a greater chance to remain competitive by enhancing productivity, improving performance, achieving targets and reducing expenses (Alatawi, 2017). Research has proven that the transformational leadership style of managers has a positive impact on attitudes of employees, commitment to the organisation, reluctance to resign, overall job satisfaction and performance levels (Siyal & Peng, 2018).

In summation, the listed negative factors as experienced in the workplace as indicated by the respondents were distrust, disillusionment, disrespect, uncertainty, anxiety, isolation, morale, conflict, tension, anxiety, lack of managerial responsibility, compensation, blame-shifting, bullying, inappropriate behaviour, instability, culture and diversity issues. The most prominent factor reported was lack of trust, second was responsibilities and then came incidents of bullying and low morale. Negative factors such as anxiety and tension were also reported by some participants as hindering their wellbeing. It is said that challenges such as negative attitudes, anxiety, uncertainty, the feeling of isolation and disillusionment could be attributed to lack of support and good leadership (Ariyabuddhiphongs & Kahn, 2017) and these authors posited that transformational leadership style could assist to improve the organisational environment and result in flourishing organisations. For these reasons and from the evidence presented, it is suggested that leadership development programmes should be developed and implemented for managers.

The next sub-theme that will be addressed is participants' perception of money as a challenging factor.

### **Sub-Theme Three: Money Factors**

Seligman (2002, p. 74) posed the question, whether is it “possible to be happier – to feel more satisfied, to be more engaged with life, find more meaning, have higher hopes and probably even smile more, regardless of one’s external circumstances.” This question was prompted by his research on the orientations of authentic happiness. Money was found to be a pervasive factor of external or extrinsic motivation at work, which spurred a related question posed by Easterlin (2003) which asked if receiving more money (income) would make one happier? The following perceptions were identified as prevalent by respondents as indicated in the data responses regarding whether money was a determining factor for happiness. Some participants answers were positive, others negative and one said it was both.

#### *Participants who answered NO*

Studies by Hershfield et al. (2016) indicate that having more money has little to no relevance for increased happiness in contexts where people experienced the same

basic safety net. Seligman (2002) also states that increasing wealth does not have much impact on personal happiness. Almost half of the participants answered that money was not a determining factor of happiness.

#### *Money does not make the world go around*

P1 stated that she does not believe that money brings her happiness, she is content with her earnings, and that more will not increase her wellbeing but rather her state of mind will. She further explained that material things only bring short stints of happiness and does not lead to an internal sense of lasting happiness: *“I think I've reached that point where I can maintain a good life... popular opinion is that money does make the world go round... I've reached a comfortable stage... it's good to still pursue it, but my level of happiness is not reliant on money, no! My wellbeing... basically, my state of mind can only increase my happiness... When we reach a level of maturity with our happiness, and reach that certain money... that timeline of getting a salary, even if we keep adding to that our level of happiness won't really increase... we can get more material things, we can use money to buy a better house a better lifestyle, but it's a short-lived state of happiness. Over time, it's not going to keep me happy if inside I'm not happy at all.”*

#### *Money: A Form of Contentment or Means to Self-actualise*

P3 exclaimed that money provides a sense of contentment and comfort, but too much actually brings trouble. He states that people use money to obtain status which poses risks: *“It definitely makes life comfortable but the only thing more money bring you is more problems... So, the more money you have, you want to then move your status in life... But where does the wisdom come in, you wanna buy R1.5 mil then car, but then you eat dhal and rice every day? More money just makes people more stupid and they create more problems for themselves, that's how they die.”* P3 was asked to elaborate on how the employees perceive their salaries in terms of being sufficient for their needs. He believes that different people have different views, that some people are happy with their simple communal life and lack 'individualism', where they are living comfortably, however others require more to "self-actualise' and therefore have varying needs: *“You see, like in that environment, it's a group community, so it's a community in that level. There's no individualism there... So obviously you define what comfortable is. Like I said, do you want to self-actualise whilst still working, or do you*

wanna self-actualise and retire. At the end of the day, you ask the question, what is enough for one person may never be enough for another person based on the goals and objectives that they decide is good.”

#### *How you use Money is the Determining Factor that bring Peace*

P5 exclaimed that she believes that the amount of income does not determine wellbeing, rather using money wisely is an important determinant of wellbeing as well as maintaining a good sense of internal harmony: *“I believe that the size of your income does not play any role in your wellbeing. It is how you use your money that is the determining factor. If you live to please others, bother about what people will say or think, then you will drive yourself to living beyond your income. That wipes away all forms of peace from your head and heart. I believe we should be mentally strong enough to walk on our own lane, while working on improving our income, and live as frugally as we can and focus on maintaining inner peace rather.”*

#### *More Money for Employees does not lead to Positivity or Commitment*

P2 states that it her opinion that an increase in income may assist to improves one’s lifestyle but does not necessarily correlate to increased commitment or positivity at work: *I often have this conversation when we look at increasing staff salaries... that paying more money is not going to make them more committed or more positive because we're all guilty of it, the moment you pay someone more money, the lifestyle shifts. So, it doesn't make someone less in debt because you've now paid them more money... they see it as more to spend on other things.”* This factor is related to whether one is able to spend money wisely, which determines a state happiness or unhappiness.

#### *Money a Factor of Unhappiness in relation to Cost of Living/Affordability*

P6 advised that he believes it’s not about the money but rather about being able to enjoy what you are doing. To him, the company he works for and the people he works with are of more significance to his happiness and wellbeing. He states that money will only become a factor of unhappiness if it affects the cost of living and affordability of life: *“It's never been about the money in my role at the company... if you enjoy what you're doing, if you are happy with the organisation, that's definitely the most important thing... I could possibly get another job at the drop of a hat in another organisation,*

*but I might not be happy there, I might not enjoy the team dynamics. I might not enjoy what I'm doing there, I might not enjoy the change in the responsibilities. I'm happy here, working with the team, I'm happy working with top management and the exec, we have a mutual understanding, we respect each other. The only time I think when money really comes in as a factor would be if you look at your cost of living. I think it's fair to say that, if the increase in inflation and the petrol prices and the food and all that sort of stuff gets out of hand, then the company that you're working for should at least match, or go little bit higher than inflation to try and make sure that you know we all can afford, or cover our expenses for that matter.”*

P6 further exclaimed that even though money is not a determinant of happiness for him, as a manager they don't get paid overtime, which is a factor of discontent for him. He also stated that the company should use money in the form of rewards, salary improvement, as a 'tool' to retain people (so as not to lose key people to the outside). He maintains that a good succession plan is important: *“Money isn't really a driving factor for me but as a manager, I don't get paid overtime when I use my personal time. Also speaking from a manager perspective, it's important that the organisation identifies the people that are really hardworking and that we need to use money as a, as a tool to retain our skills... people that are contributing tremendously into the organisation, so an active succession plan or program is imperative where management HR is involved.”*

### *Protecting Earning Power Can Steal your Happiness*

P7 stated that that people need to appreciate more what they have and focusing on protecting one's earning capacity/power can steal your happiness. He stated that it is his belief is that employees will never be satisfied, they always want more: *“...they're not satisfied. No employee is ever satisfied. You can never satisfy employees. You can even pay them ten times their salary, they will never be satisfied. Once it is received that, they'll be happy for a period of time, then once they have found a way to monthly disperse of those funds, it's how to get more... we don't appreciate what we have. We just want more and more, we continue into the cycle... looking at the past value of current money... compared to how you are living now... how you have changed from this happy person, in many cases, to actually being, not sad but*

concerned person. And when I say concerned is do you always want to protect that earning power.”

#### *Education is a More Significant Determinant of Happiness*

P10 stated that money alone does not brings happiness, she explained that money does not define her, however to her education is of utmost importance. She relates that she imparts the same teaching to her significant others, expressing the same values and beliefs to enable them to earn a comfortable living: *“I don’t think that money defines me. I think we’ve been very blessed... and that my parents have actually looked after us and educated us. So, all I needed to do was make it work... so all they need to do is fish for themselves... because education allows you to have opportunities and without it you have none... remains their choice at the end of the day, what they do with these opportunities.”*

#### *Simplicity, Gratitude, Love brings Happiness*

P10 advises further that in the process of going after money to bring her happiness and a feeling of being complete, she realised that it was only ‘gratitude’ and ‘love’ that brings this happiness: *“I wanted to enrich myself, I found out that the money that I’m earning is not enough... but it’s almost a matter of when the bar is set high, it’s so difficult to climb down. It’s so difficult because you always buying, you’re always consuming. You having to get the next best thing because this will make you complete, but it doesn’t really, because all I actually wanted was simplicity... to just have gratitude and love and be happy at the end of the day, even though we’ve achieved all these things, are we really happy with ourselves? Are we actually seeing ourselves or envisioning ourselves for where we want to or should be?”* P10 decided that she wants to rather enjoy her retirement money, sell her properties, travel and experience the world. She believes that this will bring her happiness: *“I’m going to enjoy myself when I retire at 55... sell some of my property and fly around the world.”*

#### *Money for Survival but Time, Health and Experiences brings Happiness*

P11 explained that it is his belief that one requires money to survive but it is not the secret to happiness; it is a one factor. He states that having time for family, his experiences at work, being able to explore life, having good health and maintaining this health as well as making sure that family is healthy are all important: *“That’s a*

*tricky one, because in this day and age, of course you need money to survive... I think money is a factor that is required but not the sole key to happiness... having time to do things I want, ...spend with my family, ...share my experiences at work, ...explore life in general makes me happy and to help others, that will give me extreme happiness. And secondly health, having good health, maintaining health, making sure that my family is healthy... there are two key things that I believe in, which is time and health, but money alone for me is not the key to happiness.”*

To conclude this section of the participant responses, regarding their perceptions of money factors, similar beliefs were found in a related study, where levels of health, being married, and having children were proven to be more impactful than financial status, on happiness levels (Lawrence et al., 2018). In another study by Whillans, Macchia and Dunn (2019) it was further corroborated that people who valued time experienced greater satisfaction and happiness. The results have shown in the responses as well as evidence from literature that those who valued things like education, time and positive emotions over money experienced more wellbeing. This was also validated in a study where purchasing power was tested in correspondence to greater happiness levels (Easterlin et al. 2010).

#### *Participants who Answered Yes*

Stoll et al. (2012) advise that, as much as an increase in income levels has a positive correlation with wellbeing, increased income does not translate to increased wellbeing at a steady rate. He stated that changes in income have a much greater impact on the poor than they do on the happiness of the wealthy. A later study by Sujarwoto et al. (2018) posited that people who lived in higher income houses, districts with better public services, etc. experienced greater happiness and more satisfied lives than those who lived in lower incomes housing with lower levels of income and in poorer districts with poorer facilities. With this in mind, the following participants' responses regarding the impact of money on their happiness will be discussed below.

#### *Salary denotes Intrinsic Worth*

P2 advised that her salary marks her intrinsic worth, makes her feel appreciated and self-confident and that unfair pay brings unhappiness. *“I would be lying if I said no. It's not about how much, but it's about am I being paid what I believe is my intrinsic worth...”*

*So, do you feel that for the hours, knowledge and experience that you bring are you being paid fairly? If you're not then you have every right to be unhappy and I think, it does colour in how you experience work. I think that money for me personally is very much linked to my self-worth. That for me, is what money is about...do I feel appreciated and... at my previous company... my group CEO was someone who knew his self-worth and made me realise that I don't need to compromise myself worth.”* Similarly, P7 also shares that his intrinsic or self-worth is attached to money, and resigned from his previous company due to unfair pay, only agreeing to return once his financial expectations were met: *“I have to say money is important, by no means would I do it for free, or be short-changed in the proceeds. One of the key reasons I left my previous company, was that I was not paid fairly... I took exception to it and I left. And when I come back, it's a new baseline that I have established.”*

*Money is required for Necessities like Medical Aid:*

P4 said that money is required to be able to at least afford necessities for the sake of wellbeing as one does not always need to have money for luxuries: *“It makes a difference to your wellbeing in affordability... if you've got enough money to afford a decent medical aid, it definitely helps your wellbeing. I'm not saying you must have money to go buy the most fancy car available but you must have enough to sustain yourself, your day today living comfortably so not be lavish, for quality of life... not necessarily the nice to have you don't have to have that all the time.”*

*Only Money can Provide a Comfortable Lifestyle and Security*

P7 stated that it is his opinion that money is important to build a comfortable lifestyle, it is also a form of security *“Is money the only motivating factor? My personal belief is yes, because only your potential assists you in building a lifestyle that you are comfortable with, not only for yourself and your family, your extended family, for your friends... also from a security perspective.”* He determined that employees are more extrinsically motivated than intrinsically and what motivates them is a competitiveness, the need to constantly earn more and a sense of survival: *“I do not come to work because I want to, I come to work as I have to and we have an agreement. People don't like to give something for nothing. They always wanna know what's in it for them... when they get more, they never satisfied because... once you achieve something, you have this hunger for more... it's like a natural thing in people...always*

*wanting more... a sense of competitiveness... Why do we have to compete? What happened to the basic essentials of life? Why am I not satisfied with that? Because it's human nature as well, it's a sense of survival in us."*

#### *Lack of Money causes Suffering*

P8 advised that his belief is that not earning enough impacts family wellbeing and advises that without money people will suffer: *"...if you're not earning enough money, it impacts your family, it impacts wellbeing of your family... that's why you have to work...it's not a marriage, your time at work is to earn money. I think that's reality of the fact people suffer with without enough money... it makes a difference to your wellbeing because the other people go on holidays, buying things or even just having opportunities to go to a specific university, whereas maybe your family member can't go to that university."*

#### *Money Makes the World go Around*

P9 advised that money is vital for wellbeing in that it 'makes the world go around'. He also stated that the need for money is different for different people and at different stages in life. He related that he is at a stage where he would rather spend his money and time travelling: *"Money makes the world go around. It's a very important component of wellbeing. If you work hard, you play hard to compensate, that determines the level you live at... I mean, money is hugely important. You're looking to retirement...but what I drive means nothing to me now, my home is too huge... the ability to travel seems to be important."*

#### *Participants who answered Yes and No*

In a study by DeLay and Clark (2020), it was posited that a consistently higher percentage of men than of women rated high income as very important, and also the value that money brings is far more significant to men as a marker of lifestyle and public recognition. In the excerpt below, the participant outlined that his salary marks his sense of self-value, hence money itself cannot bring him happiness, but the value ascribed to it bears significance for him.

#### *Money means Respect, Recognition and Value (NO)*

P12 stated that, even though money is linked to market value, it is not a determinant of happiness for him. He said that his salary does not drive him but it does align to his feeling of being recognised, respected and valued in the organisation: *“Money is not a motivator for me, however, it does align to the concept of respect, recognition, and value... Is money in isolation a motivator for me? I don't work for that. It aligns to certain value. Is it comparable to the market? Great, I don't have an issue... my salary has no bearing on what I do. It doesn't drive me, but as soon as the concept of money against the relative perception of my value comes in, that's the only time money has any meaning to me.”*

#### *Unfair Pay brings Discord, Dissatisfaction, Demotivation and Unhappiness (Yes)*

P12 related an incident of when he experienced discord, dissatisfaction, demotivation and unhappiness with regards to salary: *“So, I have had people report to me who, through... overtime, have significantly less responsibility, will earn more money than me. That for me is where the dissonance comes in. So, it's not about money, but it's what it means. So, if somebody tells me I got all those responsibilities, but somebody else is an expert and I've gotta pay them more, therein lies the issue for me that it is now demotivating. How do you have somebody who is the head that has significantly more experience, significantly more responsibility, and you have somebody who can push two buttons warrants more money?”*

In conclusion, with regards to the money factors as experienced by the respondents, there was no clear indication that salary is a determinant of happiness or unhappiness, due to the varying views from the evidence in this study as well as from the literature. This bears evidence that different people are affected differently regarding their income levels. Half the respondents reported that it did not impact their happiness, whereas the other half indicated that it did impact their happiness. Managers who were both from a higher ranking and financially wealthier levels, indicated that they placed less emphasis on money factors than intrinsic rewards and developing careers. The assumption was that a higher income was considered more acceptable for managers than for lower levels. From the literature, it was noted that lower income can affect people in a lower income bracket more negatively, as opposed to those who are able to afford affluent lifestyles, although, according to the literature, the money factor

therefore does not particularly or necessarily influence the happiness index significantly (Sujarwoto et al., 2018).

The next section will discuss the PPIs based on PS of transcendence.

#### **Theme Four: Positive Psychological Interventions (PPIs) based on Psychological Strengths of Transcendence**

This theme speaks to the existing positive psychological interventions (PPIs) that managers' experience at the company. Here the use of psychological strengths (PS) of transcendence is examined in its capacity to enhance these PPIs, specifically how it relates to wellbeing.

For a long time, researchers have focused on what is wrong rather than focussing on what is going right with individuals and how to encourage it. It has been argued that peak functioning requires the development of the emotion of happiness and that harnessing these positive emotions in the workplace has proved useful (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Seligman, 2011). As explained by Wong (2011), when emphasising positive emotions, the negative tends to decline and lose effectiveness. Bakracheva (2020) also adds that happiness may be predicted by intrinsic and extrinsic stimuli and that attaining such intrinsic goals – for example, growth and connection – helps lead us towards major advances in wellbeing, perhaps more than extrinsic ones such as financial status or goals (Seligman, 2011).

Della-Porta et al. (2009) describe that PPIs, such as methods, intentional activities or treatments aimed at developing positive emotions, positive cognitions and positive behaviours with the intention of enhancing people's wellbeing, are able to cement 'what is right' within a person and increase positive emotion. These activities may take the form of self-administered, group-based work, individual development and coaching (Parks et al., 2012; Della Porta, 2012). Other forms of PPIs such as therapy, counselling and other such development activities that result in happiness as an intended outcome have also been suggested (Provencher and Keyes, 2011). Additionally, as advised by Seligman (2002), the use and building of signature

strengths leads to a good, pleasurable and meaningful life, where one can build better relationships and strive for achievements (Seligman, 2011). It was noted that taking a positive attitude towards counselling builds resilience, self-esteem, and enhances happiness (Arslan & Wong, 2023).

The sub-themes are set out as follows: the existing PPIs based on PS of transcendence; how the existing PPIs help to promote managers' WB at the company and then how these PPIs may be further developed. These are discussed below with examples from the participant interviews.

### **Existing PPIs per PERMA Dimensions (How it Promotes Wellbeing and How it may be Further Developed)**

#### ***Positive Emotion / Pleasure***

P1 mentioned that she practices meditation, yoga and breath work to build her own positive emotions as well as attend EQ workshops (Emotional Intelligence). She stated: *"I do meditation, yoga and breathing exercises. We attend EQ workshops and we do an Emotion Chart – breathe, listen to what is your emotion telling you, revisit it, calm down and go back to it. Write it down and do whatever as long as it is a good routine. It's these little tools and tricks that help me keep a sane mind. I need to fill my own cup before I can actually give myself to work... I don't neglect other elements of my life, that's how I keep myself positive at work."* An intervention mentioned by P7 called TCP (Toyota Culture Programme) includes bringing diverse teams together to self-reflect, self-realise and self-actualise, which builds on the concepts mentioned by P1, in an alternate way. He stated: *"Currently we are doing TCP... This helps different people to explore who you are, e.g. whether you are an introvert/extrovert, self-reflection, understanding what is your culture, upbringing, so it brings self-realisation."* Similarly, P6 advised that the culture change project helps with diversity and understanding each other better and builds positive emotion: *"We are currently busy with the Culture Change Project that... the company has encouraged people and created positive emotions amongst the workers... both management and operators, outside of the normal group."* P6 also mentioned that prayer and music help him build positivity.

P2 mentioned that to be able to strategize and ensure collaborative efforts with the team is important: *"We need to look at and articulate around what does that future strategy look like. I think that in terms of our future aspirations as an organisation and an individual, common goals to transpire to something bigger and greater. I think this will create more positive emotions for us all."* P8 also related that training and development programmes and coaching helps to build positive emotion: *"Being able to develop people via the training programme brings positive emotion... coaching session... paying attention to their needs."* Relatedly, P3 highlighted excellence, acknowledgement of people, multi-level activities, getting people out of comfort zones is important to enable change and growth: *"...if people acknowledge... excellence. There is a multi-level of activities taking place... upsetting people's comfort zones... a level of growth."* P4 also advised that collaborative events and motivation helps: *"...we had an event here at work we got everyone together... motivate them and increase the positive emotion."* P4 suggested the following to promote positive emotion at the company: *"But there are no wellness days yet which I am talking to them about."*

P5 described that intervention workshops exist where small diverse teams are brought together to create growth, sharpen existing skills, realise own capabilities and improve self-confidence to achieve more: *"The workshops that allow us to work together in small teams thus bridging the diversity gaps... new projects in areas we are unfamiliar with... teach us something new, or to revive the skills...helped me realise my capabilities... take on more tasks and thereby increased my positive emotion towards my work... I also pray to improve my positive emotion..."* The next participant's view is that manager involvement should be a prominent feature to improve positive emotion and motivate workers. P11 stated: *"If you've got a boss that is interested in and supporting your ideas, it gives you that extra pleasure or that extra motivation. For me, having a boss that is involved, he's not driving, but just involved."* P10 also mentioned that training and learning interventions exist but advised that there are no other formal interventions: *"Nothing from the company but I enjoy the training and learning interventions... Prayer is very important to me to raise myself up."* P9 also indicated that there was no intervention to increase positive emotion: *"Nothing"* and P12 became emotional when speaking of the lack of interventions. He expressed that interventions are certainly required to be put in place as the company is in dire need and said: *"No, no, nothing formal, which in essence is actually contributing to a lot of"*

*the stress that the people are experiencing. Yeah, interventions are desperately needed.”*

In summation, on the whole, participants indicated the following traditional interventions that were used to help harness this element of wellbeing such as: emotional intelligence workshops; creating emotion charts; strategy workshops to build plans for the future; encouraging people to acknowledge excellence; collaborative events; creation of diverse teams to work on unfamiliar projects to sharpen skills, capabilities and knowledge; management involvement and motivation; culture change projects to encourage people to create positive emotions; culture leaderships programmes; workshops to develop self-realisation, self-reflection and self-actualisation; training and development programmes; coaching and learning interventions. Some indicated alternative interventions that they used independently on their own time such as prayer, yoga, meditation, breathing exercises, music and exercise activities. One of the participants indicated that a useful intervention that is required is wellness days, which were not available at his subsidiary. It is evidenced from these responses that not all subsidiaries benefit from the same interventions, and mostly it was expressed that more attention is required to build the positive emotion at the workplace.

### ***Engagement***

P1 advised that strategy workshops, transactional analysis, conflict management and succession planning are interventions that works to address gaps in engagement between different levels of managers: *“So in terms of the senior manager level now, they started to relook at the strategy and realised there is a gap in what managers should be doing and how executives are responding and so the focus is currently on interventions on soft skills to bridge that gap, ensure managers are given confidence and tools to deal with their roles, move away from operational issues and engage with their staff more appropriately. This intervention is called transactional analysis and uses conflict management methods. Also, succession planning is important in engaging people. Identify best practices at other companies and customise to suit needs of manufacturing.”* P2 also advised that collaboration of leadership teams and strategy workshops are interventions used to increase engagement: *“There has been an opportunity provided to our management teams to strategize and bring the various*

*leadership teams together to engage with them. The feedback has been quite positive because they are yet again doing it collaboratively. It's actually about giving them a voice."*

P3 advised that motivation and the creation of groups to assist each other increases engagement levels: *"So in order to create engagement and to level up operators, and to get motivation going, I have created groups of people to assist each other in engagement activities or interventions to help each other find solutions."* P4 similarly indicated that the collaborative effort works well for engagement: *"We get the leadership team together to contribute to a common goal, in other words... so you get everybody involved, the whole team involved in each person contributing their part in achieving the goal."* P11 has a similar stance in his approach of bringing people together whether it be inside or associate outside of work to increase their engagement levels: *"I normally suggest that things like you know Friday lunch, or I would propose a potjie at my place... I think it's very important to know people that you work with both as employees and as people... because you are in a better position to give advice in any situation, be it work related or personal related."* Relatedly, P8 advised that discussions, meetings, daily tasks, and communication increase engagement: *"The communication that ensues... helps us engage with each other. Each manager sits with their employee to find out where their needs are and discussions happen... engagement is also in the daily tasks, or the structured meetings but besides that the involuntary engagement that enables people to associate with each other."*

P5 advised that the implementation of short training sessions increases confidence, productivity and engagement: *"Not by the organisation in general but my team has started short training sessions here and there, both for each other and our fellow colleagues and customers. When people are confident of how they fit in to the entire productivity cycle, they work with more focus and care."* P6 reported a similar intervention at his subsidiary called the Culture Change Project and he also mentioned regular meetings that increase engagement: *"Yeah so the Culture Change Project definitely, which includes group work, and engagement at all levels, cross functional, not just within your own team and not just within your level of management, it sort of transcends all levels at work. Then we have the meetings... regularly now, which didn't happen much before, where they communicate what is happening in the organisation."*

P7 advised that his subsidiary implements EQ workshops: *“Teach individuals how day by day simple gestures influence the environment. This enhances the cohesiveness of the team. So basically, it’s how EQ (Emotional Intelligence) workshops helps to grow the teams and to work together.”*

P9 & P10 advised that there are no interventions to increase engagement, P9 said: *“Nothing”* and P10 advised that she takes it upon herself to engage personally with others to familiarise herself with them: *“No nothing from the company. However, I am getting to know people better, their personalities, getting to do my job better, getting help from others as well.”* P12 advised that WhatsApp groups are created to increase engagement and ease of communication but he feels that they are negative in that there are no boundaries and may be counterproductive and requires improvement: *“... engagement or communication at the moment, it’s a very strange approach because there is a multitude of WhatsApp groups that have been created to allow the right people to engage... It actually has the ability of negatively engaging because I think people’s ability to respect communication in a WhatsApp type of environment is very poor... it can definitely be improved. There’s no other interventions that I’m aware of now that is in place at the moment.”* P6 had the following advice to promote better engagement amongst workers at the company: *“Lack of personal engagement, team building; consultants; sport activities; break down barriers; face-to-face meetings with exec and employees.”*

In summation, participants indicated the following interventions that were used to help harness this element of wellbeing: workshops such as strategy and emotional intelligence, transactional analysis, conflict management, confidence building, soft-skills training and succession planning. Some participants reported that strategy and collaborative efforts are important to motivate and create solutions. Others indicated the importance of short training sessions that increase confidence, productivity and engagement; culture change projects; communication tools such as meetings and discussions; and team building activities. Three participants mentioned that there are no workplace interventions for engagement. One of those participants mentioned that familiarisation with different personalities of people are important. The other two advised that personal engagement activities such as team building and sports activities within working hours is more suitable rather than encroaching on

family/personal time, and that more face-to-face meetings are required. One participant reported that although an existing intervention in the form of WhatsApp groups were created to encourage engagement, this method is counterproductive as it is used inefficiently and very intrusive to the personal time of managers. Hence from the evidence it seems necessary to develop and promote interventions to improve engagement at the workplace.

### **Meaning**

P1 advised the following should be implemented to increase meaning at the company as per her previous experience: *“There is not enough on the wellness side like in my previous company and the CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility)... like carbon emissions and environmental awareness campaigns to reduce environmental damage from a Company perspective.”* This is what P1 indicated as bringing meaning to her.

P2 advised that creating collaborative groups for people to share creates meaning: *“We are starting with the senior leadership team, creating a sense of belonging. When you realise that you belong to something bigger than yourself then you see the world in a more holistic manner... make decisions that are not selfish but with a clear understanding of the consequences. So, it is collaborative... they can also be helpful to one another and create a more meaningful existence for them all.”*

P4 advised that restructure of technical standard operating procedures increase meaning *“...trying to restructure the whole process of how we do things to, and put a better flow into the system of work, you know. I am talking about the actual like SOPs (standard operating procedures).”*

P6 advised that the Culture Change workshops implemented by the company creates meaning: *“It's encouraging knowing that you can learn from other people's experiences... it's been it's been quite positive...so we set like 15-20 minutes to meet with different members and discuss topics like values, identity, helped people to gel and break down walls which bring meaning.”* Similarly, P5 advocated for the training sessions and skills development which created meaning for her: *“There is a drive from our IT department to the business that aims to promote IT skills development throughout the organisation. We currently hold a minimum of 2 training sessions per*

week.” Whereas P3 advised that coaching helps to bring a meaningful environment where people understand their requirements better: *“Most of the processes that create meaning is the constant coaching... one-on-one... once a week I could have a group coach... or ad-hoc.”* Another approach was reported by P7 who described the various kinds of Japanese teachings implemented to increase meaning at work: *“YORISORI is a Japanese philosophy or way of life to enhance caring and understanding for each other.”* P10 also reported that her personal training plans brought meaning to her: *“So what brought meaning to me is the systems training that was implemented by overseas people who came to teach us how to solve certain problems and implement new interventions, how to improve certain things and sustain them. I learned a lot and enjoyed every session. This brought meaning to me because I knew how I'm going to implement it in my work to actually showcase what I want to do.”*

Relatedly, P8 advised that the development of people, respecting their needs and recognising them helps to increase meaning: *“When we develop people they realise that it is an environment where their needs are respected and they have an opportunity to grow, to live... Also, when people are recognised for their efforts and hard work, when they achieve the results, we put it on the notice boards, this brings meaning to them.”* Contrastingly, P9 believes that in an automotive industry that is KPI driven, it is not conducive to providing meaning for individuals: *“It's a KPI driven organisation with very little room for strategy. So what people in the automotive industry don't understand is that it is purely mechanistically driven where you put forward your financial capability to meet a product on time and capability. You align your resources to that. Where is the real meaning, there is no richness of experience? It's just a product going off Toyota's design, it's a technology as Toyota has already prescribed.”* The idea highlighted here by this participant is that the manufacturing environment for most managers is not conducive to strategic thinking, in his belief, as it is not a managerial level requirement to think strategically, but only a function of the top level's management.

On another note, P11 advised that the wellness programme brings meaning to the workers: *“Putting our wellness programme in place is doing wonders because... counsellors, psychologists helped the lady to handle and to recover and deal with that whole ordeal. I think it opened a lot of eyes; people are starting to see the value of*

*having this programme... the more problems come out of our employees, the more solutions we get, the good wellbeing of our employees.*" P11 suggested that these interventions impact employees positively and further posited that days such as *"women abuse days, world aids day, spring days, heritage days, etc. where we interact, and Careways, the medical clinic that is contracted"* bring meaning to the people.

P12 advised that there is no formal positive intervention process for to improve the meaning at work: *"We do have the end of the year functions...there have been some feedback sessions...and interventions with our MD. But the positive ones with the team, where appreciation has been shared, there is no formal intervention that has helped to give or reinforce the meaning that I ascribe to my work."* P12 indicates here that team interventions are required to bring meaning.

In summation, participants indicated the following interventions that were used to help harness this element of wellbeing: creating groups, team collaboration, sharing creating a sense of belonging; coaching; restructure of standard operation procedures (SOPs); trainings and skills development; culture change projects – where groups of people share and exchange thoughts and experiences; YORISURI (a Japanese philosophy / way of life showing caring and understanding for others); respect and recognition; strategy interventions driven by key performance indicators (KPIs); wellness programmes including counsellors, psychologists; wellness days such as women abuse day, world aids day, spring day, heritage day; feedback sessions with the MD and year end functions. One participant stated that corporate social responsibilities (CSR) should be included to improve the element of meaning from an organisational perspective. As a result of this evidence it seems necessary to develop and promote interventions to improve meaning at the workplace.

### ***Relationships***

P1 advised that there is a strategic drive currently being implemented for social events to enhance the acknowledgement of the part others play, which helps build better relationships: *"It's the whole strategic thing, so we are starting to stop blaming everyone... harness that positivity and continue to do good work... either here or outside... The purpose is to realise and appreciate what everyone else is doing and*

*not live in our silos.” Following from this idea, P1 also suggested that rotation activities could be implemented to build better understanding and appreciation in relationships: “I think rotation will help... just the idea behind it is good when you put somebody in somebody else's shoes.”*

P3 advised that Team Formation helps workers build relationships: *“Then say teams form, then they storm, they norm and then they perform... you got different stages of activity that's going on with different people in the team... people learn at different rates... you gotta be patient and acknowledge that.”* P11 advised that regular meetings at work as well as his efforts to assist people outside of work build relationships: *“...something that is very close to my heart is having hourly meetings to review progress and you come up with countermeasures for problems. I think that personal touch... brings the team closer, it can only make the team strong and builds relationships. Oh, and I also do sessions at my house that could help them when they are faced with challenges.”* Relatedly, P2 suggested internal coaching activities to improve relationships at the company: *“I want to introduce peer coaching... I think that an outside coach couldn't kind of help grow their capability as much as I think that they could help each other as the company is a gold standard in manufacturing.”*

P5 and P6 advised that the activities from the culture change interventions help to build relationships. P5 said: *“There are activities that we now do together as part of enforcing the new culture change atmosphere. These activities enable us to mingle with colleagues from different departments that we don't interact with on a daily basis. This social interaction has helped bridge the cultural diversity gaps, the personality type gaps and reporting levels gaps among us all.”* P6 said: *“So this Culture Change Project includes operators, supervisors, engineering people, people outside of your outside of your department and division. So irrespective of colour, creed, level of management, department, it has been encouraging knowing that you can sort of relate to each other and it was a learning curve, because it was with those you don't generally have a relationship with. It encourages people to communicate and break down the barriers.”*

P7 advised that the outcomes of the Employee Relationship and Engagement Survey implemented at his plant, help build interventions to encourage better relationships

with workers: *“Employee Relationship and Engagement Surveys to extract how people feel and be able to address the aspects highlighted or that emanates concerns from the survey.”*

P8 advised that there is no formal intervention to help encourage relationship building but certain managers try to encourage it within their team: *“Nothing from the company but we as managers try to talk to people, it’s the way you talk to them and how you interact, how you engage, what subjects you engage them with.”* P8 advised team building interventions should be implemented during working hours rather than after hours when people want to spend time with their family: *“There is no actual intervention to create a bond or do team building. I think they tried to get people together to play action cricket but that didn’t help because that was set for a Friday after work and people are tired and they think they would rather be with their family and then they tried for Saturday but that too is the weekend and it cuts into family time.”*

P4 advised that there are currently no interventions to improve relationships and that change management is required as an intervention: *“There is no stability with all these changes... if you can't accept change it's going to make you negative, but you got to see the positive in the change... the morale is horrible at the moment... especially between all the leaders... and needs attention.”* P9 and P10 similarly advised that there are no formal interventions at the company to help build relationships. P9 exclaimed: *“Strong No”* and P10 said she tries to assist in her managerial role: *“There is nothing at the company, our HR is silent, no interventions but I like to teach people and enrich them... academically... to climb the ladder... meetings to review progress and... countermeasures for problems.”* On the same note P12 advised that there are no formal interventions at the company to help build relationships: *“There’s no interventions are the standard answer for all of this... there is no intervention formally.”* As a suggestion P3 indicated, in his capacity as a plant manager, that humour should be instilled as an intervention to build relationships: *“There are moments of laughter in the course of his day with my team, as an intervention that I implement, ...like I said, the people that you have opportunities to spend time with, you do it, ...and if the moment exists, we will have a little bit of laughter in the process, you know.”*

In summation, participants indicated the following interventions that were used to help harness this element of wellbeing: team building and sporting activities (within working hours); strategic drive for socials; interventions to help prevent blame shifting; rotation to create awareness and acknowledgement of one's own responsibilities and the role played by others; team formation and team building; culture change and the integration of diverse groups and personality types to encourage communication and break down barriers; employee relationship and satisfaction surveys; more direct interaction between manager and employees; facilitation of engagement practices to increase open conversations or varied topics; regular hourly meetings to assist people to find solutions and assist with personal issues. Three participants advised that no formal interventions to build relationships at work exists. One participant suggested peer coaching; some indicated that humour as a strength should be added as an intervention, as it is an often-overlooked strength that can add value and create relationship bonds with more ease than other traditional interventions. One participant suggested change management interventions are necessary to combat the unstable managerial presence and resultant constantly changing policies and practices. Participants' responses have provided substantial evidence of the dire need for the development and promotion of interventions to improve relationships at the workplace.

### ***Accomplishment / Achievement***

P1 suggested that there exists a company need for interventions to increase accomplishments: *"We going to try to do a leadership development programme with things like EQ, internships, but that's a future plan in terms of HR that will develop people and assist people to accomplish their goals and targets."* P2 relatedly, advised that the development of an HR framework is underway to enable the accomplishments of tasks more easily: *"A new HR framework is currently underway as a pilot at one of our subsidiaries, to develop online content to develop people and increase their capabilities and skills..."* P5 reported that education benefits were afforded to people at the company to assist them to strive to achieve at her subsidiary: *"Our company has assisted education benefits where employees can register at any accredited skills development organisation, we also have an online academy that trains employees on our internal processes..."*

P3's suggestions for future intervention requirements were the need for wellness programmes, management courses and improving recruitment drives to hire more qualified people: *"I told HR to get the wellness programme on board to teach people about their health because... when you get past 45... the world takes over you... I am their leader and will lead them into righteousness... to take care of their health... sending people out for management courses... we can develop a stronger, more fruitful team, and... we try to engage many recruits to be academically inclined."* It is the belief of P6 that appreciating, encouraging and acknowledging good work and not shaming bad work motivates people to accomplish more: *"We have a drive to encourage people to appreciate one another, recognise and acknowledge others, this helps people to face challenges... if you are working for the right manager they acknowledge people's achievements and their contributions. We also encourage gratitude... appreciate them and shine a light on them. So, if something goes right, we acknowledge and if something goes wrong we don't shame them."* Gratitude has also been highlighted as a strength to be encouraged and acknowledged.

P7 advised that extrinsic reward interventions are used such as bonuses and competitions to encourage future accomplishments: *"We have incentive bonuses for meeting quality standards; a bonus scheme for productivity or achieving target and also a bonus for top achievers. Quality Control Circle (QCC) Interventions is an internal quality and production competition where small groups enter... the most effective project wins a prize and gets entered internationally for the final competition. This helps to encourage to improve quality, eliminate issues and brings reward as a recognition to employees. It also assists with development."*

P4 advised that there are no interventions to improve accomplishments, however, a recent suggestion was made by HR to celebrate a company accomplishment with a social event. He said: *"So the other day because of the achievement of the past month's result, HR suggested we have a social get together for the plant."* P4 advised that he did not feel like being part of it due to relationships having soured and the morale being low and said: *"I've got better things to do to spend my time doing."* So, it is evident that even when some attempt to implement activities are made, not all people are encouraged and motivated to do so, hence interventions that address fundamental issues such as morale are required more urgently.

Further to the previous example, P8 advised that there are no formal interventions at the company to help encourage accomplishments, however, he mentions that lack of achievements brings negativity, as explained: *“So, no intervention but I think it’s more like if you don’t achieve you are letting the team or the company down, so it’s kinda like the reverse of a reward. Sometimes I try to show them appreciation or help them with a solution to help them achieve.”* He advised that this creates a negative environment for the employees, hence in his capacity as manager he tries to show his workers appreciation and encouragement to elevate the mood. This is another example where interventions are required to be developed to elevate the overall morale and increase positive feelings.

A similar example was provided by P9 that there are no formal interventions. He stated that people are dismissed for their inability to achieve instead: *“I think there is an iron fisted approach that... everybody who makes a mistake fire them, and it’s extremely counterproductive. It’s a serious value system challenge to me. I don’t want to be part of that.”* P10 also advised that there are no formal interventions but advised that she encourages people in her managerial capacity: *“I always want to be available to assist because I want to see them flourish. I want them to also reach the heights that was destined to be... that’s all God wanted... I want to know that I have uplifted people by the time I leave.”* P11 advised that even though there are no formal interventions, his perception is that the performance management process (PMP) are there to facilitate achievement: *“In a corporate world you need to be results orientated. Time is money so make sure that you set achievable and realistic and challenging KPI’s.”* P12 expressed that there are no formal interventions for achievements: *“Go back to every discussion we’ve had, I’ve told you it doesn’t exist in this organisation”,* and sincerely and repeatedly added: *“I am hoping, I am hoping that they start to implement interventions.”* These examples show that interventions to promote accomplishments are necessary to raise company morale.

In summation, participants indicated that the following interventions were used to harness this element of wellbeing: an HR framework to develop online training content to improve capabilities and skills of managers; education benefits providing accredited skills development; socials to celebrate accomplishments; encourage, appreciate,

recognise, acknowledge and show gratitude for good work and not shame work that is inferior; and motivate by extrinsic rewards such as bonuses and competition where employees may receive prizes. Six participants reported that no formal interventions exist to encourage or recognise accomplishment / achievements at the workplace. One participant advised that she takes it upon herself to personally assist and encourage her team. Another reported that employees should use the PMP for acknowledging achievements; however, it is not followed or adhered to at most subsidiaries. Two participants reported that the lack of achievements brings negativity and that employees are penalised for this. Participant findings indicate that there are mostly no formal interventions to encourage nor celebrate achievements and, further to this, people are dismissed for their inability to achieve, which has become a standard practice at certain subsidiaries, which has proved to be extremely counterproductive and a serious value system challenge. Hence from the evidence, a dire need is presented to develop and promote interventions to encourage accomplishments at the workplace.

### **PS of Transcendence and PPIs**

In examining the existing PPIs, it was difficult to assess the extent to which PS were utilised. However, there was evidence of some PS of transcendence which surfaced during the discussions and these were, for example, respondents indicating that the act of appreciating of excellence, which would fall under the strength category of ABE; appreciation and acknowledgement of good work, would fall under the category of gratitude; encouragement and motivation techniques would fall under the strength of hope; and Japanese philosophy techniques implemented by the company; managers wanting to lead their employees into “righteousness” and implement practices that “God would have wanted”, display the strength of spirituality. Alternate forms of spirituality, practiced independently by managers were prayer, yoga, meditation; breath work, music and exercise.

### **Conclusion**

In the assessment of the existing PPIs, it was noted that, even though PPIs were implemented across various subsidiaries to various extents, these PPIs were not specifically designed to address the challenges faced by managers, neither were they developed to the objective of enhancing wellbeing. There is also evidence from the

findings that the traditional approach to PPIs discussed by respondents currently being implemented at the subsidiaries is insubstantial and inadequate for the purposes intended.

#### **5.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In this chapter the results of the study were presented and discussed. The findings are tied together with the literature and research objectives. The findings for theme and sub-themes were first discussed independently, after which an integrated view was presented of findings for results overall. A significant relationship between certain constructs was demonstrated through a qualitative analysis across the data sets. In Chapter six a presentation of recommendations for a set of guidelines for PPIs to enhance managers' wellbeing, inferred from these findings, will be presented.

# **CHAPTER 6: RECOMMENDATIONS ON GUIDELINES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS (PPIS)**

## **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this chapter is to simply present some recommendations on guidelines for developing positive psychological interventions (PPIs), based on the results of the research. This section offers a set of guidelines that could be used to develop and promote workplace wellbeing for managers in the automotive industry, utilising appropriate psychological strengths of transcendence as determined by the research findings. These guidelines, although customised and standardised for the specific industry, may be useful in other industries as well. Further research will be required to establish this. The intention for proposing these recommendations is to improve coping mechanisms for managers to be able to deal with their numerous challenges as well as alleviate their stresses and create a sustainable work environment. It was noted in the findings of this study that existing PPIs were not as effective as they ought to be.

According to the literature, Biswas-Diener et al. (2011) report that the psychological strengths movement has shown advanced success in applying strengths to organisational settings. Hutchinson et al. (2010) advise that the development and enhancement of character strengths and resilience have the potential to combat as well as anticipate emotional challenges and foster psychological wellbeing. The area of strengths development is one area in which positive psychology has been popularised and widely promoted, according to Buckingham and Clifton (2001). This has been accepted as a well-founded strategy for creating and sustaining a happier, efficient and more engaged workforce (Kaiser & Overfield, 2011). Hence the pressing need to place emphasis on the further development of PPIs.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part discusses the more commonly used PPIs in the workplace, the mainstream or traditional approach. These PPIs are currently found to be implemented within the organisations to greater and lesser extents; however, they are not uniform, customised nor standardised across all

subsidiaries. A more user-friendly approach to the traditional approach is discussed in this chapter as recommendations for how existing PPIs may be further developed, utilising PS for transcendence and incorporating a more personalised approach. In terms of the development of individuals' strengths and weaknesses, this may thereby add more value with the purpose being to address the unique set of manager challenges. The second part comprises practical activities or mindfulness exercises that can be practised by managers either within or outside of the workplace to further develop their PS of transcendence. The third part discusses a less common approach which is only practised by some and generally practised outside of the workplace. This alternative approach provides a means to connect with and develop the inner working of the body or the internal state of being.

As evidenced from the findings, existing approaches have not been effective, hence a more holistic approach is suggested. The practical and alternate approaches are not as popular as the traditional approach, they may not resonate with or be openly accepted by all but it is hoped that it will catch on, as it adds a dimension that is not generally considered in workplaces. On their own, these practices have been utilised to a certain extent, however, in combination I believe it may enable the individual to explore the parts of themselves they would normally not delve into and open their minds to alternate ways to cope, find solutions and experience wellbeing. When an individual is capable of understanding themselves better, it may create a foundation for the individual to derive more value from the traditional approaches.

## **6.2 PART 1: TRADITIONAL APPROACH TO POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS (PPIS)**

PPIs are organisational development initiatives and play a critical role in coping with stress and challenges imposed on managers in the workplace. They aim at developing employees to create increased work efficiency and improved productivity. For the purposes of this research, PS of transcendence to enhance PPIs for manager WB was examined and the mainstream approaches were discussed in the analysis section of the study. From the list of psychological interventions as advised by the respondents, the PPI approaches with the highest prevalence as indicated by the participants were

highlighted as follows: team building and social activities; leadership development programmes; emotional intelligence workshops and culture change workshops.

The existing traditional PPIs are implemented at some subsidiaries, not across. Furthermore, regarding the PPIs that exist, not all are implemented in a standardised way and they require development and customisation to suit specific needs as per the challenges presented in the findings. The main traditional PPIs are listed as:

- Toyota Culture Project – diversity and inclusion, culture change
- Quality Control Circles (QCC) – new solutions to improve productivity through team building
- Leadership Development Programmes (Including the MBTI workshop)
- Performance Management Process (PMP)
- Emotional Intelligence Workshops (including the EQi2.0)
- Team Building Workshops (including Belbin workshop).

Apart from the standardisation of these quintessential positive psychological interventions to promote happiness and wellbeing in the workplace, I would like to suggest the following traditional PPIs:

PPIs are only as effective as their ability to directly address the challenges the managers experience, and the only way this can be ensured is if the actual strengths and development areas of the managers are first ascertained. The identification of these strengths and weaknesses may be assessed by means of psychometric assessments and intervention workshops, formulated around the outcomes of these assessments, in order to develop managers' strengths further in specific ways, as well as to address their development areas. The participants of the workshops are thus given specialised attention and their needs addressed according to the assessment outcomes.

Specific guidelines for the development of the following traditional PPIs are recommended: Emotional Intelligence Interventions (to develop the positive emotional strengths of managers to be more effective in their roles); Personality Workshops (to develop individual strengths to enhance managers' effectiveness in their role and assist them to combat challenges); and Team Building Workshops (to identify and

develop an individual's innate, natural characteristics as an individual and team-player to enable them to perform their roles more adequately, leading to the formulation well-structured teams). This suggested battery of assessments and workshops, emphasising the utilisation of PS of transcendence, may assist with increasing positive emotions, engagement, creating meaning, building more positive relationships and helping attain goals and greater achievements for managers in the workplace.

I have selected three traditional approaches that I consider work well together, comprising the components of emotions (emotional level), personality (individual level) and the team (group level). In combination, these will create a flow in the development of PS of transcendence for the enhancement of WB in terms of the PERMA model.

It is suggested that models be implemented by outside service providers or professional consultants, with the results of the appropriate psychological assessments to facilitate the workshops. Firstly, the HR department in collaboration with the heads of department will identify groups of managers to attend these workshops. Assessments will be conducted by an industrial psychologist, reports generated and the workshops prepared and customised for each subsidiary based on their unique needs and challenges. The findings from the reports will be integrated to facilitate and coach managers to improve their areas of weaknesses and highlight their areas of strength for further improvement, as per the composites of the workshop models.

These details of the proposed models are discussed and outlined as per their composites as follows:

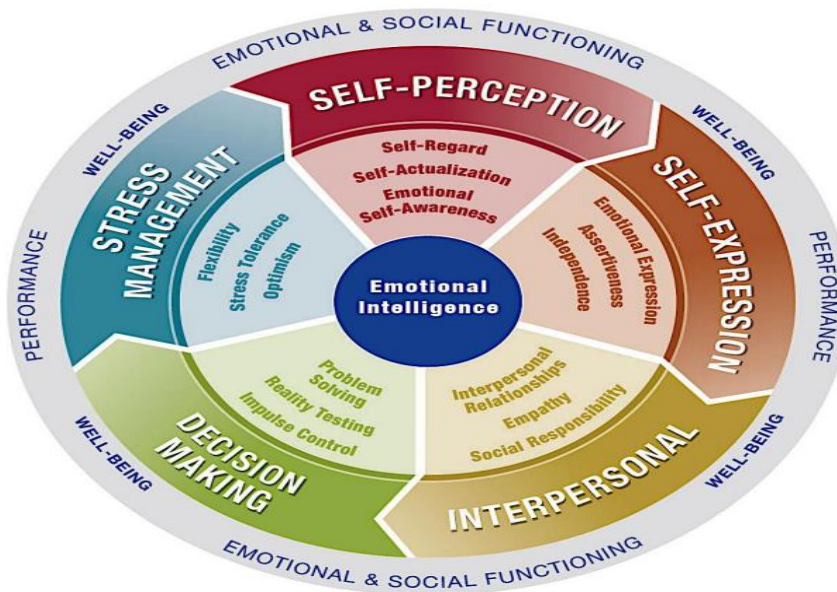
### **6.2.1 Emotional Intelligence (EI) Assessment and Workshop**

This training model and related assessment addresses the following composites of Emotional Intelligence that speaks directly to the PERMA Model of WB. The composites will include:

- **Self-Perception Composite**
  - Self-Regard: respecting oneself; confidence
  - Self-Actualisation: pursuit of meaning; self-improvement
  - Emotional Self-Awareness: understanding own emotions

- **Self-Expression Composite**
  - Emotional Expression: constructive expression of emotions
  - Assertiveness: communicating feelings, beliefs; non-offensive
  - Independence: self-directed; free from emotional dependency
- **Interpersonal Composite**
  - Interpersonal Relationships: mutually satisfying relationships
  - Empathy: understanding, appreciating how others feel
  - Social Responsibility: social consciousness; helpful
- **Decision Making Composite**
  - Problem Solving: find solutions when emotions are involved
  - Reality Testing: objective; see things as they really are
  - Impulse Control: resist or delay impulse to act
- **Stress Management Composite**
  - Flexibility: adapting emotions, thoughts and behaviours
  - Stress Tolerance: coping with stressful situations
  - Optimism: positive attitude and outlook on life

As per model below, the EQ-i2.0 measures five distinct aspects of emotional and social functioning: Self-Perception (understanding one's emotions); Self-Expression (expressing one's emotions); Interpersonal (developing and maintaining relationships); Decision Making (using emotions to make better decisions); and Stress Management (coping with challenges). This model also facilitates adaptability, accurate self-assessment, self-confidence; initiative; developing others; service orientation; inspirational leadership; influence; communication; being a change catalyst; improvement of trustworthiness; conflict management and conscientiousness teamwork and collaboration. The wellbeing factor of the model is a combination of the elements of: Self-Regard; Optimism; Interpersonal Relationships and Self-actualisation. This indicator, otherwise known as the happiness factor measures if the candidate is satisfied and content with life in the EQ-i 2.0 model. Hence this model will address many of the manager challenges reported in the findings.



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**Figure 6.1 The EQ-i 2.0 Model of Emotional Intelligence (Bar-On, 2010)**

Also, according to the model, the measure of the happiness result of the candidate is a product of emotional intelligence (EI) and can be used as a barometer of emotional health and wellbeing (Bar-On, 2010). Given that it is understood that the causes and factors related to an individual's happiness extend beyond the scope of this assessment, the workshop will examine the result of this index in relation to the other EI subscales. For example, would the strengthening of certain lower subscales lead to improved happiness or will increased happiness result from working within the strengths and talents of the candidate?

Other purposes for which the EQ-i 2.0 can be used and applied in the workplace are as follows but are not limited to: selection, recruitment, succession planning, leadership development, executive coaching and team effectiveness.

The next model that will be discussed is the MBTI, based on the personality assessment. This is a targeted individual development intervention.

### **6.2.2 MBTI Personality Assessment and Workshop**

This model and related assessment addresses the following composites of personality that speak to the psychological strengths that form the basis for those of the PS of

transcendence. From the results of the findings of the research, it was established that understanding oneself is a basis on which to understand others and thereby manage others. Hence the personality workshop is a fundamental tool to assist in the development of a more holistic intervention.

The MBTI® assessment (Belbin & Brown, 2022), comprises 16 different personality types best describes the candidate, based on the responses provided by the candidate whilst taking the assessment. The personality type as described by the assessment report comprises the preferences in four separate categories that together describe the composites in terms of how the candidate notices and thinks about his/her environment and how they interact with others and the world around them. As explained below, each composite comprises two opposite preferences which will be assessed in order to ascertain managers' preferences and then developed to enhance the managers' strengths in the workplace as a coping tool to more effectively address challenges. The composites are:

- **Where one focuses attention**

*Extraversion:* People who focus attention on the outer world of people and things

*Introversion:* People who focus attention on the inner world of ideas and impressions

- **The manner in which one takes in information**

*Thinking:* People who make decisions mostly on the basis of logic and objective analysis

*Intuition:* People who take in information by seeing patterns, the big picture and future possibilities

- **The manner in which one makes decisions**

*Sensing:* People who take in information through the five senses, with a focus on the present

*Feeling:* People who make decisions mostly on the basis of values and subjective

- **How one deals with the world**

*Judging:* People who take a planned and organized approach to life, liking to have things settled

*Perceiving:* People who take a flexible, spontaneous approach to life, liking to keep options open

Other purposes for which the MBTI may be used and applied in the workplace are developing their role as a leader and role model for engagement; gaining insight and understanding in oneself and others; exploring the effect of one's behaviours on others; championing change within the company; and leading with integrity to build trust and influencing for impact (King & Mason, 2020). The table below indicates a combination of the four composites that determine a personality type that may be used to address areas of strength and utilise these to the strength of the manager.

# What's Your Personality Type?

Use the questions on the outside of the chart to determine the four letters of your Myers-Briggs type. For each pair of letters, choose the side that seems most natural to you, even if you don't agree with every description.

<p><b>1. Are you outwardly or inwardly focused? If you:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could be described as talkative, outgoing</li> <li>• Like to be in a fast-paced environment</li> <li>• Tend to work out ideas with others, think out loud</li> <li>• Enjoy being the center of attention</li> </ul> <p>then you prefer</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>E</b> Extraversion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could be described as reserved, private</li> <li>• Prefer a slower pace with time for contemplation</li> <li>• Tend to think things through inside your head</li> <li>• Would rather observe than be the center of attention</li> </ul> <p>then you prefer</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>I</b> Introversion</p>	<div style="background-color: #c00000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>ISTJ</b></div> <p>Responsible, sincere, analytical, reserved, realistic, systematic. Hardworking and trustworthy with sound practical judgment.</p>	<div style="background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>ISFJ</b></div> <p>Warm, considerate, gentle, responsible, pragmatic, thorough. Devoted caretakers who enjoy being helpful to others.</p>	<div style="background-color: #4169e1; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>INFJ</b></div> <p>Idealistic, organized, insightful, dependable, compassionate, gentle. Seek harmony and cooperation, enjoy intellectual stimulation.</p>	<div style="background-color: #800080; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>INTJ</b></div> <p>Innovative, independent, strategic, logical, reserved, insightful. Driven by their own original ideas to achieve improvements.</p>
<p><b>2. How do you prefer to take in information? If you:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on the reality of how things are</li> <li>• Pay attention to concrete facts and details</li> <li>• Prefer ideas that have practical applications</li> <li>• Like to describe things in a specific, literal way</li> </ul> <p>then you prefer</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>S</b> Sensing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Imagine the possibilities of how things could be</li> <li>• Notice the big picture, see how everything connects</li> <li>• Enjoy ideas and concepts for their own sake</li> <li>• Like to describe things in a figurative, poetic way</li> </ul> <p>then you prefer</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>N</b> Intuition</p>	<div style="background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>ESTP</b></div> <p>Outgoing, realistic, action-oriented, curious, versatile, spontaneous. Pragmatic problem solvers and skillful negotiators.</p>	<div style="background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>ESFP</b></div> <p>Playful, enthusiastic, friendly, spontaneous, tactful, flexible. Have strong common sense, enjoy helping people in tangible ways.</p>	<div style="background-color: #4169e1; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>ENFP</b></div> <p>Enthusiastic, creative, spontaneous, optimistic, supportive, playful. Value inspiration, enjoy starting new projects, see potential in others.</p>	<div style="background-color: #800080; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>ENTP</b></div> <p>Inventive, enthusiastic, strategic, enterprising, inquisitive, versatile. Enjoy new ideas and challenges, value inspiration.</p>
<p><b>3. How do you prefer to make decisions? If you:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make decisions in an impersonal way, using logical reasoning</li> <li>• Value justice, fairness</li> <li>• Enjoy finding the flaws in an argument</li> <li>• Could be described as reasonable, level-headed</li> </ul> <p>then you prefer</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>T</b> Thinking</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Base your decisions on personal values and how your actions affect others</li> <li>• Value harmony, forgiveness</li> <li>• Like to please others and point out the best in people</li> <li>• Could be described as warm, empathetic</li> </ul> <p>then you prefer</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>F</b> Feeling</p>	<div style="background-color: #c00000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>ISTP</b></div> <p>Action-oriented, logical, analytical, spontaneous, reserved, independent. Enjoy adventure, skilled at understanding how mechanical things work.</p>	<div style="background-color: #4169e1; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>ISFP</b></div> <p>Gentle, sensitive, nurturing, helpful, flexible, realistic. Seek to create a personal environment that is both beautiful and practical.</p>	<div style="background-color: #4169e1; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>INFP</b></div> <p>Sensitive, creative, idealistic, perceptive, caring, loyal. Value inner harmony and personal growth, focus on dreams and possibilities.</p>	<div style="background-color: #c00000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>INTP</b></div> <p>Intellectual, logical, precise, reserved, flexible, imaginative. Original thinkers who enjoy speculation and creative problem solving.</p>
<p><b>4. How do you prefer to live your outer life? If you:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prefer to have matters settled</li> <li>• Think rules and deadlines should be respected</li> <li>• Prefer to have detailed, step-by-step instructions</li> <li>• Make plans, want to know what you're getting into</li> </ul> <p>then you prefer</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>J</b> Judging</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prefer to leave your options open</li> <li>• See rules and deadlines as flexible</li> <li>• Like to improvise and make things up as you go</li> <li>• Are spontaneous, enjoy surprises and new situations</li> </ul> <p>then you prefer</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>P</b> Perceiving</p>	<div style="background-color: #c00000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>ESTJ</b></div> <p>Efficient, outgoing, analytical, systematic, dependable, realistic. Like to run the show and get things done in an orderly fashion.</p>	<div style="background-color: #4169e1; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>ESFJ</b></div> <p>Friendly, outgoing, reliable, conscientious, organized, practical. Seek to be helpful and please others, enjoy being active and productive.</p>	<div style="background-color: #4169e1; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>ENFJ</b></div> <p>Caring, enthusiastic, idealistic, organized, diplomatic, responsible. Skilled communicators who value connection with people.</p>	<div style="background-color: #c00000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>ENTJ</b></div> <p>Strategic, logical, efficient, outgoing, ambitious, independent. Effective organizers of people and long-range planners.</p>










Figure 6.2 The MBTI Model of Personality: from Quenk (2009), *Essentials of Myers-Briggs type indicator assessment*.

## 6.2.3 Belbin Team Assessment and Workshop

This, the third model and related assessment to be added to the battery of traditional interventions, is proposed in response to the findings related to challenges experienced by managers. This model will address the following composites of teamwork that speaks to certain psychological strengths that form the basis for those of transcendence. The composites are: Action oriented roles, People / Social oriented roles and Thinking/ Cerebral oriented roles. Belbin Team Roles may be used to identify behavioural strengths and weaknesses of individuals in the workplace and

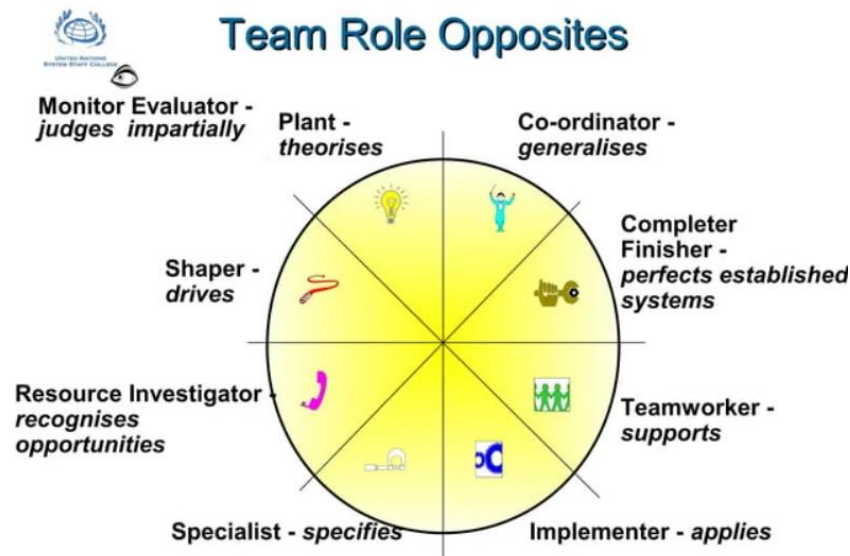
provide assistance with the development, resolving conflict and creating high performers. The results of the workshop will provide a language that ensures that teams communicate and work well together with increased understanding. The value of Belbin Team Role theory lies in enabling an individual or team to benefit from self-knowledge and adjust themselves according to the demands being made by the external situation.

There are many ways the Belbin can be used and applied in the workplace based on the strengths and development areas that may be targeted for improvement as per the model of team roles at work as indicated below. These assessments may be studied to help the facilitator to develop team and personal improvement plans; establish an agreed set of values and acceptable team behaviours; encourage empathy and respect; facilitate communication for understanding; offer guidelines for manager to take responsibility and accountability; as well as build more productive and collaborative relationships. Hence this model will address many of the manager challenges reported in the findings. The model below also shows categories of the roles and their corresponding team roles. Action category comprises Shaper, Implementer and Completer Finisher; People category comprises Co-ordinator, Teamworker, Resource Investigator; and the Cerebral category comprises Specialist, Monitor Evaluator and Plant roles. The strengths and allowable weaknesses of each role may be found in the figure below.

	Team role	Strengths	Allowable weaknesses
Action oriented roles	 <b>Shaper</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Challenging, dynamic, thrives on pressure</li> <li>The drive and courage to overcome obstacles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prone to provocation</li> <li>Offends people's feelings</li> </ul>
	 <b>Implementer</b> (company worker)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disciplined, reliable, conservative and efficient</li> <li>Turns ideas into practical actions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Somewhat inflexible</li> <li>Slow to respond to new possibilities</li> </ul>
	 <b>Completer finisher</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Painstaking, conscientious, anxious</li> <li>Searches out errors and omissions</li> <li>Delivers on time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inclined to worry unduly</li> <li>Reluctant to delegate</li> </ul>
People oriented roles	 <b>Co-ordinator</b> (Chairman)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mature, confident, a good chairperson</li> <li>Clarifies goals, promotes decision-making, delegates well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can often be seen as manipulative</li> <li>Offloads personal work</li> </ul>
	 <b>Teamworker</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-operative, mild, perceptive and diplomatic</li> <li>Listens, builds, averts friction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indecisive in crunch situations</li> </ul>
	 <b>Resource investigator</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extrovert, enthusiastic, communicative</li> <li>Explores opportunities</li> <li>Develops contacts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over-optimistic</li> <li>Loses interest once initial enthusiasm has passed</li> </ul>
Cerebral roles	 <b>Plant</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creative, imaginative, unorthodox</li> <li>Solves difficult problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ignores incidentals</li> <li>Too pre-occupied to communicate effectively</li> </ul>
	 <b>Monitor evaluator</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sober, strategic and disarming</li> <li>Sees all options</li> <li>Judges accurately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lacks drive and ability to inspire others</li> </ul>
	 <b>Specialist</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Single-minded, self-starting, dedicated</li> <li>Provides knowledge and skills in rare supply</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contributes only on a narrow front</li> <li>Dwells on technicalities</li> </ul>

**Figure 6.3 The Belbin Model of Team Roles at Work (Belbin & Brown, 2022)**

The model below is a further extension of the above model that clearly shows the roles found opposite each other that are complementary and that work well together to fill gaps in the team dynamics in terms of the characteristics displayed by each team player.



**Figure 6.4 The Belbin Model of Team Roles Opposites at Work (Belbin & Brown, 2022)**

The recommendations for the practical application of the PS of transcendence are suggested as follows, as a result of the findings of the study.

### **6.3 PART 2: PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL STRENGTHS AND MINDFULNESS EXERCISES**

Mindfulness may be described as a state of being, a non-evaluative, non-judgemental awareness of perceived mental states and processes that are sustained in the moment (Kabat-Zinn, Lipworth & Burney, 1985; Williston, Grossman, Mori & Niles, 2021, advised by Hassed et al., 2021). Being mindful has a way to gently help us refocus our attention, thus enabling constructive and intelligent use of awareness, where we are able to see our thoughts as transitory, whilst offering us the potential to disengage from thoughts and emotions that are unhelpful. Hassed et al. (2021) also postulate that in the process of our everyday life, we all meditate on something and unfortunately, we find ourselves generally meditating on negative emotions such as worry, stress anger and depression, and he reiterates that our emotional state and

mindset are reflected in the body and brain (Hassed et al., 2021). Mindfulness research has also shown improved achievement of therapeutic goals and fewer therapy sessions required for people who practise it (Rucker, 2021; Weiss, Nordlie & Siegel, 2005) as well as improved emotional regulation (Aftanas & Golosheykin, 2005).

Further to this, according to Aftanas and Golosheykin (2005), people who meditate show improved capabilities of regulating emotions and moderating the intensity of emotional arousal when negative emotions are experimentally induced. Metacognitive awareness means being aware of how you think and metacognition is the awareness of one's thinking and the strategies one is using. It enables one to be more mindful of what they are doing, and why they are doing it, and how these learned skills may be differently utilised in different situations. Metacognitive awareness may also be described as a moment-by-moment attitude of acceptance and non-judgement, where one is able to view thoughts as mental events rather than fact, which allows to one to detract from thoughts and view them more objectively (Hassed et al., 2021).

Guidelines have been suggested as practical interventions to strengthen the PS of transcendence by means of activities and mindfulness exercises. The guidelines are for managers to practise in their own time, to improve the mental, physical and spiritual state, as follows.

### **Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence (ABE)**

For the psychological strength of ABE, the following recommendations are made:

1. Discovering beauty in ordinary, day-to-day activities. Develop an eye for beautiful things or what one would regard as 'beauty', in less likely places and apart from what society would typically consider to be 'beauty'. Seek and resolve to experience beauty spontaneously, in the moment. Become aware of encounters of wonder and beauty in nature, leisurely walks, or even the value in other people.
2. Seek to appreciate, acknowledge and respect beauty and beautiful things, not as objectification of only physical attractiveness of appearance, but for a deeper value. Take care not to be judgmental. Become wary if your mind automatically

defaults to this and make a concerted effort to change this by consciously catching yourself when you go into “objectifying mode,” then shift your mind to an “appreciation mode” and seek value in the emotions felt and mental wellbeing experiences in association with this mode.

3. Reflect on past experiences of awe, and document the related emotions, thought and sensations, emotions. Contemplate your awareness of the emotion experienced in the present, as you reflect on these experiences after the occurrence. Use these experiences to identify the manner in which to re-arrange one’s daily routine to facilitate the experience of awe more regularly.
4. Deliberately seek ways to experience what triggers the emotion related to the unique emotion of awe as it pertains to each individual experience and ‘set the stage’ to experience it. Investigate what inspires this emotion within others for examples of how one can enhance the practice within oneself and then set about creating experiences that are similar. Participating in a cultural activity such as socials, museums, the ballet, concerts, an art exhibit, or a movie. Experience these activities with an open mind, and allow oneself to be inspired. Consider the excellence in the value and construction of the activity. Reflect on its beauty and reality.
5. Partake in activities that are set in a naturalistic environment. Take time to admire and immerse oneself in the beauty of nature. Detach from normal mundane life and return invigorated.

## **Gratitude**

For the psychological strength of gratitude, the following recommendations are made:

1. Counting one’s blessings and ensuring it is part of a morning and evening ritual of gratitude. Ensure that the last thought is one of gratitude, or write down all one is grateful for before bed. Think on memories of a person, experience or event for which one is grateful for. Document what has been gained, lost or learned, also the assistance that was offered during the course of the day and

how it eased your challenges. Take cognizance of those who are not in as good a standing as oneself and feel the gratitude.

2. Transcendence is considered to be accessed by writing a letter to someone in one's life to whom one is grateful. This may be considered a strategy of gratitude strategy as suggested by researchers, coaches and clinicians. This may be written to recipients as a challenge, for example to relatives, people from your past (e.g., a person who bears a significant role like a teacher or lecturer from a long time ago), or even to people who are not well known that gratitude could be shown.
3. Emmons (2007) wrote a book called Thanks! This is an evidence-based book comprising strategies for building and acknowledging gratitude by remembering the bad occurrences in one's life. Individuals experience varying levels of pain, suffering and difficulties and suffering which strengths and harnesses resilience. Reflection on past experiences of gratefulness and considering them as blessings rather than curses, where one is mindful that one cannot erase bad memories of the bad but embrace the solution whereby one can accept and even appreciate the past in this regard. Gratitude unfolds from this acceptance.
4. One's mindset can deliberately be shifted to one of gratitude by setting up reminders. Notes may be placed in spaces in your home, car and work, as a reminder to be grateful for what one does, where one is in life, and whom one is with. This habit can be cultivated; although it may seem contrived, after a period of time it becomes an automatic and budding character strength.
5. Offer a prayer of thanks to set a good tone when experiencing a poignant incident. One may also meditate on gratitude prior and subsequent to each experience. Show thankfulness for the privilege granted to be able to experience a talent, view and appreciate a show, concert or a movie, for the people who assist to perform teamwork, and even for the numerous hours of work required to complete a task. Be cognizant of the ability not to take these experiences for granted and view it with eyes of gratitude.

## Hope

For the psychological strength of hope, the following recommendations are made:

Optimism and hope can be readily developed and improved upon; and pessimists may even become optimists.

1. Set goals that are positive, specific, realistic, reachable and maintain a positive mindset that you are able to accomplish them. Envision the pathways to strive to attain these goals, keep motivated and flexible along the way as you profile your future (Worgan, 2013).
2. Make a conscious choice to choose optimism. Individuals who choose optimism are thought to achieve more, are less depressed and attain better levels of health as suggested by Seligman (1991; 2002; 2011), who describes learned optimism as those individuals who decide to move toward optimism who use optimism strategically to improve their mental and physical and mental wellbeing, together with achieving goals.
3. Develop a sense of realistic optimism. Schneider (2001) defines three different forms of realistic optimism: leniency for the past, where one gives others the benefit of the doubt; appreciation for the present, where one appreciates the current situation / circumstance or moment; and opportunity seeking for the future, where one seeks windows of opportunities.
4. Watch movies with hopeful designs provides a way of engendering the feeling of being hopeful. One is able to glean, shape and actualize one's strengths from movies (Hesley & Hesley, 1998; Niemec, 2020; Siritikul et al., 2021). These are movies that may inspire hope where often the protagonists are portrayed as people who commonly find themselves in challenging situations but refuse to let that keep them down and find ways to look forward towards a more positive future.

5. Build hope by engaging in hope-reminding strategies that promote hopeful feelings and cognitions, in this way one is able to create a 'hope feedback loop' (Lopez et al., 2004). One may document hope-filled experiences and connect the hope displayed by others in one's own life. Here it is important to closely monitor and record thoughts of hopeful, hopeless or helpless thinking in order to learn and build from them.

## **Humour**

For the psychological strength of humour, the following recommendations are made:

1. Smile, when attending work, a social event or venue, and smile at everyone you meet. Ensure eye contact is made and be aware of the impact this behaviour has on others, the feedback you receive from them as well as how it impacts oneself. If you would like to test this process, you may repeat this behaviour but this time frown instead; then notice the reaction of others in this experience and the differences are apparent in the feedback and impact one receives.
2. Make fun of oneself/one's situation or experiences, especially during challenging / overwhelming times. Comedians do this all the time; they are able to laugh and joke about their problems with those around them. This is a reminder to be playful and not take oneself seriously, even when situations in life seem serious. There is ambiguity and inconsistency that is associated with humour, so one must be discerning as to how it is used; however, the experience can be humbling and effective if used correctly. Try to relate experiences in a favourable way to others and also think of what advice a comedian may provide in a conversation.
3. In daily interactions, shift from controlled laughter to "belly laughter" that is felt from the bottom of the abdomen, such as a belly laugh. Laugh frequently, with a significant other, with children, friends, etc. One could even join a laughter club, where for five minutes daily one experiences deep laughter. One can practise deep laughter with oneself, the deliberate kind, in absence of a particular stimulus where laughter happens for its own sake, laugh just to laugh

unprovoked may provide many therapeutic benefits. This can especially be associated with deep belly laughter.

4. Practise playfulness or farce regularly helps transcend the emotions from one's head to one's heart and body. Embracing farce as a daily occurrence in life. Allowing oneself to be light-hearted and act being silly may assist to remove the seriousness from life.
5. Watching light-hearted comedies could also assist to access the strength of humour in oneself. The ability of comedy to provoke laughter provides the experience of a feeling or behaviour associated with the character strength of humour. Selecting a favourite comedy to immerse oneself in at least once a week may easily lighten a mood and help the individual to absorb and even display some of the characteristics of the strength of humour portrayed in them. One could choose from slapstick, light-hearted movies; self-deprecatory, satires, classics or even dark comedy. A deliberate decision must be made to watch these regularly.

## **Spirituality**

For the psychological strength of spirituality, the following recommendations are made. Spirituality marks an awakening and the movement away from a mundane and automatic pilot existence. One is able to find meaning and valuableness in life which could even be termed miraculous. This should be considered in the practice of the following exercises:

1. Read self-help books that relate to developing meaning and spirituality in one's life. Amongst the array of spiritual books, some are based on scientific theory and research and theory and considered significant in positive psychology. A short list of recommended books for managers are: *Wellbeing: The Five Essential Elements* by Tom Rath and Jim Harter; *No Hard Feelings: The Secret Power of Embracing Emotions at Work* by Liz Fosslien and Molly West Duffy; and *Tiny Beautiful Things* by Cheryl Strayed (which discusses the five

dimensions of spiritual intelligence and the building of new neural pathways to supernatural thinking).

2. Deliberately try to slow down life's rapid pace by being conscious of the journey, practising awareness and mindfulness in one's daily life and being unafraid to press the pause button from time to time. Maintain awareness of the physical body and the mind, as well as the external environment during daily activities such as eating, listening, working, walking and travelling.
3. Ponder on what you would do and say if you had a limited time left on earth. This is called the deathbed test. People are encouraged to think on this, specifically what they would have spent more time on if they could retrieve time. This thought experiment was considered by Peterson and Seligman (2004) to enable the generation of beliefs and ideas that relate to morality, meaning of life, connections with others, and ultimate life concerns. It was suggested that these answers be documented and kept in visible spots to serve as reminders of what is important in life.
4. Enhance one's faith. Whatever one's belief in religion or spirituality is, become better at it; for example if one is a Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jew or Muslim, become a better follower of the religion, in practising the moral application of each faith in terms of its value and benefit to oneself, one's community, the environment and others. This means emphasising humility, inclusivity over exclusivity and adopting an open-minded stance and developing mind over a rigidity one.
5. Find the balance with one's resilient spirit and the ecosystem (Niemic, 2021). The paradox of life is that sometimes apparently small, insignificantly perceived or inconsequential events may lead to devastating consequences, even though the spirit is resilient as life encompasses the multiple sources of stress daily such as trauma and neglect. However, the resilient spirit is able to recover and find strength to overcome these happenings. One needs to be conscious of this paradox, to be able to fully understand and develop awareness of what

transpires within our minds and bodies. We could then experience the utmost joy, awe and confidence within ourselves.

6. Emphasise the healing rather than the cure. Reflect on one's health, past and current relationships as well as regrets that you may have. Think of the possibility of the need for closure that may be required in terms of connecting, allowing, embracing and moving forward. Be unafraid to embrace flaws, vulnerabilities, imperfections and suffering (Kurtz & Ketcham, 1992). To heal means to fully accept the reality of the present condition. This may be perplexing to a culture where people are on a hamster wheel of existence and everything seemingly happens on auto-pilot, also where boundaries of people are not necessarily respected.
  
7. Five exercises of mindfulness should be learned and practised. Thich Nhat Hanh, who was humble as well as he was influential, discusses the Five Mindfulness Trainings that are adapted from the principles of Buddhism. These have been proven to assist people to live a more mindful existence encompassing integrity and most importantly health (Hanh, 1993). The principles are common practice in most spiritual traditions and a profound catalyst for deepening one's faith, and moving people towards happiness and freedom, which involves looking more deeply into one's behaviours and thoughts and behaviours, providing a real-world approach and benefit to spirituality. These include the following. First, **Mindful Breathing**: pay attention to the in-breath and out-breath – cultivating the emotions of happiness and joy, in being able to breathe and being alive. **Concentration**: go deeply within this process of breathing, by following the in-breath and the out-breath fully until there is an absence of other thoughts are present, where one's mind is absorbed in this process. Mindfulness is then uninterrupted, and the quality of concentration is improved. **Awareness of the Body**: shift awareness from the breath and now focus on the entire body, create awareness of the body whilst breathing where the mind and body interact and become united. This allows the individual to become fully present and feel fully alive, and open to the available wonders that life may offer. **Releasing Tension**: this exercise addresses the feelings of anxious tension that may have gone unnoticed before the practice

of mindfulness practice, the stress and pain experienced in the body, that may have been accumulating over a period of time, where the body suffers, and we could not fathom how our mind could help us release it. Finally, ***Walking Meditation***: feel and touch the surrounding wonders of life with each and every step and when one is able to walk this way, each step brings healing.

Next the alternative approaches for PPIs will be discussed, which follow from the practical examples as discussed in the spiritual PS of transcendence.

#### **6.4 PART 3: ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS (PPIS)**

Pivotal to the enhancement of wellbeing in the organisational setting is the suggestion to explore and incorporate the alternative intervention approach in order to complement the traditional and practical approaches. These are thought to reduce or alleviate some of the negative stress responses experienced by individuals in varying ways and especially during times of organisational challenge. Moreover, given the recent research on workplace spirituality (Benefiel, Fry & Geigle, 2014; Driscoll, Mclsaac & Wiebe, 2019; Indradevi, 2021; Maheshwari, 2021; Marques, Dhiman & King, 2005; Mayer & Viviers, 2014) provides evidence that the application of such alternative spiritual interventions could reduce individual stress, enhance wellbeing, as well as improve productivity. However, it should be considered that these interventions may not willingly be accepted in all cultures and religions, but it is important to stress that this alternate intervention should be viewed as spiritual rather than religious practices. Even though the teaching emanated from the ancient beliefs and practices of certain cultures, they may be utilised as spiritual practices in the workplace also known as workplace spirituality (Indradevi, 2021). Also, important to note is that some of these practices have been proven to help alleviate, if not eradicate completely, certain physical ailments and also improve mental states of being. A person cannot have clarity of vision in a body that is riddled with disease. For example, application of sound therapy is considered to help release stress and anxiety, bring clarity to the mind, rejuvenate and energise the body, calm the emotions and open the heart to happiness.

From the list of psychological interventions as practised by some of the participants, the following alternative PPIs were highlighted: prayer, meditation, yoga, breath work and music. According to Hased et al. (2021), these practices teach us to accept thoughts, feelings, sensations and experiences as and when they arise and learn to be at peace with them. It is therefore suggested that these practices be explored as the third component of the recommended intervention proposal.

A parallel component of PPIs, that has gained momentum in the field of improvement, involves the act of training the brain through activities such as gratitude journals and seeking for happiness (Kataria, Singh & Motwani, 2023; Tiwari, Narayan, Kumar & Tiwari, 2023), as discussed in the previous section. The ancient Chinese techniques for brain improvement use various approaches to attempt to change the brain from the core, through gratitude, acceptance and equanimity. In the ancient cultures of India and China, movement techniques such as tai chi, meditation, prayer, chanting, yoga and breathing (known as pranayama in India and qigong in China), are practices that improve the brain and generate mindfulness (Kataria et al., 2023; Tiwari et al., 2023). These are examples of the suggested practices to be incorporated here. Yoga is one such practice considered to be all encompassing and involves the practice of disciplining the mind, body and spirit to awaken spiritual energy (Radin, 2014) and optimum capacity, mindfulness, compassion, grace and love, leading to self-realisation (Erlam & Hammond, 2023).

Yoga is a philosophical system and meditative practice directed towards the mastery of one's body and mind and humans are considered as a principle, and not in the form of a man or woman (Swami Krishnananda, 2014). Yoga is believed to predate religion by hundreds of years, with a goal to achieve complete oneness with the absolute or true self and realise a unity with something higher than the self, with the result being the attainment of 'ananda' or bliss, according to the consciousness perspective of Jung (Greenwell, 2002). This practice allows practitioners to focus on the physical, psychological or spiritual or a combination of all three. The wisdom of traditional yoga refines expressions of a person's potential by creating a cathartic experience between the relationship of the physical world and consciousness (Radin, 2014). This knowledge is thought to be, in some ways, thousands of years ahead of where science

is today, as the restraint of mind is emphasised and the union of the transcendental self through a focus on the body as a whole being is envisioned (Radin, 2014).

According to the Bhagavad Gita, yoga is a skill and an action, balance and equanimity. The Sanskrit word “asana” refers to the various postures and “prana” refers to vital life energy. There are various paths and forms of yoga that could be practised (Swami Krishnananda, 2014). The four paths or branches of Yoga are: Karma yoga – the yoga of action and selfless service; Bhakti yoga – the yoga of devotion; Rāja yoga – the yoga of meditation and Jñāna yoga – the yoga of will and intellect. According to yogic philosophy, the universe’s cosmic energy flows through our body as breath, called the energy force or ‘prana’ (Gendry, 2019). Breathing is said to be the very essence of our life, hence during times of stress, we experience negative emotions, where our breathing becomes shallow and irregular, thus affecting this flow of prana in our body and laughter is found to assist in the reversal of that process (Gendry, 2019).

For purposes of the recommendation for guidelines for alternative approaches to PPIs, Laughter yoga and Tantra yoga are a focus and will be discussed as they pertain to wellbeing.

**Laughter yoga** which relates to the PS of Humour (Seligman, 2001), was found to be extremely beneficial to mental and physical health. Hashimoto (2018) argues that the incorporation of even intentional laughter improves health and helps one cope with the stresses of modern living. Following from the invention of laughter yoga by Kataria in 2002, and incorporating knowledge of pranayama (breath) exercises, the laughter club was launched, where it is stated that the body is unable to differentiate between pretend and genuine laughter.

Sessions in laughter yoga could begin with gentle warm-up techniques like stretching, clapping, chanting and body movement, which assist to release inhibitions and conjure a frame of mind of childlike playfulness. Breathing exercises prepare the lungs for laughter, followed by exercises in laughter combined with visualisation and techniques of playfulness. When these exercises are combined with the strong social dynamics of group behaviour, it may lead to prolonged, unconditional and hearty laughter (USA, 2013). It is said that twenty minutes of laughter is sufficient to develop full physiological

benefit: the clapping and warming up exercises stimulate the acupressure points in the hands and thus increase the energy levels within the body and when rhythm and humming is added to clapping, this helps to raise the frequency in the body and aligns it to a universal frequency (Hashimoto, 2018). The deep breathing exercises helps to flush the lungs, and results in a deep sense of mental and physical relaxation.

Incorporating laughter tools in one's toolbox may offer an individual the ability to activate this inner spirit of laughter (Alici & Dönmez, 2020). Humour is considered crucial to the individual's ability to manage stress, as it is said that "tension and anxiety can immediately be relieved by a smile or a laugh" (Garrick, 2014:173). From the evidence in the literature as well as the findings of this study, humour is often overlooked as it is sometimes considered an inappropriate tool for adults (Chadwick & Platt, 2018). Yet it is a human trait that when summoned can be used to alleviate stressful situations, diffuse tension as well as enhance a sense of belonging (Garrick, 2014). Individuals are often urged to control laughter; however, the ability to laugh is a choice, and its power over the mind, body and spirit is incomparable. Roscoe (2017) said that individuals would become unstoppable if they could readily tap into this power, as laughter really is the best medicine.

**Tantra yoga** or spiritual yoga and as the name suggests is more spiritual than other types of yoga and its purpose is to promote spiritual enlightenment. Where other types of yoga flow with the breath, this yoga combines chanting, singing, movements, and breathing in specific patterns. These practices require specific focus in that has specific uses that enable spiritual enlightenment in terms of linking to an alternative intervention approach.

**Chakra healing** is a process of Tantra yoga which proposes seven chakras or wheels of spiritual power that may be located along the spine. Each chakra or localised vortex of vibrating energy is represented as a lotus flower with a unique number of petals, signifying each location's energetic expression (Keeney, 2006). The goal is to awaken the energy upwards in the spine, allowing the whole being to become fully awakened (Keeney, 2006). The chakras are associated with modern physiology's physical centres in the body, the seven major nerve or vital energy centres which is known as the central nervous system that carries messages back and forth from the central

nervous system (which is made up of the brain and the spinal cord) to the peripheral nervous system (the nerves found throughout the body). These centres can be activated and harmonised, leading to improvements in physical and mental health, psychological stability and inner peace (Krishnananda, 2014). The seven major centres comprise nerve ganglia emanating from the spinal cord that create intricate networks known as nerve plexuses, which are pure neurological powerhouses, essentially like mini-brains within the body. Each of these nerve centres hosts its own ensemble of specific glands, hormones, and chemicals, governing distinct bodily functions (Solis, 2011). These precise spots were identified over 2000 years ago and align remarkably with what ancient practitioners called chakras (Swami Krishnananda, 2014; Ugale & Singh, 2021).

A hormone called serotonin, also known as the happy chemical or mood stabiliser, is a neurotransmitter that carries chemical messages between nerve cells in the brain and throughout the body (Owens, 2021). Serotonin has several roles including influencing happiness, learning and memory as well as regulating other physical activities in the body. Lack of adequate amounts of serotonin may lead to anxiety, depression and other health conditions. Mostly serotonin (90%) is found in the lining of the gastrointestinal tract (the second centre or sacral chakra), then released into the blood circulation and absorbed, and only about 10% is produced in the brain (Cleveland Clinic, 2022).

During challenging times, the experience of trauma or negative emotions may disrupt these centres, causing a domino effect, that then disrupts the synergistic functioning throughout the body of the organs, the tissues and the cells of the body. This disruption may manifest in physical and mental health issues (Ugale & Singh, 2021). Thoughts and feelings cause chemical reactions in the brain and body, so, with meditation and feeling and with elevated emotions in each of these centres such as the psychological strengths of transcendence, namely appreciation, gratitude, hope, humour and spirituality, all of these centres will start to perform better and revert to balance, resulting in a healing of mental and physical health, thus creating wellness (Gendry, 2019).

Hence the chakra teaching system addresses the development of the whole person. Fundamental to this teaching is a reality that is perceived in extension of the five senses, which comprise alternate forms such as visions, meditation and even premonitions and trance (Govinda, 2004). The word chakra means wheel or turning in Sanskrit, and is found in the subtle energy system, where the chakras revolve continuously and through this rotation, absorbing energies from without, converting them into subtle material of the astral body. Each chakra is considered a focal point for thousands of rays of subtle energy which are then directed outward (Govinda, 2004). In ancient manuscripts approximately 88 000 chakras were documented with the seven principal chakras, of which are indicated in the figure below. These chakras are accompanied by certain symbols, elements, colours and mantras that serve to activate the body's primary chakras (Govinda, 2004).



**Figure 6.5 The Seven Principal Chakras.**

The figure indicates the seven principal chakras: root, sacral, naval, heart, throat, forehead and crown. Each of these chakras will be discussed in detail below and how they may be activated to increase wellbeing according to the elements of positive emotions, engagement, meaning, relationships and accomplishment, according to the PERMA model of wellbeing (Seligman, 2011).

The seven chakras symbolise different stages of human development and by involving oneself in these different levels of being, an individual may actualise his or her potential through this holistic method of chakra work, which postulates that this living energy is concentrated in certain areas or regions of the body (Govinda, 2004). Each chakra or

energy centre is regulated by a certain emotional quality by transforming prana or universal life energy to an appropriate frequency (Leskowitz, 2022).

Reich contends that people develop character armour which is a sum of typical character attitudes, purpose of which is to create blocks to avoid emotional pain, resulting in bodily rigidity and emotional deadness and the resolve of chakra work is to release these blocks allowing the individual to readjust their body, beliefs and energy to authentically reflect their natural expressions (Fallon-Cyr & Fallon-Cyr, 2001; Sletvold, 2014). Chakras may be activated through breathing techniques and asanas (yoga postures) as well as through aromatherapy and precious stones that benefit body, mind and spirit (Govinda, 2004). This author describe the beneficial effects of chakra work for the body to be strengthening the body's defences, harmonising the cardiovascular system, detoxifying and improving the functioning of internal organs, healing circulatory problems, strengthening the metabolism and increasing the retention of oxygen; for the mind: reduced anxiety, relaxation, deep and peaceful sleep. Addictions are more easily overcome and mental fatigue disappears; and for the spirit: improved concentration, sharper memory, elimination of negative thinking, clarity of mind and spirit, seeing what is really important and recognising one's true purpose in life (Govinda, 2004).

The seven principal chakras, their benefits and how they relate to the individual are discussed in the table below. Working with the chakras facilitates a new openness, a willingness to view and experience life differently, and healing and growth possibilities at a bio-psycho-social level, and engages the organism as a whole. Chakra healing is a method that releases this blocked energy, resulting in deeper self-understanding, which is required to address organisational challenges experienced by the individual, which may be practised by the individual as follows:

Stimulation of the root chakra could aid in an increased sense of trust and orientation. Organisations are constantly seeking ways to increase or improve trust, so through this chakra, increased trust can be achieved. People with a strongly developed root chakra also have enormous energy and stamina stability, the will to live, self-preservation, a sense of trust and security and groundedness, as blockages in this chakra account for apathy, lack of trust and lassitude (Govinda, 2004). Through

stimulation of the sacral chakra, a sense of sexuality, sensuality, fertility and creative life energy is formed. A blocked sacral chakra can lead to jealousy, persistent anxiety, ambivalence, addiction, feelings of guilt and aggression (Govinda, 2004).

Reinforcement of the navel chakra ought to assist to people to be able to achieve their goals, and actively engage within their surroundings; they are spontaneous, follow their gut instinct and do not hold back emotionally. This chakra represents willpower, self-confidence, personality, self-development, self-control, feelings, sensitivity, power and forcefulness. A blocked navel chakra can lead to apathy, arrogance, an obsession with power, insecurity, a need to control and thoughtlessness as well as fits of rage (Govinda, 2004).

Stimulating the heart chakra speaks to the need for people to transcend selfish interests and their own limitations, they can more readily take on responsibility and accept themselves despite their weaknesses and failings. A blocked heart chakra can lead to heartlessness and bitterness, loneliness and a feeling of disconnect, being overwhelmed and a loss of identity (Govinda, 2004). People with a strongly developed throat chakra are gifted with great verbal ability. This chakra also represents hearing; sound can change a person's mood in an instant. A blocked throat chakra is often accompanied by speech disturbances such as stuttering and stammering and difficulties expressing oneself as well as a distorted thirst for fame, the desire to manipulate and a tendency to gossip (Govinda, 2004).

People with a strongly developed forehead chakra, otherwise known as the third-eye chakra are thought to have mental clarity, enhanced visualisation and self-knowledge. Central themes for this chakra are that of intuition, wisdom, realisation, awareness, fantasy, power of imagination and self-knowledge. A blocked forehead chakra can result in weakened concentration, forgetfulness, spiritual confusion, selfishness, greed and the lust for power (Govinda, 2004). People with a strongly developed crown chakra may reach a sense of the sacred unity of the cosmos. Central themes for this chakra are spirituality, experience of higher planes, knowledge of God, enlightenment, self-realisation and cosmic consciousness. The development of this centre leads the personality to the highest level and results in a profound transformation (Govinda, 2004).

Thus, the interconnectedness between the complex and intricate systems of yoga and managerial challenges could yield innumerable benefits to the individual and the organisation. Through life, individuals tend to lose themselves and their ability to adapt, feel, clarify and find purpose. Yoga and chakra work could help individuals to reawaken their innate psychological strengths to the benefit of themselves, their teams, as well as their organisations. Incorporating yoga and chakra work into existing PPIs could provide benefits such as reduced stress, improved tools or mechanisms to cope with challenges, along with a shared sense of cohesion and purpose.

In summation, given the evidence of increased challenges in the workplace, which brings with it the experience of high stress levels for managers, it seems imperative that organisations rethink and reframe traditional methods of managerial assistance. PPIs that were typically designed for managers may not resonate, assist or relieve the stress experienced by all managers in the changing landscape. Organisations could benefit from higher levels of consciousness, new openness and a willingness to see the world differently, and could therefore consider alternative PPIs, which could allow managers to explore different angles that lead to transformed perceptions and an extension of consciousness. Even though yoga may be interpreted as a comprehensive programme of self-development with a systematic layout of higher states of consciousness, this practice may be simplified for the organisational context. The mysticism linked to yoga may also appeal to managers if correctly packaged, and in so doing could be a catalyst for individual, group and organisational benefits. The ability to increase positive emotions and reduce negative emotions allows for a complete alteration of the organisational landscape. These alternative PPIs bring with it increased values of trust, creativity, willpower, love, support, reliance, confidence, communication, awareness, spirituality and thus assist in the creation of spiritual intelligence (SQ).

**Table 6.1 The Chakra (Tantra) Healing Table (Govinda, 2004)**

<p><b>Root Chakra (Muladhara Chakra)</b></p> <p><b>Sensory Function (Smell)</b></p>	<p>“I trust the power of the earth and feel my body.”</p> <p>The central theme is TRUST.</p>	<p>Symbolised by four petals that correspond to four Sanskrit syllables.</p> <p>The primary mantra to activate this chakra is LAM</p>	<p>The element is earth.</p> <p><i>The red colour represents Basic Trust, Life Energy, Passion and Strength</i></p> <p>The basic symbol is the square.</p>	<p>Blockages in the root chakra account for apathy, lack of trust and lassitude (Govinda, 2004).</p>
<p><b>Sacral Chakra (Svadhithana Chakra)</b></p> <p><b>Sensory Function (Taste)</b></p>	<p>“I take pleasure in life with all of my senses”</p> <p>The central theme is CREATIVITY</p>	<p>Symbolised by six petals that correspond to six Sanskrit syllables.</p> <p>The primary mantra to activate this chakra is VAM</p>	<p>The element is water.</p> <p><i>The orange colour represents Creativity, Vitality</i></p> <p>The basic symbol is the crescent moon expressing association with the feminine aspects.</p>	<p>A blocked sacral chakra can lead to jealousy, persistent anxiety, ambivalence, addiction, feelings of guilt and aggression (Govinda, 2004).</p>
<p><b>Naval Chakra (Manipura Chakra)</b></p> <p><b>Sensory Function (Sight)</b></p>	<p>“I trust my own feelings and spontaneity”</p> <p>Central theme is WILLPOWER</p>	<p>Symbolised by ten petals that correspond to Sanskrit syllables.</p> <p>The primary mantra to activate this chakra is RAM</p>	<p>The element is fire.</p> <p><i>The yellow colour represents Sense of Self</i></p> <p>The basic symbol is the triangle.</p>	<p>A blocked naval chakra can lead to apathy, arrogance, an obsession with power, insecurity, a need to control and thoughtlessness as well as fits of rage (Govinda, 2004).</p>
<p><b>Heart Chakra (Anahata chakra)</b></p> <p><b>Sensory Function (Touch)</b></p>	<p>“I send myself and others love and compassion.”</p> <p>Central theme is LOVE</p>	<p>Symbolised by twelve petals that correspond to Sanskrit syllables</p> <p>The primary mantra to activate this chakra is YAM</p>	<p>The element is air.</p> <p><i>The green colour Love.</i></p> <p>The basic symbol is the hexagon.</p>	<p>A blocked heart chakra can lead to heartlessness and bitterness, loneliness and a feeling of disconnect, being overwhelmed easily and a loss of identity (Govinda, 2004).</p>
<p><b>Throat Chakra (Vishuddha Chakra)</b></p>	<p>“I open myself to the power of truth”</p>	<p>Symbolised by sixteen petals.</p>	<p>The element is ether.</p>	<p>A blocked throat chakra is often accompanied by speech disturbances such as stuttering</p>

<p><b>Sensory Function (Hearing)</b></p>	<p>Central themes of COMMUNICATION</p>	<p>The primary mantra to activate this chakra is HAM.</p>	<p><i>The sky-blue colour represents Truth</i></p> <p>The basic symbol is the circle.</p>	<p>and stammering and difficulties expressing oneself as well as a distorted thirst for fame, the desire to manipulate and a tendency to gossip (Govinda, 2004).</p>
<p><b>Forehead Chakra (Ajna Chakra)</b></p> <p><b>Sensory Function (Reason / Intuition)</b></p>	<p>“I open myself to my inner light”</p> <p>Central theme is AWARENESS</p> <p>This chakra is often referred to as the third eye (Intuition)</p>	<p>Symbolised by two petals and the</p> <p>The primary mantra to activate this chakra is OM</p>	<p>The element is mind.</p> <p><i>The colour violet blue represents Wisdom</i></p> <p>The basic symbol is the winged circle.</p>	<p>A blocked forehead chakra can result in weakened concentration, forgetfulness, spiritual confusion, selfishness, greed and the lust for power (Govinda, 2004).</p>
<p><b>Crown Chakra (Sahasrara chakra)</b></p> <p><b>Sensory Function (Cosmic Consciousness)</b></p>	<p>“I am aware in every moment.”</p> <p>Central theme is SPIRITUALITY</p>	<p>Symbolised by a thousand petals.</p> <p>The primary mantra to activate this chakra is AH.</p>	<p>The element is spirit.</p> <p><i>The violet colour represents Spiritual Enlightenment</i></p> <p>The basic symbol is the lotus blossom.</p>	<p>The development of this centre leads the personality to the highest level and results in a profound transformation (Govinda, 2004).</p>

The table above discusses the chakra names, symbols, sensory functions, central themes, the primary mantra to activate the respective chakra, the elements of the chakra, the colours of each chakra, as well as the benefits of the development of each chakra.

## 6.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The focus of the chapter centred around recommendations for guidelines to suggest more suitable and enhanced methods of PPIs to allow managers to cope with challenges more effectively and also enhance their sense of wellbeing. A discussion of improved traditional approaches was presented, as well as guidelines for practical and alternative approaches based on body-based interventions that could be applied

to assist to raise individual consciousness, increase self-awareness and result in increased insight into the behaviours that provide alternatives to cope with life's stresses and challenges. It is thought that these types of interventions that intrinsically connect the mind, body and spirit will facilitate a new way of accepting emotions, thoughts, feelings and expressions when they arise and allow individuals to learn to be more at peace with themselves (Hassed et al., 2021). This is in keeping with Martin Seligman's argument that happiness and wellbeing may be experienced despite the individual's life circumstances (2002; 2011).

## Chapter 7: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the previous chapters we dealt with the findings of the research and an interpretation of these findings. This chapter comprises the ultimate conclusions taking the literature and the results of the research into account as per the specific objectives of the study. In addition, the research limitations are discussed as well as recommendations for the organisation, and for future research in the field of industrial psychology.

To recap, the research purpose was to explore the managers' experiences of wellbeing in an environment that had its challenges within the automotive sector. The research was aimed at exploring the experiences of managers in the workplace in terms of their wellbeing and respective challenges, as well as examine the role and utilisation of the psychological strengths of transcendence to overcome managerial challenges. This study employed a qualitative approach in its method of data collection and IPA for interpretation and analyses. The study participants comprised twelve managers within the subsidiaries of the chosen company in the automotive sector, who voluntarily participated in the research. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data and gain insight into the managers' experiences of wellbeing, the challenges they experienced, positive and negative factors were taken into account and the use of psychological strengths to negate these challenges. Following this, themes were identified, results of the data were collated, then evaluated and further integrated in order to present these findings. The three main objectives were as follows and will be addressed according to the findings:

*The first objective was to explore the experiences of the wellbeing of managers at the workplace according to the core elements of the PERMA model of wellbeing.*

*The second objective was to examine the role of the psychological strengths of Transcendence in negating the challenging experiences of managers and how these contribute to the wellbeing of managers as set out by the PERMA model.*

*The third objective was to identify existing strengths-based positive psychological interventions for managers that promote managers wellbeing at the company in order to further develop them.*

**Figure 7.1 Summary Objectives, Research Questions, Themes and Sub-themes**

OBJECTIVES	RESEARCH QUESTIONS	THEMES	SUB-THEMES
<p>1) To explore the experiences of the wellbeing of managers at the workplace according to the core elements of the PERMA model of wellbeing.</p> <p>2) To examine the role of the psychological strengths of Transcendence in negating the challenging experiences of managers and how these contribute to the wellbeing of managers as set out by the PERMA model.</p> <p>3) To identify existing strengths-based positive psychological interventions for managers that promote managers wellbeing at the company in order to further develop them.</p>	<p>1. What are the manager's experiences of wellbeing (WB) according the elements of the PERMA Model</p>	<p><b>Managers' experiences of wellbeing (as per PERMA Model)</b></p>	<p><b><u>1. PERMA:</u></b>                      Positive Emotion / Pleasure                      Engagement                      Meaning                      Relationships                      Accomplishment / Achievement</p>
	<p>2. How do the psychological strengths (PS) of Transcendence contribute to manager's wellbeing as per the PERMA Model?</p>	<p><b>Psychological strengths of managers in relation to PERMA Model</b></p>	<p><b><u>2. PSYCHOLOGICAL STRENGTHS:</u></b>                      Appreciation of Beauty &amp; Excellence                      Gratitude                      Hope                      Humour                      Spirituality</p>
	<p>3. What are the challenges experienced by managers and the role of the psychological strengths (PS) of Transcendence in negating these challenges?</p>	<p><b>Challenges experienced by managers and the role of psychological strengths</b></p>	<p><b><u>3. PSYCHOLOGICAL STRENGTHS &amp; CHALLENGES:</u></b>                      Challenges of Managers                      Positive &amp; Negative Factors                      Money Factors</p>
	<p>4. What are the existing (PPIs) based on PS of S&amp;T for managers in the workplace?</p>	<p><b>Existing PPIs</b></p> <p><b>PPIs to promote managers WB</b></p>	<p><b><u>4. POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS (PPIs):</u></b>                      Existing PPIs                      How PPIs Promote Wellbeing                      Further Development of PPIs</p>
	<p>5. How do the existing PPIs help to promote managers wellbeing at the company and how can these be further developed?</p>	<p><b>Further development of PPIs</b></p>	

## 7.1 OBJECTIVE SUMMARY

The research intention was to develop a set of guidelines for a wellbeing intervention for managers to enable their abilities to cope with challenges in developing the psychological strengths of transcendence. The need for this was gauged through a thorough examination of the challenges experienced by managers and the role of psychological strengths to combat these challenges based on the PERMA model of wellbeing. The intention was to facilitate the “flourishing” of the individual and the organisation as a whole. Table 11 outlines the presentation on the research findings relative to the objectives, research questions, themes and sub-themes of the study.

***The first objective was to explore the experiences of the wellbeing of managers at the workplace according to the core elements of the PERMA model of wellbeing.***

Research on the authentic happiness and wellbeing theories and the PERMA model was covered in the literature review. General themes were yielded from participants via a qualitative analysis concerning the managers’ experiences of wellbeing according to the elements of the PERMA model of positive emotion/pleasure, engagement, meaning, positive relationships and accomplishment/achievement. The outcome of this objective will be summarised as follows.

The experiences related to the element of pleasure /positive emotions were hedonism, anticipatory and consummatory pleasure, pleasures gained from on the job and off the job activities as well as pleasure derived from the managers’ work role. Many participants described diverse experiences of pleasure or positive emotion; some reported to have a much lower capacity for pleasure, some experienced pleasure in their tasks, some anticipated pleasure, whilst others reported not deriving any happiness or joy from work. This is in keeping with Hanley (2007), who explains that the capacity to experience pleasure differs among individuals, which illustrates the variable nature of pleasure, stating that experiences or activities that can be deemed as pleasurable to one person may not be necessarily so for the next person.

With regards to engagement, participants’ responses in general show compliance with the conceptualisations that associate engagement with vigour, dedication and

absorption. A majority of the participants described the ability to have healthy levels of engagement at work; however, one of the participants described his over-zealous amount of dedication as burnout. Jones and Harter (2005) contend that engagement is considered to be multidimensional and is often associated with burnout. Regarding the multidimensional definition: cognitive, emotional and physical dimensions of engagement, participants indicated no issues for the cognitive aspect; however, some participants indicated that they were struggling to cope with the emotional and physical aspects of engagement, especially that managers are expected to work many overtime hours.

Meaning attached to work was a domain of particular interest to this study as it involves a sense of purpose, goal, value and significance, according to Chalofsky (2003) and Steger (2016). Most participants expressed an experience of meaning and purpose from work; however, some noted that they derive no meaning from being a manager in this particular industry as they cannot behave autonomously as leaders. They mentioned that the directives of the company are set out for them and there is no room for their own strategic abilities.

Regarding positive relationships, this element was experienced well by managers at the company in terms of the value, meaning and purpose that relationships bring. Most participants also indicated that helpfulness, trust, gratitude, humour, hope, optimism for the future and appreciation for others were also experienced as a result of positive relationships at work. It is said that individuals who enjoy positive workplace relationships are thought to benefit as it positively impacts the wellbeing and morale of employees and the organisation (Seligman, 2011).

The dimension of accomplishment and achievement was the last on the PERMA model and experienced as follows: firstly, almost half of the participants reported they were able to acknowledge and celebrate their accomplishments; however, the other half of the participants reported being able to acknowledge their achievements but expressed no desire to celebrate them. Further to this, there was one participant who indicated that she was unable to acknowledge nor celebrate her accomplishments. It was also found from the participants who expressed no desire to celebrate nor acknowledge their achievements, that some experienced feelings of guilt whereas

others considered their achievement to be part of the job or not worthy of celebrating. Important to note is that those from the group who were able to acknowledge and celebrate achievements, were also able to reflect on these accomplishments and develop abilities of self-confidence to face future challenges more bravely. Upon reflection, one participant also indicated that she developed a more risk averse nature through the successful achievement of goals.

***The second objective was to examine the role of the psychological strengths of transcendence in negating the challenging experiences of managers and how these contribute to the wellbeing of managers as set out by the PERMA model.***

Research shows that positive feeling is a psychological capability and an effective management technique related to intrinsic empowerment of an employee (Gupta & Mitra, 2017). Participant responses in this study are evidence of the display of characteristics of psychological capabilities that Gupta and Mitra (2017) speak of. Further to this, regarding the Broaden-and-Build Theory of positive emotion, Johnson, Nadler & Minda (2021) and Fredrickson (1998, 2001) suggest that positive emotions such as happiness, enjoyment and joy broaden one's awareness and our enduring intellectual, social and physical resources and build up reserves that may be drawn from when a threat or an opportunity arises. Seligman also suggests that, by deploying one's highest positive psychological strengths to meet one's highest challenges, we are able to go into what he describes as "flow" (2011, p. 24).

The challenges experienced by managers at the workplace were found as listed: difficult employees; role expectations/responsibilities; work-life balance; capacity; delegation; leadership; disrespect for authority; issues regarding recognition and appreciation for managers; managing psychological conditions; diversity and an emphasis on technical skills as opposed to strategic abilities. The most significant and most challenging factor presented by managers was that of difficult employees. Some indicated this factor was as a result of employee performance issues that managers could not handle; others reported personal issues and employee attitude problems. Some managers described that learning to understand the strengths of their employees was crucial in order to assist and alleviate these challenges. Hosie et. al. (2008) advocate that, for managers, increased performance levels are determined by

intrinsic factors whereas for lower-level employees' performance levels are determined by extrinsic factors. In these situations, the type of motivation required for the level of employee determines success. One participant indicated that upholding laws, values like honesty, ethics and doing the right thing is imperative in dealing with challenges. Other participants attempt to lead by example, while some exhibit coercion and some were noted to possess weak managerial capabilities, presenting further challenges and ineffectiveness when attempting to resolve challenges. Regarding the challenges of leadership, work-life balance and managing people with psychological issues, lack of managerial experience, skill, knowledge and patience were indicated. About half of the participants reported a lack of HR support for some subsidiaries. The least emphasised challenges, albeit still challenges worth addressing, pertained to diversity issues, lack of strategic leadership and the shift from a transactional to a transformative mindset. A sense of maturity, emotional intelligence and proactive capabilities were also found lacking; some participants indicated that they do in fact possess and utilise these characteristics, whilst the majority did not.

The listed negative factors experienced in the workplace as indicated by the respondents were distrust, disillusionment, disrespect, uncertainty, anxiety, isolation, morale, conflict, tension, anxiety, lack of managerial responsibility, compensation, blame-shifting, bullying, inappropriate behaviour, instability, culture and diversity issues. The most prominent factor reported was lack of trust, second was responsibilities and then came incidents of bullying and low morale. There were also positive factors experienced by managers in the workplace as indicated by the respondents, such as teamwork, positive relationships, attitude to work and a positive state of mind. One respondent reported that teamwork boosts levels of optimism, another respondent reported that working together to achieve similar goals provides a sense of belonging and prevents feelings of isolation. Positive attitudes were indicated to assist in work-life balance and ease the juggling of multiple roles. The implementation of strategic workshops was indicated to assist with mindset change. This resulted in improved employee engagement and relationships.

With regards to the money factors experienced by the respondents, there was no clear indication that salary is a determinant of happiness or unhappiness, due to the varying views from the evidence in this study as well as from the literature. This bears evidence

that different people are affected differently regarding their income levels. Half the respondents reported that it did not impact their happiness, whereas the other half indicated that it did impact their happiness. Managers who were from higher ranking and financially wealthier levels indicated that they placed less emphasis on money factors than on intrinsic rewards and developing careers. From the literature, it was noted that lower income can affect people in a lower income bracket more negatively as opposed to those who are able to afford affluent lifestyles, although, as in the literature, the money factor does not particularly or necessarily influence the happiness index significantly (Sujarwoto et.al., 2018).

Understanding the challenges associated with managers within the South African manufacturing environment with the intention to find resolution, requires being familiar with the unique set of challenges experienced by these managers, rather than assuming a one-size fits all approach to assisting them with tools to cope and thus improving their sense of wellbeing. It was also evident from the participant responses that the various subsidiaries reported slightly different challenges and related aspects that required attention, although the majority of responses share similar challenges in the main. It has therefore been suggested that the different subsidiaries will benefit more from a more customised approach.

Regarding the second part of objective fulfilment on the topic of how the PS of transcendence contribute to WB, it was found that ABE, gratitude, hope, humour and spirituality were experienced by the participants in accordance with the PERMA model of wellbeing (Seligman, 2011) and utilised by managers in order to address the challenges experienced by the managers.

For pleasure/positive emotions, the psychological strengths of ABE that were reported to have been used included the desire to attain a certain level of excellence, standards or high goals and excellence that is aligned to purpose. Practices of gratitude involved speaking kindly and with respect; showing understanding, expressing thanks and showing appreciation. Practices of hope involved the communication of plans with faith and instilling hope and optimism via motivation. The strength of humour was practised as the ability to laugh at mistakes, laugh at oneself, cherish joyous and spontaneous moments of laughter and the acts of balancing the seriousness with fun. The strength

of spirituality was invoked through self-awareness; activities such as yoga, meditation, and introspection; listening to one's inner voice; controlling the internal environment to bring about peace; listening to music and offering prayers.

For engagement, the strengths of ABE were expressed by one participant through activities such as being able to lovingly perform one's work which one participant equated to excellence and to love what you do. Another participant indicated that his appreciation of beauty was experienced through taking beautiful pictures of nature, sharing and encouraging others to do the same which allows him to engage with others. A third participant advised that the appreciation for the beauty in diversity of different cultures fosters enhanced engagement. Gratitude was expressed in terms of acknowledging others, one's standing in life and being thankful for the opportunities to have the support of positive people. Another participant also recognised the importance of appreciation as well as basic politeness which increased engagement. One participant mentioned that the ability to instil hope and optimism through motivation brings team cohesiveness and that good things happen to optimistic people is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Regarding the strength of humour, one participant mentioned that by creating a pleasant environment helps to build relationships and that cracking jokes keeps people engaged. The activities that invoke spirituality were thought to be forgiveness; being non-judgmental; re-alignment of the self; respect; physical activities such as exercise, where one is allowed to temporarily detach (within and outside of the work environment).

For meaning, there was no mention by the participants of the use of the strengths of ABE. Gratitude in terms of being thankful and showing appreciation to others was expressed by one participant, which provided them with a sense of belonging which was indicated to bring meaning. One participant advised that the ability to instil a hopeful approach provided workers with a positive attitude to cope, which led to positive and meaningful outcomes. Another participant reported that feeling hopeful increases the dopamine levels in his body, which drives his passion to provides him with momentum to strive to leave a legacy. Regarding humour, one participant mentioned that happy people live from the lighter side of life, which brings meaning to his life, highlighting the importance of being adaptable in one's personality; starting the work day off with a joke and experiencing moments of spontaneous laughter. Another

participant expressed that creating an environment where workers can laugh at their mistakes creates a meaningful space for growth. The spiritual activities reported by one participant included being helpful, tolerant and patient that creates meaning for her. Another participant reported that he developed the art of forgiveness through being a good Christian, which helped bring meaning for him. One participant reported that through spiritual practices of kindness, respect, generosity of spirit and compassion, she is able to derive meaning from work. The last participant reported that it is his internal motivation that comes from his spirit that provides him with the strength required for his work, which creates meaning for him.

For positive relationships, the strengths of ABE were expressed by one participant as always showing appreciation for excellent work. Gratitude from others was reported by one of the participants as a factor that gives him hope and enables him to uplift others and form stronger bonds of relationships. Another participant reported that shared gratitude solidifies relationships and creates a 'footbridge' between people. Another participant indicated that thanking and appreciating workers increase their bonds. Regarding the strength of hope, as it relates to relationships, one participant reported that being hopeful and having faith in "God" increases team cohesiveness; another participant extended on this, stating that hope is a depth of understanding that comes from spirituality which prevents the feeling of isolation. One participant indicated that the right type of humour could change the mood of workers, whilst another reported that she experiences deep 'belly laughs' with her team as an element of humour, which creates deeper bonds with them. With regards to spirituality, one participant described that being empathetic and generous with her assistance and praise fosters relationships.

For achievement, the use of the strength ABE was reported by one participant as experiencing excellence which he expressed as linked to self-worth and value, when excellent work is realised and acknowledged. The use of the strength of gratitude was not mentioned by any of the participants in relation to the element of accomplishment. One participant reported with regard to the strength of hope that the feeling of being in love with your work creates a hopeful experience as well as increases feelings of resilience and capacitates people to cope with challenges as well as failures. Another participant indicated that the strength of hope increased his 'pot of wellness', thereby

providing improved competencies to attain achievements. Regarding the strength of spirituality, two participants reported that their gratitude to 'God' was a motivator for success; another collaborated this saying it is her gratitude and trust in 'God' together with devoted prayers that lead to successful achievements. One participant added that it is the support from his wife and 'God' that gives him the strength to achieve. The last participant indicated that his spiritual practice of mountain biking exercise allows him to temporarily detach, and provides him with the impetus to return to work with renewed energy, new visions and solutions to achieve great things.

***The third objective was to identify existing strengths-based positive psychological interventions for managers that promote managers' wellbeing at the company in order to further develop them.***

The strengths-based positive psychological interventions (PPIs) to address the challenges experienced, and improve wellbeing of the manager were indicated by the respondents as follows:

For pleasure/positive emotion, participants indicated the following traditional interventions that were used to help harness this element of wellbeing: emotional intelligence workshops; creating emotion charts; strategy workshops to build plans for the future; encouraging people to acknowledge excellence; collaborative events; creation of diverse teams to work on unfamiliar projects to sharpen skills, capabilities and knowledge; management involvement and motivation; culture change projects to encourage people to create positive emotions; culture leaderships programmes; workshops to develop self-realisation, self-reflection and self-actualisation; training and development programmes; coaching and learning interventions. Some indicated alternative interventions that they used independently on their own time such as prayer, yoga, meditation, breathing exercises, chanting, music and exercise activities. One of the participants indicated that a useful intervention that is required is wellness days, which were not available at his subsidiary. It is evidenced from these responses that not all subsidiaries benefit from the same interventions, and mostly it was expressed that more attention is required to build the positive emotion at the workplace.

For engagement, participants indicated the following interventions that were used to help harness this element of wellbeing: workshops such as strategy and emotional intelligence, transactional analysis, conflict management, confidence building, soft-skills training and succession planning. Some participants reported that strategy and collaborative efforts are important to motivate and create solutions. Others indicated the importance of short training sessions that increase confidence, productivity and engagement; culture change projects; communication tools such as meetings and discussions; and team building activities. Three participants mentioned that there are no workplace interventions for engagement. One of those participants mentioned that familiarisation with different personalities of people is important. The other two advised that personal engagement activities such as team building and sports activities within working hours are more suitable rather than encroaching on family/personal time, and that more face-to-face meetings are required. One participant reported that although an existing intervention in the form of WhatsApp groups was created to encourage engagement, this method is counterproductive as it is used inefficiently and very intrusive to the personal time of managers. Hence from the evidence it seems necessary to develop and promote interventions to improve engagement at the workplace.

For meaning, participants indicated the following interventions that were used to help harness this element of wellbeing: creating groups, team collaboration, sharing creating a sense of belonging; coaching; restructuring of standard operation procedures (SOPs); trainings and skills development; culture change projects – where groups of people share and exchange thoughts and experiences; YORISURI (a Japanese philosophy/way of life showing caring and understanding for others); respect and recognition; strategy interventions driven by key performance indicators (KPIs); wellness programmes including counsellors, psychologists; wellness days such as women abuse day, World AIDS Day, spring day, heritage day; feedback sessions with the MD and year end functions. One participant stated that corporate social responsibilities (CSR) should be included to improve the element of meaning from an organisational perspective.

For positive relationships, participants indicated the following interventions that were used to help harness this element of wellbeing: team building and sporting activities

(within working hours); strategic drive for socials; interventions to help prevent blame shifting; rotation to create awareness and acknowledgement of one's own responsibilities and the role played by others; team formation and team building; culture change and the integration of diverse groups and personality types to encourage communication and break down barriers; employee relationship and satisfaction surveys; more direct interaction between manager and employees; facilitation of engagement practices to increase open conversations or varied topics; regular hourly meetings to assist people to find solutions and assist with personal issues. Three participants advised that no formal interventions to build relationships at work exists. One participant suggested peer coaching; some indicated that humour as a strength should be added as an intervention, as it is an often-overlooked strength that can add value and create relationship bonds with more ease than other traditional interventions. One participant suggested change management interventions are necessary to combat the unstable managerial presence and resultant constantly changing policies and practices.

For accomplishment/achievement, in summation, participants indicated that the following interventions were used to harness this element of wellbeing: HR framework to develop online training content to improve capabilities and skills of managers; education benefits providing accredited skills development; social events to celebrate accomplishments; encourage, appreciate, recognise, acknowledge and show gratitude for good work and not shame work that is inferior; and motivate by extrinsic rewards such as bonuses and competition where employees may receive prizes. Six participants reported that no formal interventions exist to encourage or recognise accomplishment / achievements at the workplace. One participant advised that she takes it upon herself to personally assist and encourage her team. One participant reported that employees should use the PMP for acknowledging achievements, however, it is not followed or adhered to at most subsidiaries. Two participants reported that the lack of achievements brings negativity and that employees are penalised for this. Participant findings consistently indicated that there are mostly no formal interventions to encourage or celebrate achievements and, further to this, people are dismissed for their inability to achieve, which has become a standard practice at certain subsidiaries, proving to be extremely counterproductive and a

serious challenge to the value system. Hence, from the evidence, a pressing need is to develop and promote interventions to encourage accomplishment at the workplace.

## **7.2 RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Organisational development initiatives such as PPIs play a critical role in stress management by offering coping skills to combat challenges (Armstrong & Taylor 2020). The researcher attempted to conduct an exploratory qualitative study in an effort to increase the current body of knowledge by examining the psychological strengths of transcendence and wellbeing within a South African automotive context and among managers in particular. This study served to contribute to research by assessing the context-specific constructs, since not much literature has been generated in this particular area of study in this environment. The results of this research can hardly account for general trends in the greater population, but could be used to initiate further exploratory studies of psychological strengths in this explicit work context.

As a result of this research, it was established that managers in the automotive sector understand and experience WB as per the PERMA model (positive emotion / pleasure; engagement, meaning, positive relationships and accomplishments). It was also established that these managers utilise PS of transcendence to achieve the elements of WB as above as well as to cope with the challenges they experience in the workplace. Evidence from the research shows that PPIs are imperative for the development of managers to further develop these strengths and the utilisation thereof to improve their coping mechanisms. Recommendations for the guidelines of a combination of traditional, practical and alternative PPIs were suggested for this purpose.

Wellbeing is now being realised as a critical factor in the lives of managers within organisations in SA as well as other countries and it is important for organisations to understand, create awareness and be cognisant of this. Despite differences in the personalities, stress levels, challenges and the varied levels and abilities of psychological strengths of managers, it is imperative to have an understanding of

these factors and also how it contributes to their wellbeing in the work context and to facilitate an environment conducive to wellbeing, which this study aimed to achieve. The main goal was to support the development of managers with the intention of enabling optimal levels of productivity and reduction in turnover rates. Whilst recognition and financial rewards are considered important in SA organisations, it is necessary that leaders are given the correct tools to be able to cope with challenges, reduce their stress levels and attain their goals.

Managers in the SA automotive industry are overwhelmed with daily stresses and challenges and this study presents recommendations for a set of guidelines for the implementation of PPIs that improve their individual psychological strengths, which are considered a crucial component of wellbeing (Bakracheva, 2020; Biswas-Diener et. al., 2011). It was suggested in this study that manager support should incorporate the spiritual aspect as an alternative approach to PPIs, in combination with the existing traditional and practical approaches. In this way, a more holistic method of approach has a further reach than simply the other methods alone.

Workplace spirituality is becoming more viable currently in facilitating creativity; improving problem-solving abilities; alleviating stress levels and positively impacting productivity (Indradevi, 2021). It was found that organisations in the automotive industry suffer huge losses from low productivity, decreased work engagement, poor performance, low job satisfaction and the inability to retain key personnel within their workforce. The wellbeing of managers have a significantly positive effect on the above stated aspects in the life of individuals in the workplace (Di Martino, Eiroa-Orosa & Arcidiacono, 2017). This study proposed the proliferation of SQ (Spiritual Intelligence) as a vital component of WB in the workplace.

A criticism of the strengths approach is that the utilisation of psychological strengths by managers may be effected inappropriately and it is important to create an awareness of these strengths by allowing the manager to identify them firstly and secondly moderate their usage as appropriate to the contextual environment. This awareness in the form of emotional intelligence plays a pivotal role in the moderation of the application of strengths. However, this is an area that could be investigated further.

A further research contribution specifically pertains to the PS of humour as a strength that has been very much overlooked in the organisational context of the automotive manufacturing industry due to the seriousness of the environment. PPIs including this specific strength, amongst the other vital strengths of transcendence, are suggested in the guidelines in chapter 6 under the various approaches presented. Specifically suggested is laughter yoga (Alici & Dönmez, 2020; Hashimoto, 2018), a less common practice in industry, which was included in the alternative approach. It is suggested that further empirical studies be explored with respect to this aspect of research.

Managers are known to experience differences in their ability to learn and some are more capable than others in developing their staff due to their unique set of abilities, knowledge and motivation to do so; hence the need for interventions to improve managers' potential together with organisational effectiveness and performance (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). These authors argue that although management development can be accomplished by managers "on the job", it should not be done as a "haphazard process", therefore deliberate and well-developed interventions should be created and implemented to develop managerial learning and wellbeing (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020, p. 724), which was the main focus and contribution of this study.

### **7.3 LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following limitations and resulting recommendations were identified as follows.

This study was conducted independently by the researcher and, while every precaution was taken to ensure reliability, validity and consistency, some aspects may be subject to interpretation. To achieve reflexivity, a journal was kept to facilitate introspection concerning the roles of possible bias and subjectivity on the researcher's part. Great care was taken by the researcher to remain objective during the interview process; however, there is a possibility that subjectivity may have crept in that could possibly have impacted the data gathering and interpretation processes.

Interview questions were open-ended, which sometimes led to participants to stray off-topic, which was time consuming, as some interviews ran longer than expected.

The researcher was reluctant to interrupt for fear of losing flow and context to the data provided by participants. Sometimes the actual questions were not answered or may have been misinterpreted. The researcher respectively further probed and provided clarification to facilitate the process. In this way rich data was gleaned from the subjects as the researcher allowed them to share and explore, which led to nuanced data. However, there were instances where unanswered questions remained as a limitation of the interview approach. This did not jeopardise the results as the data collected was found to be more than adequate for its purposes and the quality of the responses corresponding to the research questions was more than satisfactory. However, a recommendation is that a mixed methods approach should be considered for quantitative research to supplement the qualitative approach.

In examining the existing PPIs, it was difficult to assess the extent to which PS were utilised. It is the researchers view that this was a limitation in the study and a quantitative approach using a questionnaire for this specific purpose could possibly have been more suitable for this investigation. In saying that, it is also the researcher's view, after having conducted the interviews, that to elicit this type of information on what specific psychological strengths were used in the existing interventions, may also have been beyond the capability of the respondents to identify.

Another limitation of this study is the use of purposive sampling, which has resulted in a specific set of managers being selected for participation. As a result of the study using a qualitative approach, a smaller sample was used than would have been with a quantitative approach. Even though a set of criteria was formulated, as discussed in detail in the research methods chapter of this study, to ensure that the chosen participants did in fact possess the PS of transcendence, the researcher may have been subject to bias when selecting these participants to participate. This concern is supported by the authors Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016), who argue that purposive sampling could result in a researcher being unable to remain absolutely objective in participant selection, hence the study sample is then limited when the method is qualitative. Since the sample size is a possible limitation, it is recommended that the sample size should be continuously evaluated during the research process to ensure that the adequacy of the sample is satisfactory for the results required, as suggested by Malterud, Siersma and Guassora (2021).

A further and key limitation was that the sample was limited to the automotive sector within SA, and therefore cannot be generalised to the entire South African population. Since the findings of the study point to the challenges that are generally experienced by SA managers in the industry, it cannot be generalised to other organisations in the industry as well as other industries, which is also due to the result of the qualitative nature of the study. Whether similar issues raised by other managers in other organisations and industries are prevalent, is yet to be established and this is a further recommendation for future empirical and comparative studies.

#### **7.4 CONCLUSION**

In the final chapter of the study, an integrated summary of results was presented, and contributions to the research and recommendations were made, specific to the objectives of the research study. The limitations were also considered, with further recommendations on how to address them in terms of suggestions for alternate approaches and avenues for similar studies. The study results indicate that the psychological strengths of transcendence are an important component for promoting wellbeing and that managers in the specified work context understand, experience and utilise these strengths to experience wellbeing in their work role and environment. Moreover, the specific factors that contribute to challenges that managers experience at work were considered and discussed with respect to how these managers utilise the PS of transcendence as tools for coping with challenges. Existing PPIs were also examined and a full account of those currently being implemented at the subsidiaries and those suggested by respondents were discussed. Recommendations for guidelines on how to develop and improve more suitable PPIs for purposes of the study were also presented. An overall conclusion of this research was provided by this chapter, including a summary of the research objectives. The findings of the study were compared to the research objectives, to assess what was actually achieved.

It is hoped that these results will serve to provide further understanding of the constructs of this study with respect to the SA automotive sector, but not confined to this context alone.

## 7.5 PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON THE STUDY

The completion of my thesis has required great determination and investment into years of study. I have been dedicated, devoted time, personal sacrifice and scholarship as an industrial and consulting psychologist. The learning I gained from this journey was life changing; however, it was an extremely lonely journey, at times felt tedious and at other times I felt pride. I poured countless hours into writing and re-writing. Thankfully, it was a topic that has always been close to my heart and through my love for the field and my work, I was able to see it to completion. I also developed skills of critical thinking, focus, I learned to trust myself through the process. A part of this study was to ensure its trustworthiness and my personal reflection played a significant role in yielding an authenticity.

No sooner did I begin the process we were hit by the Covid pandemic, which brought about strife and trauma for me personally. I fought many struggles which I have subsequently overcome; albeit it has transformed me into a more resilient human being on the one hand, it has left me quite emotionally vulnerable on the other. I learned the art of compartmentalising the emotions that emanated from my experiences, in order to stay on track and pursue my goals. Towards the latter part, I had lost a best friend, who was a rock for me in my life, and ironically a spiritual healer by profession. As I write this, I have yet to mourn her departure appropriately, however, a continuation of my spiritual journey was further entrenched through this loss which provided me some resolve. I am convinced as a result of subsequent readings in this study, that the spirit lives on after death and that we are all connected via a universal consciousness that does not end with the material world and body.

I have committed myself to extensive introspection, self-reflection, self-actualisation and personal growth through the related study material that traversed my path; needless to say, I could not include all of it in this study. I have always been one to display strong traits of discipline; however, I learned the true art of perseverance. Apart from my personal efforts, I was also afforded the tolerance and continuous

support from some significant others who played substantial roles in keeping me dedicated and focused to bring this journey to fruition.

The submission of this thesis is not representative of the end of the journey, however, it is the start of a new chapter of my life, where I plan to continue my scholarship and become more involved in the development of the guidelines presented in this study, in my capacity as an industrial psychologist. However, in all my future endeavours, I will remember to value more the little things in life, remain cognisant of our remaining time on this earthly plain and the importance of enjoying time with significant others.

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**APPENDIX A – PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM FOR VIA STRENGTHS SURVEY**

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

**Re: Permission to use VIA Strengths Survey Results for Research Purposes**

I.....(Full names of candidate) hereby grant Jasmé Singh-Modi of Amygdala Consulting (Pty) Ltd. permission to utilise VIA survey results for research purposes.

Current Position Title:.....

ID NO. / DOB:.....

Qualifications:.....

No. of Years at Company:.....

Home Language:.....

Race:.....

Gender:.....

M/S/D/W.....

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX B – OUTCOMES OF THE VIA STRENGTHS SURVEY

### WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE

1. Curiosity \_\_\_\_\_
2. Love of learning \_\_\_\_\_
3. Judgment \_\_\_\_\_
4. Ingenuity \_\_\_\_\_
5. Social intelligence \_\_\_\_\_
6. Perspective \_\_\_\_\_

### COURAGE

7. Valour \_\_\_\_\_
8. Perseverance \_\_\_\_\_
9. Integrity \_\_\_\_\_

### HUMANITY AND LOVE

10. Kindness \_\_\_\_\_
11. Loving \_\_\_\_\_

### JUSTICE

12. Citizenship \_\_\_\_\_
13. Fairness \_\_\_\_\_
14. Leadership \_\_\_\_\_

### TEMPERANCE

15. Self-control \_\_\_\_\_
16. Prudence \_\_\_\_\_
17. Humility \_\_\_\_\_

### SPIRITUALITY & TRANSCENDENCE

18. Appreciation of beauty \_\_\_\_\_
19. Gratitude \_\_\_\_\_
20. Hope \_\_\_\_\_
21. Spirituality \_\_\_\_\_
22. Forgiveness \_\_\_\_\_
23. Humour \_\_\_\_\_
24. Zest \_\_\_\_\_

# APPENDIX C – GATEKEEPERS LETTER: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

## UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

### INFORMED CONSENT

For research with human participants

#### Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Date: 10 October 2022

Dear Prospective Research Participant

My name is Jasmé Singh-Modi. I am a Doctoral scholar at the Department of Industrial Psychology at UKZN. My Contact no: [REDACTED] and Email: [REDACTED].

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research on experiences of Psychological Strengths (PS) and Wellbeing (WB) of managers at the workplace. The aim and purpose of this research is to explore these experiences of PS & WB in the role of the manager, with the intention to develop guidelines for an intervention to promote WB, based on the outcomes of the research interviews. The study is expected to enroll (14 participants in total, from the executive / management level of the Company nationally across SA). The research will involve semi-structured research interviews. The duration of your participation in the once-off semi-structured interview, if you choose to enroll and remain in the study is expected to be 1-1,5 hours in length.

We hope that the study will assist in the development of guidelines based on strengths-based positive psychological interventions to promote WB for managers in the workplace based on the outcomes of the empirical research. Furthermore, the study hopes to contribute to the field of PS & WB by creating further awareness of the importance of cultivating a culture of WB in the workplace in that organisations may adopt and augment in their current and future work environments. Please note that there are no appropriate alternative procedures and treatment etc. that may serve as possible alternate options to study participation.

The study may involve the following risks and/or discomforts such as describing your experiences of PS and WB within your role as manager. Should participation in the interviews yield an emotional reaction within the participant, he/she may contact the researcher (details above), should he/she require further psycho-social support. Arrangements will be made with the Company to assist with support via counsellors/psychologists available through the Company Care Services Clinic, which is a free service offered to employees of the Company.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, protocol reference number HSSREC/00002534/2021.

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher (details above) or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

**HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION**

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Participation in this research is voluntary and participants may withdraw participation at any point. In the event of refusal/withdrawal of participation the participants will not incur penalty or loss of treatment or other benefit to which they are normally entitled.

If you are amenable to participate in the study, we will require you to sign this form as an indication that participation was voluntary and not forced. You may also refuse to answer particular questions if you feel uncomfortable answering them. You may also choose to end the discussion at any time during the interview. In the case that you want to withdraw information given after the interview, you may contact me directly. Details provided above.

No costs will be incurred by participants as a result of participation in the study. No incentives or reimbursements will be provided for participation in the study.

All information that you provide will be kept confidential. The information collected will be stored with me and only I will have access to it. Information will be used for research purposes alone and raw data will be destroyed as soon as the study is completely over. I will not use your actual name or designation in reporting the findings of the study and you will remain anonymous to ensure that no one relates the information you provided.

Please also note that arrangements have been made for you, the prospective research participant to contact me should you require any Psycho-Social support during the course of the research process. I will then make arrangements for this assistance via the HR Department to arrange counsellors/psychologists as support should you request this during the process of conducting the research. This support is available through the Company Care Services Clinic, which is offered to employees of the Company as an employee benefit.

# APPENDIX D – PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

## PARTICIPANT CONSENT

I ..... (provide your name) have been informed about the study entitled "Psychological Strengths of Spirituality and Transcendence and Wellbeing of Managers in the Automotive Sector" by Jasmé Singh-Modi.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study is to explore experiences of Wellbeing (WB) in the role of the manager via semi-structured interviews, with the intention to develop guidelines for an intervention to promote WB, based on the outcomes of these research interviews.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

I have been informed about any available support mechanisms as a result of study-related procedures.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at contact no: [REDACTED] email: jasme@webmail.co.za.

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researcher then I may contact:

### HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus  
Govan Mbeki Building  
Private Bag X 54001  
Durban  
4000  
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA  
Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609  
Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Additional consent, where applicable.

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / focus group discussion      YES / NO

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Witness  
(Where applicable)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Translator  
(Where applicable)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX E – GATEKEEPERS PERMISSION LETTER

# METAIR

MANAGEMENT SERVICES (PTY) LTD

automotive | industrial | retail

Suite 7 | Ground Floor | Building 2 | Oxford & Glenhove |  
114 Oxford Road | Houghton Estate (Johannesburg) | 2198  
PostNet Suite # 231 | Private Bag X31 | Sisoni | 2132  
Tel: +27 010 786 0800  
Email | info@metair.co.za | Website | www.metair.co.za

12 October 2022

Dear Ms. Jasmé Singh-Modi

**Re: Access Granted for PhD Research**

**Topic: Psychological strengths of spirituality and transcendence and wellbeing of managers in the automotive sector.**

We are pleased to inform you that you have been granted access to contact and request voluntary participation of managers (in their personal capacity) for your PhD research both within Metair Head Office as well as the various subsidiaries (outlined below) within our Group, including:

- Automould (KZN: New Germany)
- Smiths Manufacturing (KZN: New Germany)
- Hesto Harnesses (KZN: Stanger)
- Unitrade (KZN: Stanger)
- First National Battery (Eastern Cape: East London), (KZN: Prospecton) & (Gauteng: Benoni);
- Supreme Springs (Gauteng: Nigel)
- Lumotech (Eastern Cape: Uitenhage)

Psycho-social support with respect to counsellors / psychologists from the onsite wellness clinics are made available to each subsidiary should research participants require such support.

We wish you well in your research.

Regards



**Taryn Marcus**

Group HR Executive

Metair Management Services (Pty) Limited Reg No. 1984/001856/07  
Directors: R. Haffejee; S. Douwenga  
Company Secretary: SM Vermaak

## APPENDIX F – INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

**Title: Psychological Strengths of Spirituality and Transcendence and Wellbeing of Managers in the Automotive Sector**

### **Appendix B: Interview Schedule for Managers**

#### **(i) Introduction and purpose of study**

Hi .....thank you for agreeing to participate in this study on **Psychological Strengths (PS)** and **Wellbeing (WB)** in the field of Industrial Psychology. We are attempting to explore the experiences of these constructs and how these may serve managers in their role in the workplace. The objective is to explore what leads to WB in the workplace, with particular emphasis on PS as well as what kinds of interventions and practices may be implemented to increase WB. The objective is to find ways for organisations such as yours to be able to use these results in order to create and improve WB in the workplace through **Positive Psychological Interventions (PPI's)**. These are intentional activities or treatments, targeting individual strengths and cultivating positive emotions, positive cognitions and positive behaviours in order to enhance wellbeing. Examples of PPI's are self-administered activities, group-based development, coaching and individual development.

**(ii) Voice recording and confidentiality** (reminder that participant read the participant information sheet and has signed the informed consent form and go over key points).

#### **(iii) Section 1: Biographical Data**

Ensure you have collected the bio data from the Consent Form which has a table for the respondent to input this information: Position/Level; Education; Tenure Home Lang; Age; Race; Gender; Married/S/D/W, Dependents.

**(iv) Section 2: Interview Questions** The interviewer will use the following questions and information as a guideline and explain the content as the interview progresses. Please note that this is merely a guide for the interviewer, who will probe at the appropriate points to elicit further information as required.

#### **Background:**

Please describe the management role you play in this organisation wrt:

- a. Your overall role in your management level?
- b. Can you also describe how you feel when you are performing your role?

For this study the concept of **Psychological Strengths (PS)** encompass that of the virtue of **Spirituality and Transcendence** which may be described as numerous talents and strengths that humans can possess. **7 are identified:**

- ✦ **1)** Appreciation of beauty & excellence;
- ✦ **2)** gratitude,
- ✦ **3)** hope, optimism
- ✦ **4)** humour,
- ✦ **5)** spirituality and religiousness;
- ✦ **6)** forgiveness and mercy;
- ✦ **7)** zest, passion and enthusiasm.

They can assist as a buffer against misfortunes and psychological disorders and also help to build resilience. You may have certain strengths that are so natural to you that you may not

even consider them strengths. Please think about personal strengths do you believe you have and utilised in this scenario that enabled effectiveness in your role?

For this study the concept of **Wellbeing (WB)**, the **PERMA model** will be used:

**Positive Emotions; Engagement; Relationships; Meaning and Accomplishments / Achievements** as the core domains.

These may be experienced by individuals within the work context in diverse ways. With this in mind, could you tell me your views on these and and more importantly describe your experiences of the concepts of WB as explained below:

1) **Positive Emotion/Pleasure** or the pleasant life is described as state that involves pleasure, excitement; enjoyable and positive experiences that most often produce feelings of joy; rapture; ecstasy; warmth; comfort etc. E.g. you may be an extrovert /social person and derive a feeling of comfort and inspiration from social interactions and discussions or collaboration with others.

- a. What can you tell me about your experiences of pleasure in relation to your work?  
For example, before you embark on your daily tasks at work, do you perhaps think about whether it will bring about pleasure or positive emotions, if so how?
- b. From the list of psychological strengths above, which are the ones that you bring to ensure that you experience positive emotion in your work?
- c. Are there any interventions currently being implemented that assist to increase the positive emotion at work?

2) **Engagement** is described as vigour, dedication and absorption. It relates to the total involvement of the self during the performance of an activity considered pleasurable, otherwise known the state of "flow". Vigour is the high levels of energy and mental resilience you experience while working, the willingness to invest in effort in your work, and persistence in the face of challenges. Flow is being one with the music, time stopping, and the loss of self-consciousness during an absorbing activity. It is different and even opposite from positive emotion as people usually say they are not thinking about anything when they feel they find themselves in flow. Please could you tell me how you experience engagement in your work? You may answer whilst pondering the following questions.

- a. When performing your daily tasks at work, how would you describe the level of distraction from things happening around you, i.e. do you feel totally absorbed in your work, (e.g. where time passes without you noticing)? Are you able to immerse yourself so much that you find that you are able to ward off distractions and can you describe when this happens? Can you perhaps comment on your level of self-awareness and consciousness whilst doing your work?
- b. From the list of psychological strengths above, which are the ones that you to ensure that you experience engagement in your work?
- c. Are there any interventions currently being implemented that assist to increase engagement at work?

Although it is possible, some say it is not always probable to experience positive emotions, be engaged and find meaning in ones work and life, all at once, however we may experience one or two out of the three domains at any given time. By learning about each, we are able to move our emotions in a more positive direction.

3) **Meaning** is associated with a sense of purpose and significance that individuals experience within the workplace. Work-meaning relates to how employees understand their experience in organisations or their place of work. So for example a meaningful life consists of belonging to and serving something that you believe is greater than the self. Humanity creates positive institutions to allow this such as community and social responsibility; drives; environmental awareness campaigns, etc. Please think of how/ whether you find meaning in relation to work with regards to the following:

- a. How do you feel about your work in relation to the meaning that it has brought to your life? Do you feel your work has a higher purpose and that your work is in line with your personal values? Kindly elaborate.
- b. In your role, do you feel that your work benefits other people, the company and /or society and how? In other words, have you ever pondered the meaning of your work and do you feel that you have a responsibility to make the world a better place? Please explain.
- c. From the list of psychological strengths above, which are the ones that you bring to ensure that you experience meaning in your work?
- d. Are there any interventions currently being implemented that assist to increase meaning at work?

4) **Relationships or Positive Relationships.** Positive Psychology has been thought to be synonymous with "other people" and encompass all interactions individuals have with partners, friends, family members, colleagues, bosses/mentors/supervisors, and their community at large. Relationships refer to feeling supported, loved and valued by others and social connections become particularly important as we age. Very little that is positive is solitary and the social environment has been found to play a critical role in preventing cognitive decline. Strong social networks contribute to better physical health among older adults. Research has demonstrated that sharing good news or celebrating success fosters strong bonds and better relationships. Also responding enthusiastically to others, particularly in close relationships, increase intimacy, wellbeing and satisfaction.

- a. When was the last time you sensed profound meaning and purpose in relationship/s?
- b. When was the last time you helped someone and how did it make you feel?
- c. When was the last time that you laughed uproariously, the last time that you felt indescribable joy?
- d. From the list of psychological strengths above, which are the ones that you bring to ensure that you experience better or more positive relationships in your work?
- e. Are there any interventions currently being implemented that assist to increase positive relationships at work?

5) **Accomplishment/Achievement** is an element of wellbeing, which is often pursued for its own sake, even when it brings no positive emotion, no meaning, and nothing in the way of positive relationships. People pursue success, accomplishment, winning, achievement, and mastery for their own sakes. A sense of accomplishment is a result of working toward and reaching goals, mastering an endeavour, and having self-motivation to finish what you set out to do. This contributes to wellbeing because individuals can look at their lives with a sense of pride. It includes the concepts of perseverance and passion. Flourish and wellbeing happen when striving towards things with an internal motivation or working toward something just for the sake of the pursuit and improvement. All of these experiences would have taken place in the company of other people, as they are the best antidote to the downs of life and the single most reliable up. Even doing a kindness can produce a momentary increase in wellbeing of any exercise tested.

- a. Reflecting on your past experiences, when was the last time you felt a sense of accomplishment or achieving a milestone or success and felt enormously proud of it? Please describe.
- b. How do you celebrate your achievements / accomplishments?
- c. From the list of psychological strengths above, which are the ones that you bring to ensure that you experience accomplishment/achievements in your work?
- d. Are there any interventions currently being implemented that assist to increase accomplishments/achievements at work?

6) **Challenges.** There are many challenges that managers are faced with on a daily bases, such as work-life balance, difficult employees, performance issues, strikes, etc.

- a. Can you describe situations that challenge your skills and abilities?
- b. What kind of challenges have you encountered in your role as manager and how have you dealt with/overcome these? Please give examples.

7) **Positive and Negative Factors.** In your role as manager there most probably have been many positive and negative factors that have come into play. Positive effects such as trust, positive interactions, social connections, positive role models and emotions which increase good feelings, wellness, morale and improves work satisfaction. There are also negative states/effects, such as anxiety, confusion, tension, distrust, disillusionment and uncertainty, which adversely affect work efficiency and company productivity.

- a. Can you tell me what kinds of factors you have experienced and how it played out in your work-life? Please elaborate.

8) **Money.** It is believed that achieving intrinsic goals (such as growth and connection) leads to larger gains in wellbeing than external extrinsic goals such as money or fame. Whereas some people believe that money is the key to happiness and wellbeing. In other research it was postulated that with more money and buying power comes greater happiness and wellbeing. Some researchers have found that people who value money more than other goals are less satisfied with their income and lives as a whole.

- a. Do you believe that money or earning potential makes a difference to your wellbeing? Please explain.

9) **Positive Psychological Interventions (PPI's)** to re-state, are intentional activities or treatments, targeting individual strengths and cultivating positive emotions, positive cognitions and positive behaviours in order to enhance wellbeing. Examples are self-administered activities, group-based development, coaching and individual development.

- a. Can you think of other PPI's conducted at your company, that you may have not previously mentioned and how do you think this has helped you / the company?

(v) **Close and thank participant**

# APPENDIX G – TURNITIN REPORT

1/20/24, 9:57 AM

Turnitin - Originality Report - Jasme Thesis

<p><b>Turnitin Originality Report</b></p> <p>Processed on: 17-Jan-2024 2:46 PM CAT                  ID: 2272498778                  Word Count: 102801                  Submitted: 1</p> <p>Jasme Thesis By Jasme Singh</p>		<p><b>Similarity Index</b></p> <p><b>8%</b></p>	<p><b>Similarity by Source</b></p> <p>Internet Sources: 7%                  Publications: 3%                  Student Papers: 3%</p>
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## APPENDIX H – EDITOR’S LETTER

Crispin Hemson  
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C: [REDACTED]  
Durban  
South Africa 4001

[REDACTED]  
C: [REDACTED]  
H: [REDACTED]

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22<sup>nd</sup> January 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to record that I have carried out language editing of the dissertation by Jasmé Singh-Modi, entitled **Psychological strengths of spirituality and transcendence and wellbeing of managers in the automotive sector.**

-  
-  
-

Yours sincerely



Crispin Hemson

# Help Yourself to Happiness

by Helen Steiner Rice

Everybody, everywhere  
seeks happiness, it's true,  
But finding it and keeping it  
seem difficult to do.

Difficult because we think  
that happiness is found  
Only in the places where  
wealth and fame abound.

And so we go on searching  
in palaces of pleasure  
Seeking recognition  
and monetary treasure,

Unaware that happiness  
is just a state of mind  
Within the reach of everyone  
who takes time to be kind.

For in making others happy  
we will be happy, too.  
For the happiness you give away  
returns to shine on you.