

**Exploring the Top Management Team's attributes that influence organisational  
resilience when navigating disruptions in the logistics sector.**

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A research project submitted to the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Corporate Strategy.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The logistics sector is inherently vulnerable to disruptions that can adversely affect the supply chain and the broader economy if not properly managed. These challenges, while potentially threatening an organisation's viability, also present growth opportunities, depending on the effectiveness of response strategies.

This dual nature of disruptions necessitates an investigation into the characteristics of the top management team (TMT) during such periods. The TMT serves as the highest decision-making body influencing the organisation's growth trajectory under various business conditions. Their role is essential for guiding the organisation through challenges, as expected by the board of directors and shareholders. This study aimed to explore the roles and attributes of the TMT that inform the organisation's resilience strategies, enabling it to capitalise on opportunities and enhance performance during and after disruptions.

This study involved 17 participants in semi-structured interviews, including senior executives and decision-makers in the logistics sector. Thematic analysis highlighted the importance of collaboration and humble leadership within the top management team for fostering resilience. The research underscores how proactive change initiatives from leaders can transform organisations into learning entities, enhancing their resilience for optimal performance amid disruptions.

## **KEYWORDS**

Diversity, Humble leadership, Multilevel organisational resilience, Sensemaking and anticipation, Top management team.

## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Corporate Strategy at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any University. I further declare that I obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Phrase</b>
BOD	Board of Directors
BCP	Business Continuity Plan
BSC	Balance Score Card
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
TMT	Top Management Team
UET	Upper Echelon of Power Theory

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

Qualitative research was conducted to investigate the influence of the upper echelon theory (UET) within the logistics industry during times of crises. This study focused on identifying the essential attributes and primary facilitators that empower the top management team (TMT) to navigate their organisations effectively through logistical disruptions.

The leadership and decision-making processes of the TMT significantly impact how organisations confront challenges in the logistics sector, particularly during periods of uncertainty and disruption (Samimi et al., 2020). This research developed insights and fostered a deeper understanding of the TMT role in promoting resilience and flexibility amidst logistical constraints by examining these processes.

### **1.1. Relevance of the research from a business perspective**

The logistics sector faces significant challenges due to operational disruptions that can severely impede the supply chain, resulting in delays or failures in delivering goods and services to customers. These disruptions are often unplanned and chaotic, stemming from unexpected events that disrupt normal operations (Hernes et al., 2024).

Every logistics organisation will inevitably encounter some form of operational disruption, whether internal or external. External disruptions occurring outside the organisation are beyond the control of the top management team (TMT). This reality underscores that all organisations in the logistics sector are inherently exposed to these risks (Nel, 2024).

Nel (2024) emphasises that external disruptions can arise from a range of factors within the political, economic, technological, and natural environments, including pandemics like COVID-19 and natural disasters, such as floods. Recognising the inevitability of these disruptions is vital for organisations to devise effective strategies to mitigate their impact and sustain operational resilience.

The influence of the top management team (TMT) in formulating response strategies during these disruptions is crucial for determining a business's success in navigating such challenges and enhancing performance in the aftermath. This aspect significantly contributes to the effectiveness of organisational resilience, as noted by Hillmann and Guenther (2020).

Disruptions in logistics operations are a constant reality that organisations must manage, making resilience essential. These unexpected events, whether caused by environmental

factors or geopolitical tensions, underscore the importance of robust supply chains that can withstand external shocks while also adhering to sustainability objectives (Economist Impact, 2025).

Political changes arising from elections in various countries can result in instability in the logistics environment. A notable example is the election of Mr Donald Trump as President of the United States, which has caused significant disruptions due to his protectionist policies, including the implementation of 30% trade tariffs on South African exports (BusinessTech, 2025).

The United States is South Africa's second-largest trading partner, representing R156.6 billion in exported goods in 2024 (Republic of South Africa, 2025). This circumstance indicates that the South African logistics sector experiences operational disruptions, resulting in various challenges, such as increased costs and a decline in the volume of goods exported to the United States. Moreover, third-party logistics providers will also be impacted, raising concerns about job security and generating uncertainty within the overall logistics sector (PWC, 2025).

The path to overcoming inevitable logistics disruptions lies in building organisational resilience. This research sought to deepen the understanding of the roles and attributes that the TMT must demonstrate to foster multi-layered, team-based organisational resilience, in so doing, enhancing performance during and after disruptions. Raetze et al. (2021) noted that significant gaps remain in establishing resilience across various organisational levels, and addressing these gaps is crucial for achieving long-term success.

## **1.2. Grounding of the research from a theoretical perspective**

The top management team (TMT) is vital in fostering a culture of organisational resilience, empowering the organisation to achieve outstanding results during periods of disruption. Comprising the most influential senior executives, the TMT holds the important responsibility of delivering superior performance, irrespective of the business climate. This claim is strongly backed by the research of Samimi et al. (2020) and Holmes et al. (2021).

Raetze et al. (2021) emphasise that cultivating a resilient organisation is a deliberate and challenging endeavour that requires unwavering commitment from members of the top management team (TMT). They highlight that resilience operates on multiple levels, beginning with the individual, progressing to the team, and ultimately reaching the organisational level. This multi-layered approach illustrates the importance of the TMT diverse backgrounds within the logistics sector, alongside their specialised expertise and extensive knowledge in guiding

the organisation through significant disruptions. Furthermore, the dynamic nature of their skill sets is crucial for developing strong organisational resilience, a notion supported by Weiser (2020), who states that adaptability and innovation are vital in times of uncertainty.

The responsibilities of the top management team (TMT) place them at the core of organisational leadership, as they interact closely with the board of directors (BOD) and other key stakeholders. Their role is crucial in steering the organisation to success by building resilience capabilities that ensure business continuity during times of disruption (Popli et al., 2022).

It is essential for the TMT, operating at the top of the organisation, to foster a collaborative environment. By working together, they can effectively analyse the data at their disposal and make strategic decisions that address logistics disruptions. In other words, the success or failure of the organisation during periods of disruption often reflects the performance of the TMT (Paraskevas et al., 2023).

The organisation's success predominantly relies on this power coalition, as they are the definitive decision-makers concerning its trajectory. The success of the TMT is underpinned by the upper echelons theory, which states that the traits, convictions, values, and prior experiences of organisational leadership in the logistics sector profoundly affect the organisation's capacity to manage disruptions. Therefore, the TMT is tasked with establishing a comprehensive resilience strategy to address logistics concerns (Hambrick, 2007; Neely et al., 2020; Samimi et al., 2020).

The presence of a powerful coalition composed of diverse backgrounds and expertise within the logistics sector, operating at the top of the organisation, plays a crucial role in enhancing organisational resilience. This situation requires an investigation into the attributes to foster teamwork and collaboration across various levels of the organisation, which are essential for building resilience (Neely et al., 2020; Paraskevas et al., 2023).

### **1.3. The research questions**

The primary research question of this study is: *How do leadership attributes of the top management team impact organisational resilience in navigating disruptions in the logistics sector?* This investigation arose from suggestions by Fisher et al. (2022) and Hartmann et al. (2025) to explore resilience analysis at the organisational level, particularly examining the role of the top management team in influencing resilience at the team level.

The following sub-questions were developed to aid in a detailed response to the main research question:

- 1 How do the behavioural characteristics of the top management team contribute to enhancing the organisational multi-level resilience response mechanism during periods of disruption?
- 2 How do the members of the top management team establish a robust foundation that enables the organisation to foresee and capitalise on the opportunities presented by future disruptions?

#### **1.4. The research aims**

This research aimed to gather insights into the TMT attributes that influence organisational resilience at various levels within the logistics sector. In addition, the study sought to understand the detailed processes the TMT employs in communicating, empowering, collaborating, and influencing teamwork. This includes inspiring teams below the upper echelons of leadership to engage in the response efforts initiated by the TMT in executing changes within the organisation. The study explored key attributes that would enable the TMT to effectively connect with the broader organisational structure, thus facilitating a change response to organisational disruptions.

The secondary aim was to investigate the foundational practices that establish the TMT credibility to confidently lead the organisation during periods of disruption in the logistics sector. The study also examined how this credibility is communicated to the firm's external stakeholders.

#### **1.5. The research contribution**

This research sought to enhance the current understanding of the TMT influence across various organisational levels in driving effective strategy implementation through collaboration and teamwork. It highlights how the TMT takes an active role in cascading and executing detailed strategic decisions in response to disruptions, ultimately fostering organisational resilience as a vital outcome.

The study advocated the enhancement of the deep level attributes of a TMT, which contribute diverse knowledge and expertise within the logistics sector. This crucial aspect of diversity should be channelled through collaborative efforts arising from intellectual discussions related to strategy formulation. Such collaboration is essential for guiding employees at lower

organisational levels in adhering to actions established by upper management, particularly in navigating logistics disruptions.

Furthermore, the research identified similarities with existing literature regarding TMT attributes that facilitate the development of organisational resilience. These attributes include establishing support structures for change, understanding employee needs, demonstrating confidence and transparent communication, showcasing expertise in operational excellence, and maintaining a commitment to a unified vision.

### **1.6. Research scope**

The study investigated how the attributes of TMT influence an organisation's resilience in navigating unavoidable and persistent logistics disruptions. It aimed to identify the characteristics that define a resilient organisation, as well as the roles and responsibilities of a TMT, highlighting the essential attributes to lead the organisation during periods of disruption. The theoretical framework of the study was based on the upper echelon's theory. In addition, the research focused exclusively on the logistics sector in South Africa.

### **1.7. The research roadmap**

The research study consists of seven chapters outlined as follows:

- **Chapter 1: Introduction and context**  
This chapter presents the research study, delineating the research problem and articulating the primary research question and sub-questions that the study sought to address.
- **Chapter 2: Review of the literature**  
This chapter presents a comprehensive review of relevant literature about organisational resilience and the characteristics of the top management team.
- **Chapter 3: Research inquiries**  
This chapter elucidates the research questions identified through insights gained from the literature review.
- **Chapter 4: Research methodology**  
This chapter explains the research methods employed, data collection, and the subsequent interpretation of the data.

- **Chapter 5: Research results**

This chapter presents the research findings obtained by the methods outlined in Chapter 4.

- **Chapter 6: Analysis of findings**

This chapter analyses and interprets the findings presented in Chapter 5, culminating in conclusions drawn from the results.

- **Chapter 7: Conclusions of the research**

This chapter offers theoretical conclusions that address the research questions. It delineates the research contributions, examines the study's shortcomings, and proposes recommendations for further enquiries.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Introduction

This study examined how the attributes of the TMT in the logistics sector collectively influence organisational resilience in the face of disruptions. This chapter reviews the academic literature on TMT attributes and organisational resilience.

It outlines the role and characteristics of the TMT, along with the theoretical perspectives that inform its effectiveness in navigating disruptions within the logistics sector. In addition, this chapter establishes the academic relevance of the study and outlines the research questions that are explored in Chapter 3. The chapter concludes with a set of questions to collect the data for further analysis.

### 2.2. Disruption

Logistics operations are inherently susceptible to disruptions that can hinder organisational objectives and compromise customer satisfaction. Dubey et al. (2023) define disruptions as unforeseen events that complicate logistics management, with examples of terrorist attacks, protests, geopolitical conflicts, and pandemics, such as COVID-19. These disruptions can threaten business continuity, especially when TMT fail to respond effectively. Raetze et al. (2021) highlight that organisations lacking sensemaking and recovery strategies are at a higher risk of failure, with more than 40% ceasing operations following significant disruptions.

A failure to address logistics disruptions leads to adverse consequences for employee well-being and overall organisational performance (Hartmann et al., 2025). TMT play a crucial role in building resilience within logistics frameworks, as emphasised by Samimi et al. (2020). The following section explores the characteristics of resilient organisations and the essential role of TMT in achieving superior performance during both stable and unstable periods.

### 2.3. Organisational resilience

The concept of organisational resilience is crucial for understanding how businesses navigate and recover from various disruptions. Resilience is not an ambiguous or elusive phenomenon; instead, it is fundamentally outcome-oriented, grounded in the organisation's ability to anticipate and respond to interruptions in the logistical flow of operations. It is also an iterative process that involves learning from the adversities or crises experienced by the organisation.

This process often entails the effective deployment of resources, which Fisher et al. (2022) describe as the capacity to respond to challenges through strong leadership and organisation. Thus, organisational resilience encompasses the ability to make sense of and anticipate disruptions, the

response processes supported by individual and team-level resilience, and the effective collaboration that occurs across all levels of the organisation, ultimately leading to positive outcomes (Liang & Li, 2024).

Effective organisational resilience extends beyond simply responding to disruptions; it involves significantly enhancing performance in the aftermath of adverse events. Organisations that embrace challenges during a Crises demonstrate not only greater agility but also improved performance following such disruptions. Hillmann and Guenther (2020) suggest that resilience necessitates a structured approach, which organisations must adopt to successfully navigate and overcome the adversities experienced during disruptions.

“This process is designed not merely to ensure business continuity but to create a recovery trajectory that enhances entrepreneurial effectiveness in the wake of crises, disturbances, or challenges” (Hillmann & Guenther, 2020, p. 7). As a result, organisations shift their focus from mere survival to engaging in a transformative process, actively leveraging lessons learned during crises to enhance future operations.

This perspective highlights the crucial need for organisations to evolve and strengthen their capabilities in the wake of adversity. By implementing changes based on their experiences during challenging times, they position themselves for success. Organisations that achieve exceptional performance after a Crises exhibit agile internal processes that embody robustness, resilience, and antifragility (Munoz et al., 2022).

A robust organisation is defined by its ability to withstand both external and internal disruptions, allowing it to achieve its objectives with minimal negative effects. In contrast, a resilient organisation may initially face setbacks but, through proactive adaptation, can ultimately improve its performance. The concept of antifragility, especially relevant in agile environments like logistics, suggests that disruptions, while temporarily weakening an organisation, also create opportunities for growth amid volatility. This interplay between antifragility and organisational evolution highlights how entities can thrive in adversity (Munoz et al., 2022; Usher et al., 2024).

It is essential to recognise that a robust system alone does not constitute a comprehensive Crises response strategy. Munoz et al. (2022) note that such a system primarily serves to avoid disruptions, potentially preventing organisations from adapting and improving during crises. This strategy often includes creating redundancies, such as diversifying suppliers and developing contingency plans. While effective at resisting disruptions, it may fail if these issues persist due to inadequate adaptability.

In addition, Van den Berg et al. (2021) stress that building an agile organisation requires strong commitment from the TMT to empower the workforce. An organisational resilience mindset is not temporary; rather, it relies on the strengths of all employees to respond effectively to systemic changes. Empowering those involved in day-to-day operations and involving them in decision-making is crucial, supported by leadership's active participation.

The top management team must build trust and respect among employees, which is crucial for enhancing structural empowerment and fostering an inclusive organisational environment. This inclusive culture drives employee performance, positive behaviours, and collaboration, all of which are vital for building resilience during challenging times (Zahoor et al., 2024).

An environment that prioritises diversity, fairness, equity, and empowerment establishes a strong foundation of trust, enabling employees to use their skills effectively. This trust enables the organisation to respond quickly to disruptions, with employees playing a crucial role in influencing decisions that foster collective resilience (Van den Berg et al., 2021; Zahoor et al., 2024).

Decentralising decision-making during a Crises is crucial. Empowering those closest to the situation enables rapid responses and emphasises the importance of top management in creating a trust-based, adaptable environment.

The top management team is key to fostering organisational resilience by aligning resources and empowering teams to handle disruptions. Hillmann and Guenther (2020) noted that an organisation's resilient behaviour, resources, and skills are essential for its overall resilience. The ability to respond to adversity drives development and learning, as illustrated in Figure 2.1 (Hillmann & Guenther, 2020).

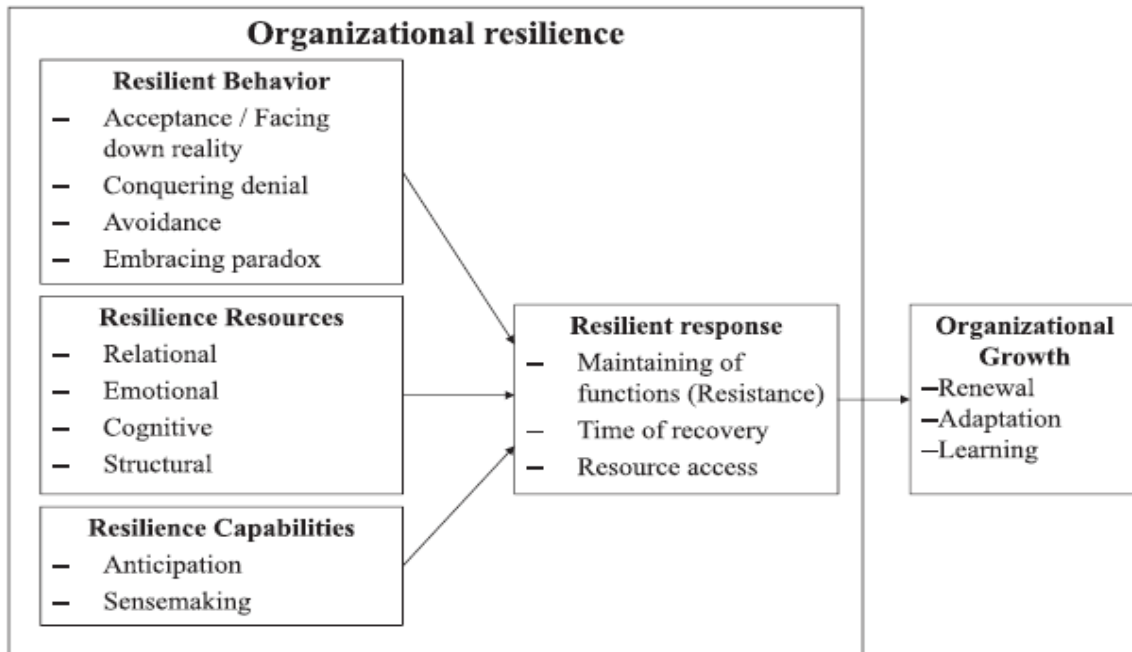


Figure 2.1: The organisational resilience model

Source: Hillmann and Guenther (2020)

### 2.3.1. Resilient behaviour

Prayag et al. (2023) highlight the crucial role of the TMT in fostering organisational resilience during disruptions. The TMT must effectively interpret challenges and respond urgently, necessitating strong communication skills and a calm, optimistic approach. Leaders should practice change leadership by articulating a clear vision and guiding actions to enhance resilience (Prayag et al., 2023).

This leadership style empowers the TMT to confront the realities of disruptions and engage employees in understanding the magnitude of the Crises. Such engagement creates a psychologically safe environment essential for team-level resistance. Ultimately, effective change leadership enables the organisation to emerge stronger from a Crises by maximising internal resources and setting clear directions for individuals and teams during challenging times (Hartmann et al., 2025; Prayag et al., 2023; Stoverink et al., 2018).

### 2.3.2. Resilient resources

Raetze et al. (2021) introduced a multi-level resilience framework that examines the components contributing to organisational resilience, which includes individual, team, and organisational levels. This framework illustrates that the effectiveness of resilience in facing adversity depends on all three levels, as shown in Figure 2.2. The authors assert that organisational resilience traits are interlinked with individual and team resilience, facilitating effective responses to supply chain

disruptions. Hillmann and Guenther (2020) further support this by highlighting that organisational resilience emerges from individual resilience, which strengthens team resilience. As the logistics industry is human-centric, individual decision-making during disruptions is crucial (Gerschberger et al., 2023). Below is a brief synopsis of the multi-level resilience framework's characteristics:

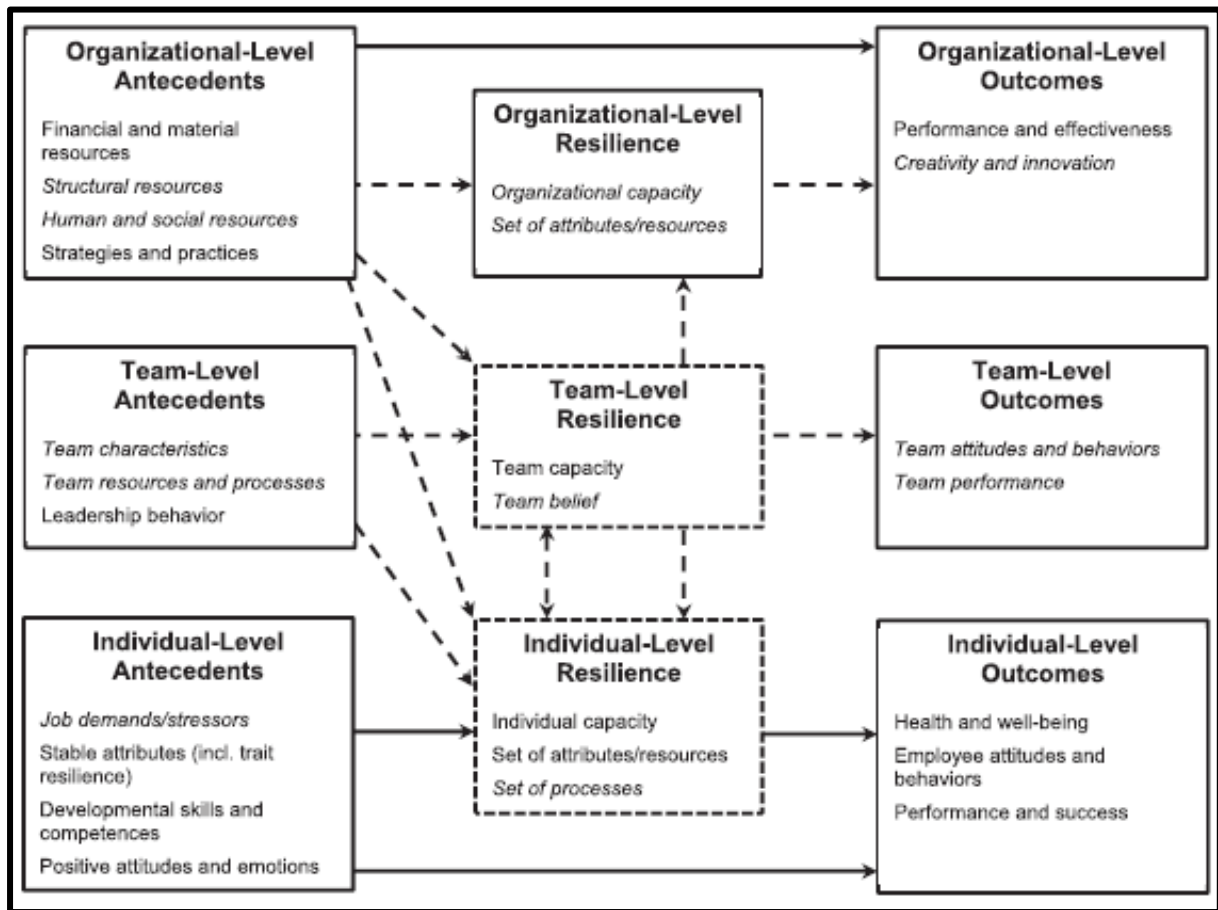


Figure 2.2: Multilevel resilience framework for the organisation

Source: Raetz et al. (2021)

Raetz et al. (2021) describe a framework in which organisational resilience traits are linked at individual and team levels, as enabling effective responses to supply chain disruptions. Hillmann and Guenther (2020) highlight that organisational resilience arises from individual resilience, which enhances team resilience. The individual and team-level attributes form the core of organisational resilience, especially in the human-centric logistics industry, where decisions during disruptions are crucial (Gerschberger et al., 2023). Below is a summary of the characteristics of the multilevel resilience framework:

## **I. Individual-level resilience**

Individual-level resilience refers to the qualities that enable members of an organisation to respond effectively to logistical operational disruptions (Raetz et al., 2021). Employees involved in daily operations play a crucial role in managing these challenges, as they are experts in their respective areas. Therefore, providing training and education is essential to empower them to interpret information related to disruptions and develop actionable strategies (Cotta & Salvador, 2020).

Gerschberger et al. (2023) highlight that cognitive, emotional, and behavioural attributes enhance organisational resilience, leading to improved performance post-disruption. Cognitive attributes enable employees to creatively analyse challenges and engage collaboratively with management to formulate necessary actions. This ability is vital for effective sensemaking during crises.

Building a resilient organisation requires a deliberate effort, as rapid changes often accompany increased uncertainty (Fisher et al., 2022). Individual emotional attributes are particularly crucial during times of adversity. Hollands et al. (2023) argue that poorly managed disruptions can negatively impact employees' mental and physical well-being. Therefore, individual resilience is critical for fostering trust between employees and the TMT, creating a culture of psychological safety and empowerment. This environment allows employees to evaluate their capabilities and confidently escalate issues when necessary.

## **II. Team-level resilience**

A team is a group of people with different skills working together to achieve a specific goal defined by the members of the TMT. For a team to succeed, TMT members should encourage collaboration and use each other's diverse abilities (Chapman et al., 2018). It is essential to foster an inclusive environment built on trust, as this promotes effective teamwork. This is especially true when facing challenges and building organisational resilience.

Having an inclusive culture provides diverse viewpoints, which lead to more effective responses to problems. Raetze et al. (2021) suggest that organisational resilience stems from the effectiveness of team member interactions. Clear communication is essential for effective collaboration when facing challenges. This supportive environment enables team members to acquire new skills and build confidence in addressing future challenges.

Team resilience is crucial because it fosters creativity, agility, and flexibility, enabling teams to adapt to changing environments. Chapman et al. (2018) note that a team's confidence in its ability to handle challenges is a key factor in its success. Therefore, the TMT is responsible for creating a safe and collaborative culture within the organisation.

### **III. Organisational-level resilience**

Organisational resilience refers to an organisation's ability to achieve business objectives amid adversity by leveraging individual and team attributes to enhance performance during disruptions. It fosters competence and collaboration while improving the effectiveness of the TMT in facilitating communication during challenging times (Gerschberger et al., 2023; Hillmann & Gather, 2020; Raetz et al., 2021).

According to Raetz et al. (2021), effective coordination of financial, structural, social, and human resources is crucial for maintaining performance during and after a Crises. The TMT must skilfully use these resources to optimise employee creativity and well-being, thus maximising overall performance.

#### **2.3.3. Resilience capabilities**

The capacity for resilience within organisations is significantly influenced by their ability to anticipate potential disruptions through proactive measures, such as environmental scanning and scenario planning. Nikookar et al. (2025) underscore that vital elements for achieving effective supply chain and organisational resilience include visibility, responsiveness, flexibility, and collaboration. This observation highlights that organisations lacking competencies in sensemaking and anticipation invariably find themselves in a reactive position when faced with logistical or organisational disruptions.

Sensemaking facilitates the identification of both external and internal environmental activities, enabling organisations to formulate response strategies that address disruptions through a collaborative approach leveraging internal resources. Consequently, the ability to engage in sensemaking and anticipation serves as a foundational phase for initiating the change management process, which is essential for fostering employee engagement (Christianson & Barton, 2020; Nikookar et al., 2025).

It is imperative for TMT members to thoroughly examine their operational environment and effectively interpret the substantial amount of data at their disposal. This analysis allows them to construct and articulate narratives surrounding emerging disruptions, which may manifest

as data trends. Moreover, the TMT must possess proficient problem-solving skills, including the capacity to experiment with new insights regarding disruptions. Sensemaking empowers the TMT to recognise and deconstruct uncertainties logically, resulting in the formulation of a coherent narrative regarding the disruption (Holt & Wiedner, 2024).

Christianson and Barton (2020) advocate for a structured sensemaking process comprising several stages: initially paying attention without immediate action, subsequently building a narrative in preparation for change, and ultimately implementing decisive actions to address the disruptions. This sequence represents a significant responsibility incumbent upon the TMT. When executed effectively, sensemaking not only facilitates an organisational response to disruptions but also catalyses innovation, enhancing value creation by providing customers with manageable solutions to their challenges. However, the timing of transforming sensemaking into innovative solutions remains a critical determinant of success.

Moqaddamerad and Ali (2023) reinforce this argument by pointing out that strategic foresight enhances organisational sensemaking processes through the construction and deconstruction of uncertainty. This strategic alignment enables organisations to develop robust responses to a spectrum of disruptions, uncertainties, and business risks, encompassing both known unknowns and unknown unknowns (Cohen et al., 2022).

#### **2.3.4. Resilient response**

Cohen et al. (2022) emphasise the importance of adaptability, agility, and alignment in organisations to manage disruptions effectively. They note that companies with high internal integration can better respond to external uncertainties and collaborate with various partners during crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Azadegan & Dooley, 2020).

Azadegan and Dooley (2020) stress that unpredictable disruptions necessitate structured collaboration at multiple organisational levels. Prayag et al. (2023) highlight the role of confident leadership in driving change and promoting clear communication to enhance collaboration.

The TMT plays a key role in translating data into actionable strategies while improving performance during disruptions. Jarrett and Vince (2023) introduce the concept of the “engaged negotiated order”, which emphasises shared understanding and decentralised authority within a TMT to foster cross-functional teamwork and better post-disruption outcomes (Chapman et al., 2018; Jarrett & Vince, 2023; Raetz et al., 2021).

### **2.3.5. Organisational growth**

Organisational resilience should be viewed not just as the capacity to survive adversity, but also as an opportunity for growth, emerging stronger in the post-Crises period. Liang and Li (2024) emphasise that enhancing performance should be the primary goal of investing in capabilities related to sensemaking and strategic foresight.

The TMT plays a crucial role in the organisation in interpreting and sharing insights from the sensemaking process. This collaboration enhances execution and fosters collective learning, ultimately strengthening organisational capabilities that are difficult for competitors to replicate. Learning from adversity encourages innovation and resilience, as individuals discover new approaches to challenges. Thus, resilient organisations are more adaptable, innovative, and focused on cultivating a culture of learning (Do et al., 2021).

Post-adversity reflection enables organisations to identify strengths and areas needing improvement, serving as a catalyst for business renewal and reinforcing organisational values. A robust learning culture enhances dynamic capabilities and improves adaptability during disruptions.

In the logistics sector, operational efficiency largely depends on its workforce, and disruptions can induce stress, negatively impacting performance and values. Wu et al. (2021) emphasise the importance of TMT possessing strong Crises leadership skills for organisational survival and competitiveness. Effective Crises leadership involves using sensemaking tools to anticipate crises while confidently guiding the organisation and stakeholders through challenges, prioritising crucial implications, and leveraging growth opportunities (Wu et al., 2021).

### **2.4. The role of the top management team (TMT) in navigating disruptions**

The TMT must possess strong Crises leadership capabilities, as they are accountable for the organisation's strategic direction and overall performance. Samimi et al. (2020) and Singh et al. (2023) highlight that TMT members, operating at the highest levels, must demonstrate confident leadership during disruptions, as such qualities can significantly impact the organisation's success or failure.

Members of the TMT are expected to lead at various organisational levels, requiring strong interpersonal skills to engage with stakeholders, including customers, investors, employees,

suppliers, and government agencies. Their people-centric approach is crucial for driving organisational performance (Samimi et al., 2020).

The TMT effectiveness directly impacts the organisation's ability to manage and achieve business objectives during logistical disruptions. With access to essential information, they interpret and implement actions that facilitate effective responses, thus influencing how employees navigate these challenges (Holmes et al., 2021).

The members of the TMT play a crucial role in the organisation and are financially incentivised to foster growth. Their behaviour and attributes are vital for effectively navigating disruptions, as they significantly influence employee responses, potentially leading to anxiety and chaos if the resources are not managed correctly (Hollands et al., 2023; Holmes et al., 2021; Raetze et al., 2021; Samimi et al., 2020).

Thus, examining the TMT strategic leadership role is essential for understanding their impact on organisational performance, as outlined in the framework by Samimi et al. (2020), depicted in Figure 2.3

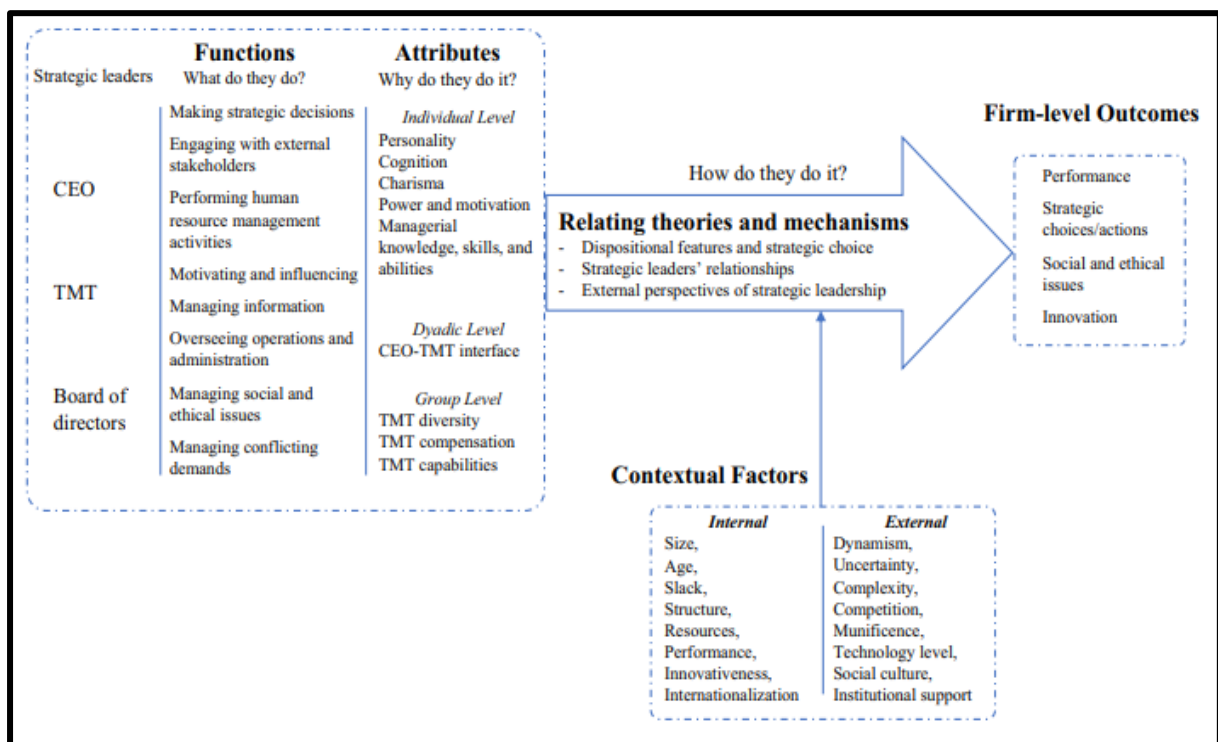


Figure 2.3. Strategic leadership framework

Source: Samimi et al. (2020).

Samimi et al. (2020) highlight that the role of the TMT involves making crucial decisions that affect organisational performance, managing relationships with both internal and external stakeholders, and engaging in key human resources activities. TMT must apply transformational leadership skills, analyse vital information exclusive to their team, and stay involved with operational matters while guiding social and ethical issues. Their effectiveness is crucial for the organisation's ability to respond to external challenges, such as supply chain disruptions. Thus, their roles warrant careful examination, particularly regarding their impact on organisational effectiveness during logistical disruptions, as illustrated by Samimi et al. (2020) in Figure 2.3.

#### **2.4.1. Consequential decisions during disruptions**

A TMT acts as a catalyst for change during logistical disruptions, playing a pivotal role in crafting strategies that help the organisation endure challenges and capitalise on emerging opportunities (Liu et al., 2021; Luciano et al., 2020; Samimi et al., 2020). Inadequate executive engagement undeniably hinders strategy execution and compromises overall performance, as Liu et al. (2021) highlight. The TMT needs to work cohesively during disruptions and communicate their decisions effectively, thereby fostering collective action throughout the organisation.

#### **2.4.2. Internal and external stakeholder management and engagement**

The TMT decisions that affect the logistics sector, in addressing both internal and external disruptions, must be translated into action to achieve superior performance. This requires effective communication; without it, the TMT efforts may falter. Engaging with internal stakeholders, particularly employees, and external partners, is crucial for problem-solving, innovative thinking, and the rapid implementation of decisions (Acebo et al., 2021; Samimi et al., 2020).

Transparent communication about the Crises and the decisions to mitigate it fosters collaboration, respect, and trust between the TMT and stakeholders. Such collaboration enhances problem-solving by empowering employees and enabling decentralised decision-making during disruptions (Acebo et al., 2021; Raetz et al., 2021).

#### **2.4.3. Performing human resources management activities**

The TMT plays a crucial role in executing human resources management activities, especially during logistical disruptions. The TMT responsibility is recruiting skilled personnel, as highlighted by Gerschberger et al. (2023), who note that individuals with strong cognitive, behavioural, and emotional attributes enhance organisational resilience. Those with advanced

cognitive skills promote collective problem-solving, while behavioural and emotional strengths are essential for stakeholder engagement and effective communication across all levels of the organisation.

#### **2.4.4. Transformational leadership style**

The effectiveness of the TMT during a Crises largely depends on their leadership style, especially when navigating uncertainty, which impacts post-disruption outcomes. TMT members must communicate the challenges and opportunities presented by adversity, reinforce the organisational vision, and maintain employee motivation and engagement (Stock et al., 2022).

Transformational leadership attributes within the TMT are essential for fostering collaboration, teamwork, and innovation, which are key components of organisational resilience. Without these qualities, organisations may struggle to overcome adversity. Transformational leadership involves: (1) clear communication about the disruption; (2) ownership of messaging and behaviours necessary for overcoming the Crises; (3) challenging the status quo to inspire innovation; and (4) providing vital support to employees through appropriate HR policies during difficult times (Loyless, 2023; Siangchokyoo et al., 2019).

#### **2.4.5. Managing access to information**

TMT play a crucial role by accessing information that shapes the organisation's strategic direction. Their ability to manage this information effectively allows them to respond quickly to external business dynamics, which is vital for maintaining competitiveness against rivals (Kirtley & O'Mahony, 2020; Samimi et al., 2020). Kirtley and O'Mahony (2020) note that new opportunities or challenges may require a re-evaluation of strategy, leading the TMT to decide between a strategic exit or addition. Accessing information alone is not enough; the team must also interpret internal strengths and external trends to take decisive actions that address business disruptions and fulfil strategic obligations.

#### **2.4.6. Strategy implementation**

TMT play a vital role in overseeing daily operations, identifying risks in strategic execution, and achieving organisational goals. They seamlessly integrate strategies into everyday activities, empowering teams to take ownership of their responsibilities. TMT members exemplify desired behaviours and enhance employee engagement by promoting open lines of communication. Chandler et al. (2022) highlight that humble leadership cultivates a culture of feedback and creativity, fostering strategy ownership at all levels and driving innovation. An effective TMT is adept at encouraging collaboration across the organisation, ensuring the

successful implementation of the corporate strategy and the delivery of results. Consequently, they are skilled at engaging in difficult conversations and taking decisive actions against employees who deliberately undermine strategic initiatives, as emphasized by Kosfeld (2019). This underscores the notion that leaders must be decisive and possess the authority to address and eliminate obstacles that hinder the successful implementation of corporate strategies. Thus promoting a culture of uniting behind strategic decisions and being consistent in driving accountability within the organisation.

#### **2.4.7. Responsible for ethical and social leadership**

TMT are essential in driving organisations to maximise stakeholder value while ensuring high performance and profitability. Ethical leadership is crucial (Javed et al., 2024), requiring TMT to focus on leadership behaviour and implement strong accountability through clear reward systems.

TMT must prioritise all stakeholders by creating customer value, investing in employee development, treating suppliers as partners, and acting ethically. Their responsibilities extend beyond shareholders to community well-being and long-term value (Harrison et al., 2019). Ultimately, TMT must understand their organisation's operations to align resources with stakeholder and shareholder goals (Luciano et al., 2020) and adapt to internal and external factors that impact performance.

#### **2.5. Top management team attributes**

The success and direction of an organisation, whether during uncertain or stable times, depends on the collaborative efforts of the entire TMT rather than just the CEO. The TMT power and influence are vital in shaping strategic directions during logistical crises, as they are the key decision-makers responsible for handling disruptions (Firk et al., 2021; Ke et al., 2021).

It was, therefore, essential to examine the TMT key attributes that impact the organisation's survival during logistics disruptions. These attributes are essential for navigating challenges but also for achieving outstanding performance afterwards. The TMT is accountable for delivering results, regardless of the business environment (Samimi et al., 2020). The attributes of the TMT are crucial, as decisions made at the highest level directly influence performance during logistical disruptions (Ma et al., 2021); the impact on the organisation's performance is discussed below:

### **2.5.1. Diversity**

The TMT composition with diverse backgrounds and personalities is essential for fostering effective discourse and stimulating creativity, both of which are critical for sensemaking, anticipation, and scenario planning in response to disruptions. The deep-level attributes, such as experience and specialised knowledge, significantly enhance the organisation's performance through dynamic engagements, including constructive agreements and disagreements at the upper echelons of leadership.

This is particularly relevant when interpreting data from strategic foresight planning sessions, enabling the TMT to translate insights into decisive strategic actions. These actions must be executed through either an induced or autonomous approach to achieve superior performance during disruptive periods (Belderbos et al., 2020; Bengtsson et al., 2018; Krieweth et al., 2024).

Basing the TMT composition on factors, such as race, gender, demographic characteristics, or ethnicity, rather than on experience and specialised expertise, can lead to dysfunction within the team. Such an approach undermines teamwork, minimises collaboration in strategic decision-making, and negatively impacts performance outcomes for stakeholders (Krieweth et al., 2024).

Weiser (2020) stresses that the mechanism for addressing disruptions plays a crucial role in driving strategic transformation and is deliberately guided by the TMT to elevate performance amid logistical challenges. The collaborative efforts of a diverse TMT empower executives to effectively integrate internal and external information, enabling a well-organised and impactful response to both crises and opportunities. This proactive approach ultimately enhances organisational performance during critical times (Saeed et al., 2024).

It is essential to understand that implementing a strategic response inevitably creates disruption among employees, necessitating modifications to existing operational procedures to tackle the situation effectively. While these changes may introduce discomfort, they are vital for advancement. Thus, the TMT must initiate and execute a robust change process (Weiser, 2020). There are several key steps that TMT members must not only lead but also champion, as emphasised by Weiser (2020).

1. The need for the employees to embark on a change process, which has been triggered by the logistics disruption and the anticipated benefits of engaging in the change journey
2. The TMT must establish the change implementation structures at all levels of the organisation to strengthen the level of engagement, improve effective communication, and provide coaching regarding the strategic change.
3. The TMT must designate change responsibilities to members of the established change implementation structure, allowing change leaders (team leaders) to impact the execution of the strategic decisions made by the TMT. These change leaders will be integrated into the newly formed extended change implementation team, forming part of steering committee, alongside members of the TMT.
4. The change management implementation teams must define critical success measures to drive action implementation. The TMT supports these initiatives by coaching on the development of key performance indicators (KPIs), communicating progress, and addressing shortcomings. Weiser (2020) and Kumar et al. (2023) advocate using a balanced scorecard (BSC) as an effective way to present the multiple KPIs that guide strategic direction during a Crises.
5. Change implementation leaders must report progress to the TMT using a BSC. This approach fosters integration between TMT members and employees, enhancing collaboration during disruptive periods.
6. The BSC measures financial, customer, internal processes, and organisational growth, enabling team leaders to effectively communicate change performance to their members during a Crises (Fabac, 2022). This fosters ownership of change at lower organisational levels and encourages collaboration and innovation.

The change process, intentionally initiated by the members of the TMT in response to logistics disruptions, begins with their analysis of environmental data. They translate this data into communication that is subsequently shared with the teams. The TMT works tirelessly to foster the behaviour necessary for implementing strategic change initiatives alongside team leaders in the organisation. The measures for these initiatives are developed collaboratively by the teams, with support from the TMT through engagement and coaching. A balanced scorecard

is then used to convey the progress of change implementation from team leaders back to the TMT. Figure 2.4 provides a summary of the iterative process for implementing change.

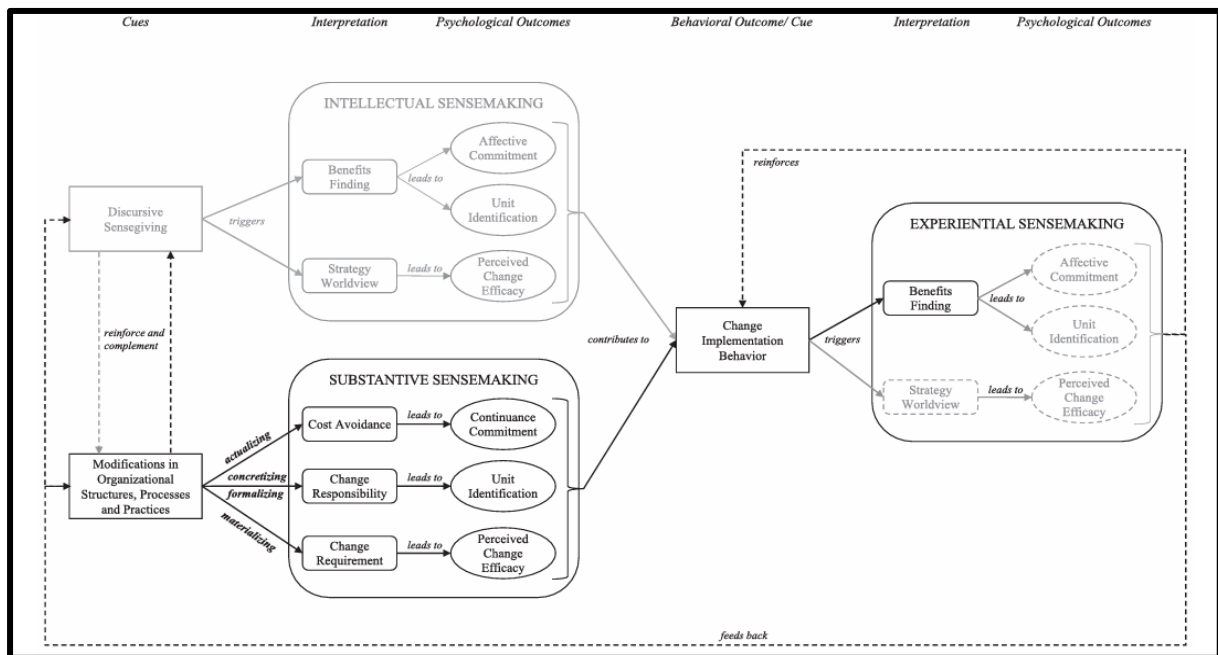


Figure 2.4. An integrative model of sensemaking during strategic change as a multimodal process

Source: Weiser (2020)

Weiser (2020) and Krieweth et al. (2024) highlight the critical role of a diverse TMT with deep-level attributes in effectively navigating complex disruptions. It is evident that fostering a collaborative environment, supported by robust communication processes, is essential for a diverse TMT to achieve outstanding performance during crises. This approach not only enhances problem-solving capabilities but also cultivates trust among employees within the organisation.

### 2.5.2. Top management team's structure:

TMT members should be viewed as peers, with a structure that fosters social integration to enhance collaboration (Aktan & Castellucci, 2025). A well-balanced TMT is essential for maximising the diverse knowledge within the team. It should be large enough to synthesise extensive data quickly, yet compact enough to ensure timely decision-making, avoiding the pitfalls of excessive debate in oversized groups. Agnihotri and Bhattacharya (2020) emphasise that larger TMT can hinder communication, leading to disjointed messaging and conflicting strategic priorities, which can create workplace chaos. In addition, managing a large

TMT poses challenges for the CEO, which can obstruct collaboration and diminish team performance.

Instead of promoting teamwork, larger teams often foster individualism, leading to unresolved conflict and heightened political dynamics. This underscores the urgent need for a strategically designed TMT structure, as its size impacts the organisation's agility in responding to logistical challenges. Understanding these organisational characteristics is crucial for the TMT effectiveness in tackling both internal and external issues.

### **2.5.3. Humble leadership**

Leaders who embody humility are well-known for their commitment to high standards, not only for themselves but for their teams. They openly acknowledge their weaknesses as opportunities for growth and actively appreciate the strengths and contributions of others, particularly during times of Crises. These leaders strive to become the best versions of themselves and are deeply invested in the development and engagement of their people. Their primary focus is on valuing and integrating diverse ideas and perspectives, which can significantly enhance organisational performance during times of logistical disruptions (Leblanc et al., 2022; Lin et al., 2024). The TMT must, therefore, embrace the trait of humble leadership, especially during times of logistical disruptions, as highlighted in the earlier statements.

The TMT fundamental belief must be based on the premise that performance is not static and that weaknesses present opportunities for learning and self-improvement. According to Leblanc et al. (2022), this approach to leadership fosters an environment that embraces risks and empowers teams to navigate challenges by becoming innovative in their areas of responsibility. This perspective does not diminish the importance of exhibiting strong leadership traits during times of Crises.

Humble leadership has proven to be highly effective during times of Crises. However, Chan et al. (2024) warn that the trait of displaying vulnerability by openly acknowledging mistakes can lead to misconceptions about a leader's strength of character. This is one reason why many organisations are led by non-humble leaders characterised as "arrogant, overconfident, and narcissistic". These leaders often disregard feedback and lack empathy, leading to significant issues, such as acquisition mistakes, cover-ups, and accounting scandals (Kelemen et al., 2022, p. 202).

This underscores that humble leaders prioritise the values of humility over personal ambition. As Chan et al. (2024) highlight, this leadership style is essential in the logistics sector, regardless of the presence of a Crises. The TMT must be intentional about cultivating a culture where humble leadership is a fundamental value. This approach enables individuals, teams, and multilevel structures within the organisation to effectively execute strategic change across all business units, particularly during times of disruption (Van den Berg et al., 2021; Weiser, 2020).

Kelemen et al. (2022) identify key dimensions of humble leadership that are vital for fostering effective organisational resilience during crises:

- Humble leaders possess a clear and honest understanding of themselves, recognising both their strengths and areas for improvement. They prioritise their well-being and maintain a balanced view of their abilities and limitations (Chandler et al., 2022).
- Fostering a people-centric approach by recognising team strengths and weaknesses builds trust and psychological safety, which enhances TMT integration during challenges in the logistics sector (Maldonado et al., 2021). This practice promotes teamwork, collaboration, and an innovative mindset essential for achieving superior results post-logistics.
- Maldonado et al. (2021) suggest that humility in leadership is vital during crises because it fosters teachability. This allows the TMT to collaborate with knowledgeable stakeholders in logistics, leveraging their expertise to improve organisational performance during disruptions.
- Humble leaders demonstrate a strong analytical approach to the information gathered regarding disruptions. They actively collaborate with the TMT members to craft effective communication and action plans that address challenges head-on. Taking charge of the rollout of strategic decisions, these leaders empower the organisation to respond decisively to disruptions. This clearly shows that humble leaders not only lead by example but also drive the successful implementation of strategic initiatives.
- Humble leaders place collaboration at the heart of their leadership style in the organisation because this is characterised by their belief that employees have something valuable to offer, so they create an environment where knowledge sharing

is encouraged and championed. Collaboration is crucial in cultivating an innovative culture.

- Chandler et al. (2022) suggest that humble leaders have empathy and are approachable. This is crucial during logistics disruptions because these can create adversity in employees' lives. Therefore, leaders' awareness during the difficult times is assisted by approaching situations with utmost care, creating an environment of trust and open communication.
- The culture of continuous improvement is based on the premise of respect for the employee (De Treville et al., 2023). Each employee must be seen as valuable and be empowered to do the work for which they are hired. Their tasks must be meaningful to improve their intellectual capacity and capability, which are necessary during a period of Crises.
- Members of the TMT must show passion for mentoring and coaching their employees during a Crises. This enables them to support, guide, and improve the communication process with the employees, which is crucial in overcoming the disruptions (Quarato et al., 2025).

It is important to note that humble leadership is particularly effective during a Crises compared to other leadership styles, such as authentic and servant leadership. Authentic leadership emphasises self-assessment, but it may not adequately focus on evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of employees. This can lead to traits of arrogance that are unhelpful for organisational leadership and direction in a logistics Crises. In contrast, servant leadership prioritises serving employees and fostering individual development, which might be more suited to periods of stability rather than times of Crises and uncertainty.

Humble leadership, on the other hand, excels in these challenging situations by intentionally recognising and leveraging the strengths and weaknesses of employees. This approach fosters higher levels of collaboration and teamwork, enabling the organisation to navigate crises more effectively (Kelemen et al., 2022).

Humble leadership is essential for TMT to build resilience against logistics disruptions at individual, multi-team, and organisational levels. This leadership style engages employees as key contributors to solutions through transparent communication, fostering an innovative

organisational climate (Chandler et al., 2022). In addition, Maldonado et al. (2021) outline the key attributes of humble leadership during these disruptions in Figure 2.5

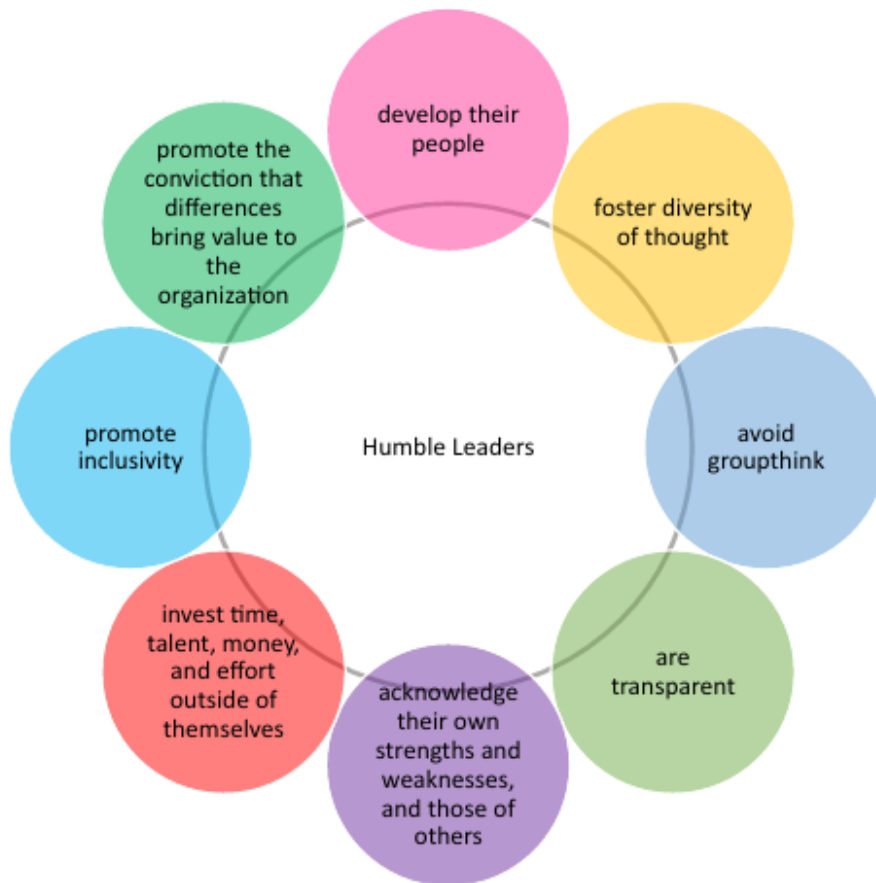


Figure 2.5: Observable actions of leader humility

Source: Maldonado et al. (2021)

#### **2.5.4. Top management team's experience in the logistics sector**

The TMT expertise in the logistics sector offers significant advantages in managing and mitigating logistical disruptions. Their extensive experience enables them to tackle challenges and seize growth opportunities through networks beyond their organisation (Saeed et al., 2024).

This suggests a strong link between TMT tenure and operational excellence, as well as organisational outcomes (Lin & Lin, 2018; Saeed et al., 2024). TMT can identify disruption challenges and seek assistance while embodying humble leadership with access to

specialised peer knowledge. This blend of experience and humility enables leaders to engage external stakeholders for support and collaborate effectively with internal teams. Moreover, TMT' knowledge helps organisations use technology and innovation to navigate logistics crises successfully (Firk et al., 2021).

#### **2.5.5. Top management team education**

TMT educational backgrounds play a crucial role in acquiring and accurately interpreting information, which is essential for decision-making during logistical disruptions. Agnihotri and Bhattacharya (2020) highlight the importance of diverse educational backgrounds of TMT members, as such diversity fosters a range of perspectives that enhance information synthesis. In contrast, homogeneity may lead to groupthink, stifling creativity and innovative solutions to logistical challenges (Maldonado et al., 2021).

The uniformity of education in the TMT structures may create a culture resistant to new ideas, marginalising executives who wish to offer innovative viewpoints. Therefore, diverse educational and experiential backgrounds are vital, enabling TMT members to leverage their expertise and effectively engage with external stakeholders to address complex supply chain issues. A strong educational foundation empowers the TMT to grasp logistical problems and develop appropriate responses, which are communicated clearly to interested parties.

The attributes of TMT members significantly influence an organisation's response and performance during logistics crises, as they are the principal decision-makers. These attributes need to align to foster a culture of empathy and resilience at all organisational levels, rooted in humility and diversity. As leaders at the pinnacle of the organisation, their effectiveness in executing logistics response plans is crucial; failure in this capacity can lead to the deterioration or collapse of the organisation (Kelemen et al., 2022; Samimi et al., 2020; Weiser, 2020).

#### **2.6. Upper echelon of power theory**

The upper echelon of power (UET) emphasises the crucial role of the TMT, comprising the CEO and senior executives, in influencing organisational performance, particularly in the logistics sector (Hambrick, 2007; Popli et al., 2022; Samimi et al., 2020). From this framework, the speculation is that the characteristics, values, and experiences of TMT members significantly influence strategic decisions during logistics disruptions, requiring effective interpretation of relevant information (Hambrick, 2007; Neely et al., 2020).

Paraskevas et al. (2023) describe the TMT as the “dominant coalition” tasked with making significant strategic decisions for superior performance. TMT members must gather accurate information and rely on their beliefs and past experiences for effective sensemaking. The diverse skill sets within the TMT are crucial for responding to disruptions.

The CEO's central role involves fostering TMT collaboration and establishing processes that promote effective leadership. Humble leadership, focused on people and organisational dynamics, is particularly important during crises (Chandler et al., 2022; Kelemen et al., 2022). The TMT collective behaviour is vital in developing strategic responses, facilitating communication with stakeholders to ensure informed decision-making, and feedback integration (Weiser, 2020). Neely et al. (2020) illustrate (Figure 2.6) effective TMT processes for managing logistics disruptions.

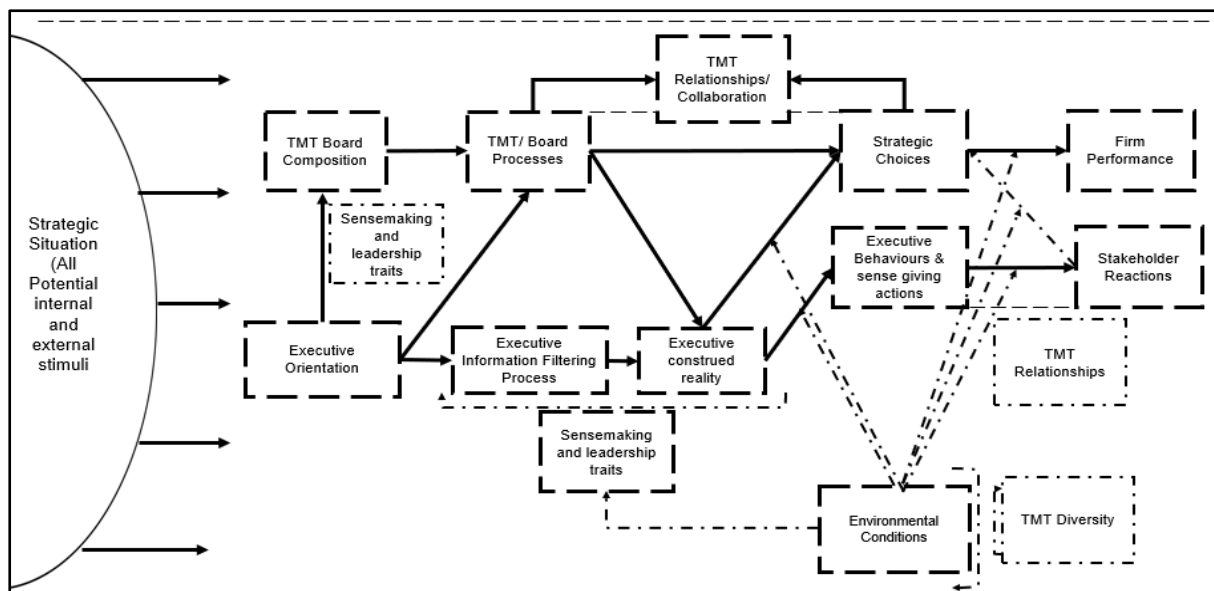


Figure 2.6: The upper echelon theory process model

Source: Neely et al. (2020)

The UET process model, as depicted in Figure 2.6, illustrates the complexities of leadership that must be navigated at the organisational level. There is a strong emphasis on the vital necessity for collaboration and effective teamwork, which should be firmly reinforced through the operational processes governing the TMT structures.

This underscores the undeniable importance of having a diverse and cohesive team in the upper echelons of organisational leadership. Such a team must work together decisively to cultivate a shared understanding of the threats posed by logistics disruptions and to devise

well-coordinated strategic responses to tackle these challenges. This proactive approach will lead to superior performance in the aftermath of a Crises, driven by resilience built through the implementation of change leadership skills at the individual, team, and organisational levels (Hillmann & Guenther, 2020; Raetze et al., 2021; Weiser, 2020).

## **2.7. Conclusion**

The literature review has effectively identified the key attributes of the TMT and their significant influence on organisational resilience during periods of logistics disruption. While extensive research exists on the individual attributes of TMT members, there is a pressing need to explore the collective characteristics of a TMT in the logistics sector. This exploration will empower organisations to achieve superior performance during both stable and uncertain times.

The literature findings highlight the TMT ability to access vital information about the internal and external environments as a foundational element essential for fostering organisational resilience. This capability is important for ensuring effective responses within the South African logistics sector and delivering expected performance outcomes, even amid uncertainty.

The literature underscores humility as a vital trait within TMT leadership styles. This quality is pivotal for influencing the organisation's overall response and the reactions of stakeholders to strategic decisions made at the highest levels. The logistics sector, inherently people-centric, thrives on the engagement and empowerment of employees, which in turn enhances processes that effectively address uncertainty.

Employees at various organisational levels are crucial in championing the implementation and refinement of strategic decisions agreed by the TMT. Their involvement is instrumental in the organisation's success during periods of disruption.

Thus, a TMT must cultivate a culture of collaboration from the top down through effective communication and dialogue. Such an approach will yield superior outcomes characterised by trust, learning, adaptability, growth, and a focus on employee health and well-being, as illustrated in Figure 2.7. This model serves as a framework for discussing the findings related to the TMT attributes.

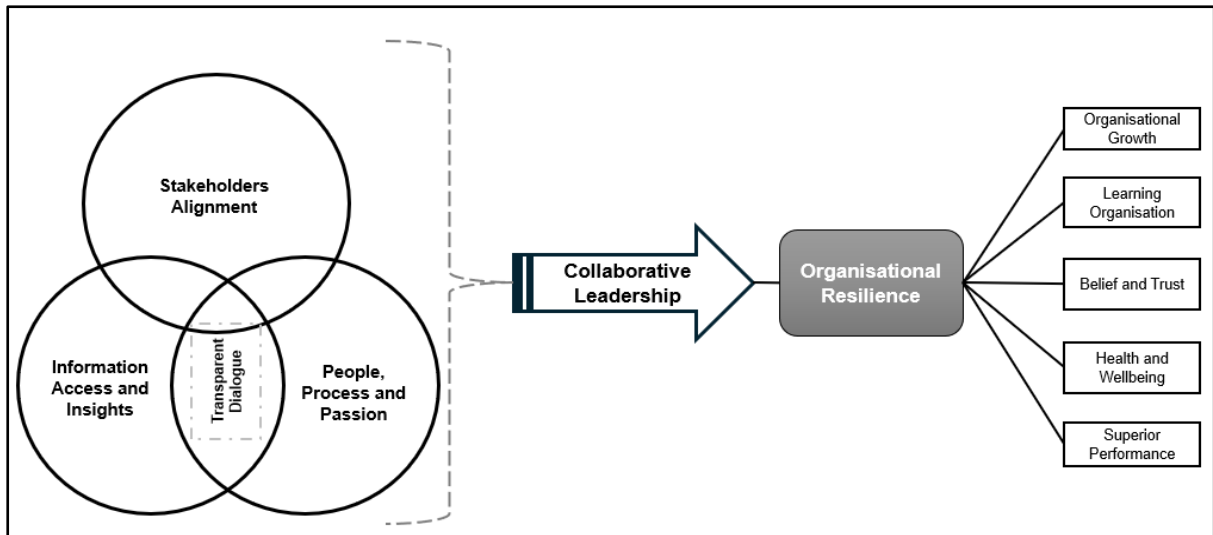


Figure 2.7: Factors influencing organisational resilience in the logistics sector

Source: Author's own

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

### 3.1. Introduction

This study highlighted the significant impact of the Top Management Team (TMT) on organisational success by examining their collective role and the essential attributes necessary for effectively navigating and strengthening organisational resilience during disruptions in the logistics sector within the South African context. The objective of this research was to identify the various approaches, strategies, and mindsets that inform the TMT decisions, enabling organisations to respond effectively to logistics disruptions. Accordingly, the research questions are structured as follows:

### 3.2. Main research question

*How do top management team leadership attributes influence organisational resilience in navigating disruptions within the logistics sector?*

The research objectives were to thoroughly examine the TMT attributes crucial in influencing the organisation's resilience in responding to logistics disruptions through the lens of the upper echelons theory.

#### 3.1.1. Sub-question 1

*How do the behavioural characteristics of the top management team contribute to enhancing the organisational multi-level resilience response mechanism during periods of disruption?*

The objective of this research question was to investigate the strategies and approaches used by the TMT to leverage the organisation's resources at various business levels in response to logistics disruptions. This research question also explored the behaviour that the TMT can leverage to turn a logistics Crises into an organisational growth opportunity and a competitive advantage.

#### 3.1.2. Sub-question 2

*How do the members of the top management team establish a robust foundation for the organisation that enables it to foresee and capitalise on the opportunities presented by future disruptions?*

This research question investigated the essential skill sets that the TMT must possess to effectively anticipate future disruptions. It explored how this expertise can be leveraged to inform organisational decisions, thus transforming potential disruptions into strategic opportunities. In addition, this enquiry facilitated an investigation into the role of the TMT in fostering an organisational culture characterised by collaboration and innovation.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter delves into the selected research methodology, emphasising its significance in addressing the outlined research questions. It provides a comprehensive overview of both the data collection process and subsequent analysis techniques used throughout the study. Ultimately, the chapter serves to clarify the methodology approach to effectively tackle the research enquiries.

### **4.1. Qualitative method**

This study used a qualitative research methodology to explore how the TMT promotes organisational resilience within the logistics sector. A qualitative approach was particularly effective as it examined the lived experiences and perspectives of individuals in senior leadership roles, providing valuable insights into the topic. This methodology helped identify leadership behaviour and team dynamics that influence TMT performance, and consequently, organisational outcomes (Lim, 2024).

The primary aim of this exploratory research was to identify and interpret the collected data, distilling it into common themes that enhance the analysis of TMT attributes in the logistics sector (Melnikovas, 2018). The study specifically focused on analysing data from the TMT perspective, investigating behavioural patterns and attributes that influence decision-making during supply chain disruptions.

The qualitative research methodology enabled gathering data through observations and interactions with senior executive leadership and their direct reports, all of whom have effectively navigated supply chain disruptions in logistics companies in South Africa. This approach facilitated flexible data collection and interpretation, allowing for comprehensive analysis of both explicit data and inferential insights drawn from observed patterns within the coded data (Braun & Clarke, 2020). Furthermore, certain questions may have been challenging to address using alternative research methods due to the inherent complexities of the logistics sector.

### **4.2. Population and research setting**

The target population consisted of top executives and key members of a various TMTS in the logistics sector, including tactical managers, depot managers, and operations managers, all of whom played a crucial role in implementing directives and bringing experience from different organisations.

The inclusion of senior, depot, and operational management teams is based on the understanding that, while decisions during a logistics Crises largely originate from the TMT, the execution of these strategies is primarily carried out by lower levels in the organisation. Therefore, analysing the direct reports of these managers offered the researcher valuable insights from an organisational integration perspective. The study investigated the roles of TMT in logistics firms in South Africa in the context of supply chain disruptions.

#### **4.3. Unit of analysis**

The TMT members, who play a vital role in strategic leadership, were the participants, as shown by Samimi et al. (2020) in their framework. The study concentrated on the attributes of the organisational structure that influence and lead the implementation of organisational response plans during times of Crises. The individuals who were interviewed included a managing director, business development and supply chain directors, logistics operations executive, SHEQ executive, senior HR manager, and a general manager.

In addition, insights were collected from the direct reports of these executives. By analysing their responses, the aim was to evaluate the strategies employed by TMT members within logistics organisations to address unplanned supply chain disruptions. This analysis led to the identification of key attributes that enabled them to navigate logistics challenges, ultimately resulting in enhanced organisational performance and improved teamwork both within the TMT and throughout the lower levels of the organisation. Also examined were the cascading efforts undertaken by TMT members to engage with the structures below the upper echelon.

It is important to emphasise that the TMT focus in the logistics sector is to meet client objectives outlined in contracts, specifically in the form of requests for proposals (RFQs). Consequently, successfully managing expectations, maintaining clear communication, and fostering dynamic, collaborative relationships with external stakeholders remain paramount for the TMT as they navigate disruptions (Harrison et al., 2019).

#### **4.4. Sampling method**

A blend of convenience and purposive sampling methods was used to collect data, designed to yield rich and in-depth insights. This approach enabled the researcher to uncover and analyse the key attributes that empower a TMT to function effectively as a cohesive unit. Such teamwork leads to well-crafted messaging, significantly enhancing collaboration within the organisation, particularly at lower levels responsible for executing strategic decisions (Weiser, 2020).

The researcher targeted insights from individuals holding senior executive leadership roles, recognising that their experience could provide invaluable, high-quality information (Campbell et al., 2020). Each participant had been in their current role for more than three years, bringing extensive background knowledge of various organisations within the logistics and supply chain sectors.

The focus included those promoted to director roles from general management, as well as key players functioning at the tactical level just below the top level of leadership. The tactical level included senior management teams, which play an execution role, and operations management teams involved in depots, warehousing, and distribution.

The research aimed to gather insights from these executive leadership teams, particularly organisation TMT, which serve as critical first responders in managing unplanned disruptions, customer interactions, and internal stakeholder relations from an escalation perspective. By integrating findings from the lower echelons of the TMT, who act as first responders in executing the strategic decisions, the study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the decision-making dissemination process (Fabac, 2022).

These organisational structures are crucial for ensuring resilience during times marked by logistical disruptions and challenges, whether they stem from internal or external sources. They play a crucial role in delivering exceptional service to clients, maintaining effective coordination, and ensuring an integrated operational system that performs at optimal levels (Liu et al., 2021).

To ensure comprehensive insights, the study targeted a diverse sample size of 10 to 25 participants from various business areas, particularly those engaged in strategic planning, warehousing, and road freight functions within South Africa's logistics sector. Ultimately, the findings were derived from data collected from 17 participants from different disciplines within the logistics industry.

Table 3.1 shows the categories of the study sample size in relation to the initial number of participants to be included in the study. The decision to conclude data collection with 17 participants aligned well with the range of the targeted sample size. Further details of this decision are discussed in the data analysis section of this chapter.

Table 4.1 illustrates the purposive sampling size

Organisational Layer	Leadership Role	Number of Participants	Actual Number of Participants
Executive Leadership	Strategic (TMT)	10	7
Senior Level	Strategic and tactical (Direct Reports)	7	7
Mid-Level	Tactical Level	8	3

Source: Author's own

Table 4.2 presents demographic data that highlights the participants' areas of expertise, their positions within the current organisational structure, and their daily functional disciplines. To maintain the confidentiality agreement, participants were assigned codes.

Table 4.2: Demographic data

Participants Code	Gender	Organogram	Discipline	Expertise
Participant 1	Male	Director	Strategic	Commercial and sales
Participant 2	Female	Director	Strategic	Supply chain
Participant 3	Female	Executive	Strategic	Global logistics and engineering
Participant 4	Male	Director	Strategic	Health, safety and environment
Participant 5	Female	Manager	Tactical	Inventory
Participant 6	Female	Executive	Strategic	General management
Participant 7	Female	Senior Manager	Tactical	Customer services
Participant 8	Male	Executive	Strategic	Logistics
Participant 9	Female	Manager	Tactical	Depot management
Participant 10	Female	Senior Manager	Tactical	Warehousing and transport
Participant 11	Male	Manager	Tactical	Distribution
Participant 12	Female	Senior Manager	Tactical	Human Resources
Participant 13	Female	Director	Strategic	Business development
Participant 14	Male	Director	Strategic	
Participant 15	Female	Manager	Tactical	Warehousing
Participant 16	Female	Analysis	Tactical	Planning and supply chain
Participant 17	Female	Manager	Tactical	Warehousing

Source: Author's own

Table 4.2 shows that 76% of the participants were female, while 24% were male. This gender distribution was mainly due to the accessibility of the participants. Among them, 47% were at

a strategic level as a TMT member. while 53% operate at tactical and executive-levels. It is important to note that those at the tactical level report directly to TMT members, making their roles crucial for translating organisational strategies into actionable milestones that yield superior results. In addition, all participants have extensive experience in logistics operations, with 94% currently working in a dedicated logistics sector and 6% involved in supply chain operations that include logistics activities, such as planning functions.

Access to the participants was facilitated through the researcher's network within South Africa's logistics sector. Initial contact was made with operational managers and strategic leaders, such as directors and operations executives in logistics organisations. This outreach process involved direct methods, including email and in-person meetings. These individuals were invited to participate in the study and were also asked to refer colleagues or clients with firsthand experience of supply chain disruptions.

This approach facilitated convenience sampling, allowing the researcher to tap into participants' networks to gain deeper insights into strategies for managing disruptions in the logistics sector (Golzar et al., 2022). The data collection method was a snowball sampling technique, which was particularly effective for reaching senior-level individuals who shape the strategic direction in response to supply chain disruptions.

This approach is purposeful, aiming to capture the essence of participants' lived experiences across various logistics functions, with an emphasis on the quality of information gathered for analysis (Malterud et al., 2015).

By actively engaging key players who handle unexpected interruptions within the supply chain, this data-gathering approach significantly enhanced the understanding of logistics business processes. It aided in identifying themes from strategic to tactical levels of operations, resulting in a comprehensive analysis and a richer understanding from a project perspective.

#### **4.5. Research Instrument**

The approach to collecting rich data from participants involved a structured open-ended interview protocol. Participants were informed about the interview questions in advance to help them prepare and to ensure they did not feel overwhelmed during the interview process. A consent letter, formatted according to the guidelines provided by the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS), was used to obtain signatures from the participants consenting to the interview and from the researcher.

This process included a standardised set of questions posed to the various participants, aimed at exploring their lived experiences in the logistics sector. It sought to uncover their perceptions and identify key learnings that should be shared with the existing local logistics industry.

The questions were developed based on a comprehensive literature review analysis conducted as part of the research proposal. The same interview protocol was used to obtain ethical clearance approval, marking the initial step in conducting the interviews (Turner, 2014). This process was thorough, and the researcher handled the interviewees' perceptions with the utmost care, reflecting on and validating the information shared. This approach was essential to accurately capture their thoughts, feelings, and behaviour (Lavee & Itzchakov, 2021).

#### **4.6. Data gathering process**

Data collection involved conducting both structured and semi-structured interviews with various members of the TMT, including individuals occupying tactical and mid-level positions within the organisational hierarchy. The interview process was strategically tailored to align with their specific roles and experiences. Initially, the plan was to engage in face-to-face interviews to facilitate meaningful interactions as participants shared their personal experiences regarding the management of logistics disruptions. However, due to challenges related to participant availability and travel costs, the interviews were ultimately conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams. This anticipated logistical constraint was addressed by providing virtual interviews as an alternative, as specified in the ethical clearance application process.

Throughout the interviews, participants expressed a high level of comfort, with some sharing personal information pivotal for the analytical process. To uphold the highest standards of confidentiality, both the researcher and the participants signed a consent letter as part of the interview protocol.

The data obtained from the interviewees were handled with meticulous care. Participants were assured of their protection, which included the omission of their names and the identification of their respective organisations during the analysis phase, conducted via Atlas.ti software. Nonetheless, the roles and positions held by the participants are disclosed to highlight key leadership focus areas within the logistics sector.

The virtual interview methodology proved to be an effective strategy for data collection, outperforming the initially planned face-to-face interactions. In several instances, participants found it comfortable to activate their cameras during the interviews, whereas others preferred to maintain their privacy. Nonetheless, the ability to record these sessions enhanced the data

collection process, allowing for comprehensive transcription and detailed analysis. This feature provided the researcher with the option to revisit interviews for any critical information that may not have been adequately captured in the transcripts.

The rich data collected during the interview phase significantly supported the researcher in identifying and obtaining supplementary secondary data available in the public domain, which further informed the analysis of the participants' insights.

This supplementary data was collected from the interviewees' perspectives in various formats. The researcher practised rigorous data management, handling all forms of information, including raw data, such as transcripts and video recordings.

Acknowledging the critical importance of responsible data collection and storage, the researcher implemented multiple effective strategies for data management throughout both the active and completed phases of the research. The primary storage method for raw data, including consent forms and participant feedback, used the Apple Cloud service, which is currently activated and access-controlled. In addition, Google Drive and Dropbox were used as secure backup options, subject to access controls, to ensure data retention for ten years or more. The data were systematically organised, with multiple links provided on the front page of the data collection plan for easy access whenever needed. This comprehensive approach ensured that the researcher could adhere to long-term data storage requirements with confidence.

Other means of data storage, such as a local PC, external drives, and OneDrive backups, were employed during the active stages of report writing. While these methods may entail certain risks, the researcher was committed to establishing a disciplined approach, ensuring that short-term data collection strategies operated concurrently with the long-term data management strategies outlined above.

#### Data analysis approach

The thematic analysis approach was used effectively to interpret the data collected from the interviews. The data was meticulously analysed and organised into relevant themes, allowing for a more straightforward interpretation.

Transcripts derived from the 17 semi-structured interviews were thoroughly analysed to gain a deeper understanding of the findings. This analysis resulted in the development of 167 open codes, which were subsequently organised into 20 categories. From these categories, a final set of four themes emerged, forming the foundation for a detailed analysis of the interview

data. The process aimed to achieve data saturation, which was achieved at the 13<sup>th</sup> interview, when no new codes were generated (see Fig. 4.1)

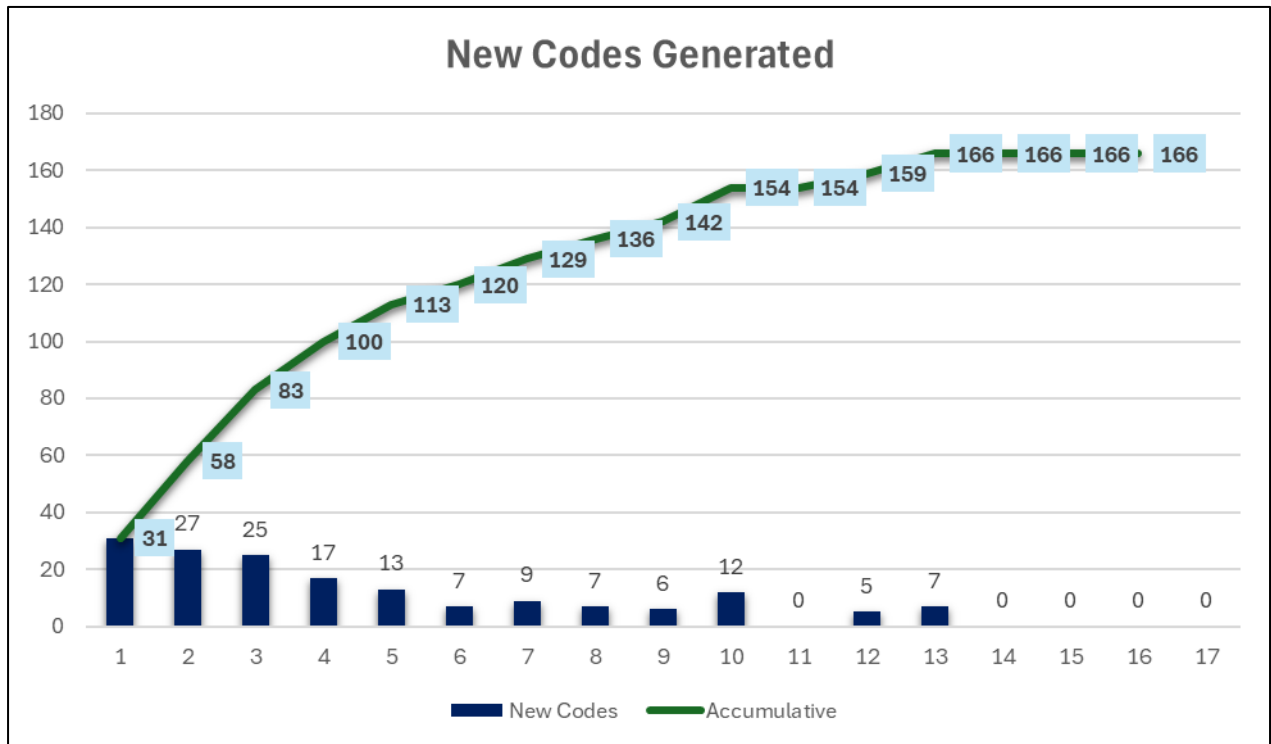


Figure 4.1: Data saturation analysis

Source: Author's own

#### 4.7. Data analysis approach

To ensure that the collected data accurately represented the phenomenon under investigation and led to a valid conclusion (Lim, 2024), the study followed the approach outlined below:

- Ensured the quality of literature by selecting credible journals.
- Used a literature review to guide the research questions.
- Employed standardised interview questions for the research.
- Selected only participants from the logistics sector with experience in leadership during crises. This included members of the TMT, senior managers, and operational managers.
- Used Atlas.ti software for coding purposes.

#### **4.8. Ethical considerations**

The research was carried out in a semi-structured format, effectively capturing the lived experiences of participants. By fostering trust, the researcher facilitated open and honest dialogue, allowing participants to share their valuable insights on the topic being investigated. Consequently, ensuring participant confidentiality was of utmost importance.

The study adhered to ethical standards designed to protect both participants and the organisations they represent from any potential harm or bias. This commitment to safety benefitted all parties involved, including the researcher (Lim, 2024). Each participant was guided through a consent process developed by GIBS that outlined their rights and clarified the study's scope. Their signed consent confirmed voluntary participation and helped to establish a trusting relationship, which the researcher strives to maintain.

All data collection adhered to GIBS's ethical protocols, ensuring that specific requirements were met before engaging participants. Data collection only commenced after receiving a confirmation email approving the ethical process from the institution. The findings reported in this study were collected exclusively after all ethical procedures were completed. Please refer to Appendix 4 for the ethical clearance approval.

#### **4.9. Limitations**

The time constraints limited the number of logistics executives who could participate in the research study, which included 17 experts in the field. The study was concluded when the saturation point was reached.

There may have been errors during the data collection process that affected the quality of the information, hindering a comprehensive exploration of the research topic. However, as the researcher gained confidence, the quality of data collection improved. These mistakes are a normal part of the learning process for researchers striving for quality in their work.

#### **4.10. Conclusions**

This chapter outlined how the researcher collected the necessary data to answer the research questions. It also addressed the measures taken to protect the confidentiality of the participants and the protocols for data storage for a predetermined period. The following chapter presents the study's findings gathered during the interview period.

## CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

### 5.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the participants' findings from the interviews conducted by the researcher. The findings are presented as two sub-research questions as discussed in Chapter 3. The findings were derived from the analysis of the 17 interview transcripts that addressed the research questions outlined in Chapter 3.

To interpret the data gathered from the participants, an interpretative phenomenological analysis approach was employed. The results of the analysis from the collected data are summarised in Table 5.1, which reflects the researcher's interpretation of the participants' responses to the research questions.

### 5.2. Presentation of primary research findings

The analysis produced 166 open codes, which were subsequently organised into 20 categories, ultimately revealing four key themes that underpin the detailed discussion in this chapter. Participants highlighted the significance of creating support structures and addressing individual needs during disruptions. This was followed by a dedication to the organisation's purpose, the importance of confidence and transparent communication, and a focus on operational excellence (see Fig. 5.1).

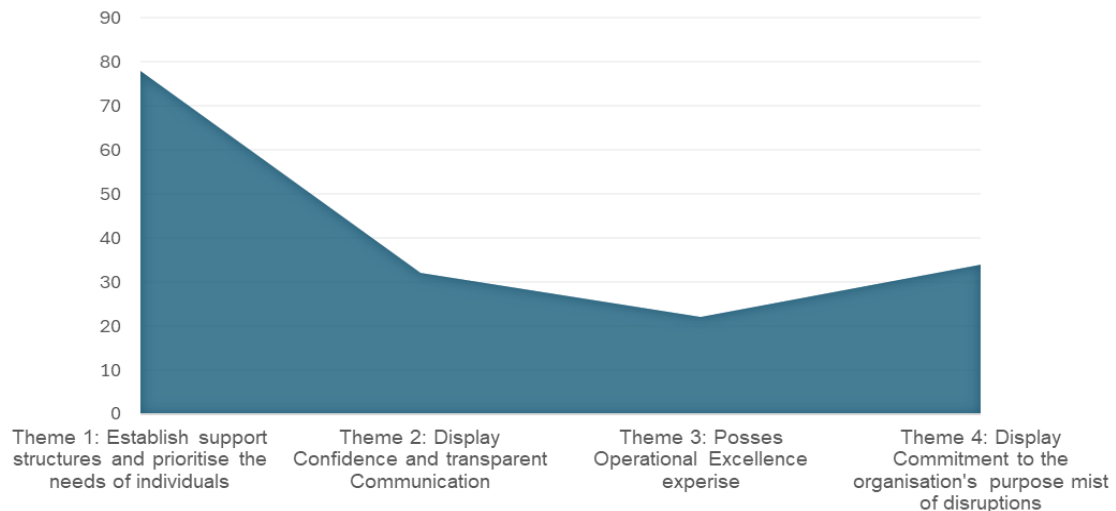


Fig 5.1 Summary of key themes from the study

Source: Author's own

Table 5.1: Survey review of the interpretive notes

Source: Author's own

Interview Questions	Summary review of the interpretive notes
1. How did you respond to the recent disruptions that you may have experienced in your logistics environment?	Effective scenario planning and foresight mechanisms are crucial for responding to crises, as highlighted by a participant reporting to the board. This approach fosters a sensemaking and anticipation framework, allowing businesses to proactively address challenges. "Fortunately, we engage in extensive scenario planning," the participant noted.
2. What actions did you observe the Top Management Team take in response to the recent logistics disruptions? What are your main takeaways from their actions?	Participants highlighted the necessity of clear communication and prioritising employee safety during a logistics Crises. Effective communication is vital for successful collaboration, while experience in the logistics sector and a strong executive education are essential for accurate Crises assessment and fostering confidence among top management when engaging with stakeholders.
3. What actions did you take to lead the organisation during the period of logistics disruptions? What worked, and what are the areas for improvement?	Maintaining composure during logistics disruptions is essential to minimising chaos among employees. Effective communication and resource coordination from the TMT can help manage these crises. Establishing a change committee to share decisions and evaluate actions supports continuous improvement and sustainability.
4. Which values and principles from your experience helped the team navigate logistics disruptions?	Collaboration and teamwork are crucial for managing logistics disruptions. Despite significant investments in technology, logistics remain people-centric, relying on interactions with customers and stakeholders. Utilising both internal and external knowledge is key to strategic decision-making throughout the logistics value chain, helping to mitigate disruptions and improve performance. Thus, values that foster trust and teamwork are essential during these challenges.
5. What skill set assisted you in navigating the logistics disruption?	Participants stressed that decisiveness, resilience, and swift action are vital for effective Crises leadership. Decisiveness fosters trust among employees, while resilient leaders prioritize communication and collaboration to tackle logistics challenges.
6. Based on your experience, has humility in leadership been crucial in leading the teams during a Crises? Please elaborate using examples.	One participant questioned the role of humility in fostering organisational resilience during a Crises, suggesting that urgency diminishes its importance. In contrast, others highlighted that involving affected employees enhances collaboration, trust, and continuous improvement. The TMT should view a logistics Crises as a chance to foster a learning environment, making humility essential for building teamwork and trust during challenging times.
7. What is your educational background, and based on your experience, did your educational background assist the TMT in adding value during a logistics Crises diagnosis? Why?	Most participants hold NQF8-level qualifications, including two with MBAs and one currently pursuing the degree. They agree that combining education with practical experience is essential for senior management teams to effectively tackle the logistics Crises, as it enhances communication and helps identify root causes. While experience is necessary, relying solely on it can prevent TMT from maintaining a long-term strategic view during a Crises. Thus, both attributes are crucial for successfully managing disruption.
8. What would you do to enhance the existing Crises management plan that the TMT has implemented in your company to address logistics disruptions?	The participants emphasised the need for ongoing simulations of the Crises management plan to ensure its effectiveness in the future, foster leadership, and enhance the organisation's readiness for potential disruptions.

### 5.2.1. Research Question 1: Findings

*Research Question 1: How do the behavioural characteristics of the top management team contribute to enhancing the organisational multi-level resilience response mechanism during periods of disruption?*

The purpose of this question was to clearly define the behaviour that is deemed optimal for the TMT in managing the organisation during periods of logistics disruptions. Furthermore, it aimed to clarify the participants' views on how these behaviours demonstrated by the TMT were essential not only in navigating the organisation through crises but also in seizing opportunities that ultimately enhanced their organisations' reputations, as illustrated by their real-world experiences.

The analysis and organisation of TMT behaviour revealed three central themes: (1) establishing support systems and prioritising individual needs, (2) demonstrating confidence while ensuring transparent communication, and (3) upholding expertise in operational excellence. Each theme, along with its related categories, will be elaborated to illustrate the insights gained from participants' responses to Research Question 1.

#### 5.2.1.1. Theme 1: Establish the support systems and prioritise the individual needs

Among the participants, 89% emphasised that the ability to overcome business interruptions and achieve growth following logistics disruptions is largely contingent upon the resources allocated to individuals within the industry. Individuals and teams must be empowered and supported by the Top Management Team during challenging times, not only to navigate through these disruptions but also to excel, in so doing, enhancing the organisation's competitiveness. Participant 1 effectively summed up this perspective when asked about their observations regarding the actions and behaviour of the TMT in response to the logistics disruption.

*[I]f there's no structure...how will we support the company[s] imperatives or the vision, it becomes very difficult to find an alignment, because people will find themselves not sure what is expected [of them,] and with no alignment, you will not get the momentum [needed] to solve... what needs to be solved [to get results during a period of a disruption]. [17:22 ¶ 15 in Participant 1](#)*

The point emphasises the significance of the TMT in clarifying the company's direction during a period of disruption. The organisation must establish a reference point to develop the internal structures that will support the team in managing logistics disruptions. This guidance is crucial

for the team during such challenging times, as succinctly expressed by Participant 3 when they stated:

*I will say the first thing is clear direction that we need set for the teams, this responsibility lies with me as a leader, my manager, and our CEO. Our CEOs and our Chairman, our CEO since the beginning, have set a clear priority, and the priority is to keep global trade moving all the time while... protect[ing] our employees and our customers. This is very clear from a company perspective. So it was a clear direction, it matters, and it is the first thing when dealing with a Crises. [21:12 ¶ 8 – 9 in Participant 3](#)*

Navigating and leading through periods of disruption necessitates a strong commitment to overseeing the overall direction of the company, rather than solely concentrating on managing the adversity at hand. This demands resilience from the TMT members, who have a genuine passion for their business and confidence in their leadership capabilities during challenging times. Participant 1 highlighted this point when asked about the essential skill set that helped them navigate the logistics disruption, responding as follows:

*I think for me... it's the grit. I think we're in, it's a combination of being resilient and being passionate about supply chain and really not look at supply chain at an academic arena, but look at supply chain even in terms of how it informs my day-to-day, how I wake up, what to do when I wake up, what comes first, what makes my preparation more efficient but effective to me and to the world that I provide a service. [17:25 ¶ 25 in Participant 1](#)*

Possessing grit and a strong commitment to logistics operations is vital for effective supply chain management. This commitment enables the TMT to formulate innovative strategies that navigate the challenges posed by business disruptions. However, this enthusiasm must be strategically harnessed to generate organisational buy-in from employees, rather than creating an atmosphere of alienation that could lead to panic and frustration among those instrumental in executing Crises response measures. For this reason, emotional intelligence is highlighted as a critical behaviour trait that TMT members must cultivate.

#### **I. Emotional intelligence attribute**

Participants noted that emotional intelligence is essential for the TMT to stay composed during a Crises. It enables the TMT to identify opportunities to respond effectively and help the organisation to thrive afterwards by fostering effective leadership in challenging times.

Emotional intelligence enables the TMT to think critically and fosters essential traits, such as effective communication, humility in the face of challenges, and collaboration. Their composed demeanour is crucial for managing disruptions and minimising chaos. Table 5.2 summarises participants' reflections on their experiences or observations of colleagues during a logistics Crises.

Table 5.2: Participants' views on the emotional intelligence trait.

<p>I think with emotional intelligence, you tend to remain calm in a period of adversity...when people see obstacles, challenges, and problems, when you are calm, cool, and collected, you see opportunities when they see adversity. So I think that's where emotional intelligence really gets you results <a href="#">17:27 ¶ 28 in Participant 1</a></p>
<p>[I think that] emotional intelligence ...[Lacks] attention... in the supply chain ... [where I find] myself in different cultural dynamics. You find you know all these challenges that people relate to but how you respond is important, and emotional Intelligence has been that key for me that has been opening so many doors <a href="#">17:26 ¶ 25 in Participant 1</a></p>
<p>So visibility of management [and] remaining calm [<i>sic</i>] so that you don't send panic throughout the entire [organisation]<a href="#">19:30 ¶ 9 in Participant 2</a></p>
<p>I also mentioned it before, it is the ability to remain calm in chaos, right? Because in situations where disruptions this big happens, panic sets in, and if not managed very well then you know, chaos ensues, and then everybody then tries to, as I said, cover themselves instead of saying, what's the best way that we can manage a situation like this. <a href="#">19:20 ¶ 18 in Participant 2</a></p>
<p>I think you've got to be calm. You've got to be able to listen to all the comments and all the challenges that the teams bring, not just go forward and say to them This is how I want it done but hear from them as the experts for their regions, for their drivers, their fleet. <a href="#">22:6 ¶ 31 in Participant 4</a></p>
<p>You need to have a good transparent relationship with your team. You have to have resilience, emotional intelligence. You know, disruptions create stress and uncertainty, so you've got to maintain composure, [and take] ... a calculated risk. <a href="#">31:3 ¶ 17 in Participant 12</a></p>

Participants' views indicate that the TMT establishes effective Crises response systems by improving emotional intelligence. This increased emotional awareness allows TMT members to identify opportunities during challenges and communicate effectively with teams. As Participant 4 mentioned, listening to team feedback is essential for providing support during a Crises. It was highlighted that TMT members must show transparency and maintain

composure, resilience, and emotional intelligence, especially in times of stress and uncertainty.

Another crucial observation is that emotional intelligence plays a significant role in achieving positive outcomes for leaders. It is also believed to facilitate access to greater information and support from both staff and the board of directors (BOD), and in so doing, unlock additional resources necessary not only for navigating crises but also for ensuring organisational success. This insight is underscored by Participant 1's statement that "emotional intelligence has been that key for me that has been opening so many doors". Overall, elevated emotional intelligence significantly enhances the development of collaborative qualities within the TMT, which are essential for sustaining organisational performance cohesively during challenging times.

## **II. Ability to enhance collaboration**

Most participants emphasised that teamwork and collaboration are critical priorities for the TMT, especially in the face of logistical disruptions. Collaborative efforts at various organisational levels not only enhance individual capabilities but also facilitate the development of solutions that aid the TMT and benefit the entire organisation in navigating challenges and achieving exceptional results, as stipulated by the shareholders, despite disruptions.

*So I think generally it's challenging because the shareholders have an expectation, you know, so they want their return on Investment. So I think your group expectations are to meet your number [31:9 ¶ 9 in Participant 12](#)*

The TMT must possess the expertise to cultivate a corporate culture that fosters collaboration throughout the organisation, thus enhancing effective teamwork and agility during times of disruption, as highlighted by the participants.

*Teamwork and adaptability are the biggest factors in responding to the disruptions. [21:18 ¶ 14 in Participant 3](#)*

The TMT should demonstrate effective collaboration by engaging at the highest levels of leadership to navigate logistical challenges and make critical decisions. This consultative approach strengthens connections between the TMT and lower organisational leadership. Those implementing TMT decisions are involved in discussions about continuously refining strategies to enhance performance during a Crises. Participant 5 emphasised this recommendation by stating:

*I think collaboration is very important for a logistics leader. You cannot make decisions on your own because your decisions are not always right, and because we have a strong team nationally, you can actually lean on everybody for input and their knowledge to help you out. and it's one thing that I think most companies don't have.*

[24:5 ¶ 5 in Participant 5](#)

TMT must recognise that responding to disruptions primarily concerns individuals employed by the organisation during challenging times. Consequently, emotional intelligence has emerged as a vital quality that fosters a collaborative environment. Participants 1 and 2 have emphasised the importance of leaders maintaining a sense of calm during disruptions, as this enables them to formulate a thoughtful response to logistical challenges.

A leader who is anxious through the mere distribution of directives, coupled with insufficient engagement at all levels of the organisation, can create an uneasy atmosphere, as well as frustration and nervousness. This environment discourages employees from leveraging their technical expertise to assist the organisation in effectively navigating the Crises, as highlighted by Participant 10:

*I think when you try and dictate right, and when you try and fully dictate how the process should run or how to execute without consulting the team... and you don't give your team the space to raise concerns or a safe space to raise any risks, what you do is you create a fear culture. Your team keeps quiet, and you're going to fail without question. [29:2 ¶ 17 – 18 in Participant 10](#)*

Insufficient collaboration within an organisation, particularly during a Crises, can create an environment where the TMT is viewed as beyond reproach, leading to unchallenged authority. This dynamic may prevent organisational members from critically assessing and refining the decisions made by TMT leaders, which can hinder effective implementation. The result may be flawed decisions that negatively impact the organisation's long-term success or, even worse, lead to the loss of highly skilled personnel.

Such an environment prevents the organisation from learning from its failures, undermining the very essence of collaboration that is vital for the team's success. Furthermore, inadequate consultation can foster frustration and diminish the team's ability to navigate crises, resulting in blame-shifting and a reluctance to address mistakes made during disruptions. Consequently, the organisation may face prolonged logistical challenges, ultimately jeopardise its success, and lead to negative consequences.

Participant 6 highlighted this issue by noting that the TMT has not supported their business unit in making decisions without their input, which has contributed to subpar performance.

*When we [did] the root cause we realise that at scoping[ of the new work] we may [have had the ]wrong team... to scope the work that we are currently doing...and now the operations team must kind of figure [out how to deliver the objectives to the client as per the signed contract...It's [hard]. Their advice is basically let's go back to legal, "which I don't believe is a fair point. We are almost 13 months into a 36-month contract, and we are now going back to legal. [25:1 ¶ 11 – 12 in Participant 6](#)*

This point highlights that insufficient engagement with employees, particularly regarding issues that impact their operations, leads to increased frustration among the teams responsible for executing the work. Therefore, a TMT member must maintain composure to prevent errors by ensuring that process specialists are consulted during a Crises.

Inadequate collaboration can result in fragmented organisational teams, suggesting a disorganised TMT at the operational level, which can ultimately hinder the organisation's long-term performance. Clearly, the TMT ability to foster a collaborative culture is vital for organisational resilience during periods of disruption. In simpler terms, a lack of collaboration during such times would be detrimental, as illustrated by Participant 6, who shared their experiences and observations regarding the TMT response to a logistics disruption they faced.

*I think for me the key takeaway is maybe the fact that we are a supply chain, right, that we should not be working in isolation. I think that's really where the failure has [occurred] here... various departments work in isolation, whereas we are codependent, so BD (business development) scoping [and winning the work] without [consulting] operations [on the work that it needs to carry out]. [25:2 ¶ 13 – 14 in Participant 6](#)*

Participant 10 emphasises the significant consequences of operating in isolation, noting that logistics operations depend heavily on collaboration with various departments to provide exceptional service to clients. A lack of teamwork and cooperation may indicate that the organisational vision has not been effectively communicated across departments, reflecting a misalignment on what is crucial for the organisation in times of instability. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the TMT to ensure a cohesive vision throughout the organisation, particularly during crises. This alignment is essential for fostering teamwork and enhancing collaboration, which, in turn, reinforces the TMT credibility in coordinating efforts towards targeted actions that improve organisational performance during disruptions, as outlined below:

*I think the first thing is we must all share [is] a common goal. It's clear as anything we need to get good quality, good product to the customer. How do we do that? It's collaboration as a team, I can't do it alone. The team can't do it without me, so collaboration. Also learning from each other. There's so much experience from the team. Experience from me that again, collaboration helps us get what we need to the customer. [29:12 ¶ 19 in Participant 10](#)*

Organisational collaboration is the driving force behind effective integration, enabling different teams, including TMT members, senior management, and tactical teams, to respond to crises with precision and coordination. This proactive approach significantly diminishes the risk of chaos unfolding within the workplace.

### **III. Ability to drive integration**

The TMT is responsible for effectively communicating disruptions to the broader organisation. Equally vital is their duty to comprehend these disruptions by enhancing collaboration efforts that they strive to implement. This approach empowers the TMT to promote integration throughout the organisation during times of Crises.

*...making time to go to the floor and for them [TMT] to practically show me what it is. And then obviously with us brainstorming together, not me, just giving a directive and saying, I want this done. I actually work with my team to understand it, to work through it with [them], and then obviously to come up with the best solution. [24:2 ¶ 17 in Participant 5](#)*

The ability of the TMT to facilitate organisational integration is one of the most crucial skill sets that must be developed. This capability fosters a culture of coaching and innovation through ongoing formal and informal engagements with teams at various levels within the organisation.

*Once we have a solid response plan, we need to be cascading it down to the team and then guiding them on how we execute it, right, ... I think my [role] is basically to support the team in executing it [the plan]. The other stuff, that's where I would now need to come in and support them in getting rid of any of the stumbling blocks that they come across, and we did it [we were successful]. It wasn't ideal, but we did it and then afterwards. What I appreciated, we went back with the leadership team to see how do we then prevent it from happening again, if it's possible. [29:1 ¶ 5 in Participant 10](#)*

Vertical and horizontal integration is essential during logistics crises, ensuring accurate information flows to senior management and operational teams while providing ongoing feedback to the TMT. The TMT must establish a clear direction to help the organisation navigate disruptions. As noted earlier, engaging with subordinates is crucial for removing

bottlenecks and fostering an environment that promotes employee excellence. This highlights the importance of humility and respect from the TMT, which ultimately drives superior organisational performance.

#### **IV. Respect and humility in leadership**

Respect and humility in leadership within the logistics sector are crucial during times of disruption. These qualities are foundational attributes that the TMT must embody and consistently demonstrate in Crises situations. Such an approach allows the TMT to engage in collaborative problem-solving sessions with both internal and external logistics specialists. This collaboration creates a learning environment where the TMT can gain valuable insights from experts regarding the ongoing Crises. This perspective was reinforced by 96% of study participants, who stressed the critical importance of respect and humility when navigating periods of disruption, as reflected in the following responses:

*I think one thing that is very important is that from a management's response or understanding is definitely making sure that you have the right advisors upfront, understanding what the consequences of any decision ...is making, so, meaning if we're talking about a strike. We need to ensure that health and safety specialists are there. You have to make sure the operational teams are there [as]decision makers, meaning your executives and directors that can give input and ... your labour specialists, such as your HRs and your ER [emergency response] team. [28:3 ¶ 10 in Participant 9](#)*

*I think that [is] fundamental in leadership, so whether it's in a Crises or whether it's in your day-to-day, humility and treating people with respect and... Integrity is fundamentally important. And it's a (sic) situation that happens. Yes, we human beings, we have emotions, we react, sometimes not in the best way, but [we are humans]. integrity, fundamentals in leadership. Because if you don't have that, people are not going to trust you. Sorry. [32:5 ¶ 21 in Participant 13](#)*

The statements from the participants indicate that humility and respect entail prioritising the needs of individuals during a Crises. TMT must acknowledge that it may not have all the necessary solutions to enable the organisation to respond effectively in challenging times. However, they should be willing to seek expertise both internally and externally to realign performance amidst a Crises. This willingness does not signify a weakness in the TMT capacity to address disruptions; instead, it reflects a deliberate process of assessing available information, which demonstrates composure under pressure.

The TMT recognition of the value of incorporating expert insights to inform decision-making fosters a culture of learning within the organisation. This approach empowers strategic leaders to provide employees with the essential resources needed to thrive during crises. Consequently, such practices can enhance employees' sense of value and respect within the organisation, ultimately building greater confidence and trust in the TMT.

Not all participants believe that humility is a necessary skill during a Crises, as it can hinder the TMT ability to make decisive decisions. This, in turn, may lead to a delayed response in logistics crises, as highlighted in the following comments:

*I find that humble leaders always take the long way... to the end. So, it works, yes, but takes longer. So, for the purpose of this [logistics disruptions], I'll say no, I don't believe that humility helps a lot, in particular in a disruption. Yeah, in disruption. No, I think humility doesn't help. [25:7 ¶ 35–36 in Participant 6](#)*

The participant noted that humility is a process that could be time-consuming for the TMT to engage in during a Crises. While they believe it is effective under normal business conditions, they argue that such a process is not conducive during periods of disruption, as it can hinder the speed of response. However, this viewpoint is contested by other participants who strongly emphasise that the needs of the people must be prioritised during a logistics Crises.

*Humility has been crucial. It is crucial in leading a team during a disruption because teams are naturally demoralised; if they get pressured, they are prone to making mistakes, and if you are not leading with humility, chaos may manifest, resulting in frustration, fear, and anxiety. [35:1 ¶ 29 in Participant 16](#)*

*I think the key take out for me is sometimes when there's a disruption, we just have to take a pause and understand how it is affecting our people and start engaging from there. [26:8 ¶ 21 in Participant 7](#)*

*We looked after our people first. Everything else can be replaced. Property can be fixed; stock can be replaced. People can't be replaced. So, I think that was just reiterated. Because we talk about it as a principle, that safety is important for you as a human being. But to see it lived and read through our leadership team, it just reiterates that we are in the right company, we worry about our people, and we really want to take care of them. [32:1 ¶ 9 in Participant 13](#)*

Participants maintain that during disruptions, employee well-being takes precedence over operations due to the significant impact on staff. Participant 13 emphasises that leadership must genuinely commit to protecting employees.

Overcoming disruption is an ongoing process that requires careful management. The TMT plays a crucial role in guiding employees through this experience and reinforcing learning after the Crises. Therefore, addressing a Crises should focus not only on performance metrics, such as KPIs, but also on employee well-being while achieving business goals, as detailed below:

*People tend to be numbers-focused and forget everything else in a period of Crises, so humility allows one to show sympathy and empathy when dealing with people, and you can support them through the process. [17:28 ¶ 29 in Participant 1](#)*

*So, for me, humility says understanding that you cannot be a leader if people are not involved. I mean, you can be a leader in a vacuum, right? You are a leader because you're leading people. You need to understand people's cross-cultural differences. You need to be sensitive to you know how people show up with their biases, which are affirmed by the differences that we have. I mean, as a South African community, we have a rich heritage, but that also comes with its challenges. [19:25 ¶ 29 in Participant 2](#)*

Humility plays a crucial role in fostering a psychologically safe environment where employees can voice their opinions without fear of retaliation. This emphasises the need for the TMT to cultivate a culture of trust and respect, especially for those directly impacted during crises. The TMT should continuously refine their understanding of humility as a leadership trait, as it enhances respect and improves collaboration and performance during challenging times, as noted by Participant 3 below:

*I believe [that] humility in leadership has been very important and crucial during times of Crises. Humble leadership, grounded in collaboration rather than competition, you know, can lead to a very sustainable outcome. It can be instrumental in helping the teams improve their performance during a period of Crises. [21:22 ¶ 21 in Participant 3](#)*

*[Practice] Stop Work Authority [as a leader], pause and reflect on the Crises to understand the situation, show empathy, and take your team along the journey of a Crises. At times, its ok for a team to miss some deadlines, especially when there's grief in the team, But as a team leader, I must be prepared to take the repercussions for that decision. [33:1 ¶ 12 in Participant 14](#)*

Humility in leadership is fundamentally about respecting the employees who operate in the logistics sector, which often faces daily disruptions and heightened uncertainty. Therefore,

prioritising the well-being of employees should be the foremost responsibility of the TMT to ensure effective performance and meet customer demands during crises. Demonstrating a people-centric approach during challenging times reflects TMT genuine concern for the workforce in the organisation. Leaders must be willing to pause and reflect on how they are supporting their employees during these difficult periods, as emphasised by Participant 1, who noted:

*Humility allows one to show sympathy and empathy. [17:15 ¶ 29 in Participant 1](#)*

This attribute is essential for the members of the TMT and is often regarded as a calling in terms of leadership within the logistics sector. It is crucial to understand that humility in leadership does not undermine the focus on organisational results; rather, it enhances it. This quality emphasises self-leadership among TMT members and their accountability for their actions. One cannot truly claim to possess humility unless one maintains high personal standards. A participant emphasised the significance of TMT accountability, especially during crises.

*The first part of departure is trying to distance ourselves from responsibility (sic) accountability, like proving that we are not at fault. And once we have proven that we are not at fault, then we now understand the situations and in doing that. I think we then create an environment where you know people, then lose trust in how we show up as leaders, right? So, we put the reputational risks and all these other things linked to our reputation and brand. [19:8 ¶ 27 – 28 in Participant 2](#)*

*I think, like you say, in the principle of trust, the principle of openness, being transparent, and understanding what is confidential, and actually understanding the logic behind what we do, and not just giving an instruction. [24:8 ¶ 25 in Participant 5](#)*

Humility involves maintaining consistent, high standards that enhance accountability among the TMT. This accountability is essential for exemplifying a culture of high performance and collaboration. The TMT fosters this culture by demonstrating consistent behaviour, whether in times of certainty or uncertainty. As a result, this approach creates an organisational environment grounded in trust between the TMT and its employees.

*[Humility is] probably one of the most important things. It is important to remain empathetic and humble, and we have a saying, you know, no matter what the success is, you remain humble, and when times are also down and low, you still remain humble. [31:4 ¶ 25 in Participant 12](#)*

The participants highlight the necessity for the TMT to remain consistent and intentional in applying the characteristics of humility in leadership, particularly within the logistics sector. This approach should not be limited to times of uncertainty but should also be embraced during periods of stability. The belief that humility yields slow results in times of disruption suggests that such leaders do not view humility as a fundamental trait and may prefer to issue instructions to their employees instead.

Participants noted that humility in leadership is a vital trait that allows leaders to navigate challenges effectively and, more importantly, to exceed expectations during difficult times. It is also important to emphasise that humility in leadership is cultivated through multi-level organisational engagement with employees.

This engagement is essential for gathering information in an organised manner to address adversity. By fostering humility in leadership, an organisation promotes a reflective mindset, therefore, cultivating a culture characterised by learning and innovation.

#### **V. Create a culture of learning and innovation**

The intentional engagement of employees by the TMT regarding the organisation's disruptions and challenges presents an opportunity to involve staff in the journey of overcoming the Crises. The TMT humility in leadership fosters a collaborative environment across various levels of the organisation, paving the way for valuable insights into the Crises.

This collaborative spirit encourages employees to be innovative in finding solutions to the disruptions. Furthermore, humility in leadership empowers the TMT to recognise that other organisations may have faced similar challenges or that external expertise may offer useful insights. More importantly, it prompts the TMT to consider how to leverage or enhance its internal knowledge to address adversity. This perspective was emphasised by a participant, who highlighted the importance of exploring in-house resources to overcome challenges.

*I believe in a culture of continuous learning and innovation that becomes your reality. You have an opportunity to draw back from that continuous culture of learning and innovation and revisit your notes in terms of who has been in that reality and how did they respond to that and take learnings as well as shortcomings of how they could have responded better with the innovation. [17:8 ¶ 18 in Participant 1](#)*

The culture of continuous improvement is defined by a commitment to team-based problem-solving and a spirit of humility, both of which are actively encouraged by the members of the TMT. Their intentional actions remain evident during both crises and stable periods. Team-based problem-solving aims to bring together individuals with diverse perspectives and

backgrounds to collaboratively address common organisational challenges, especially in times of Crises.

The responsibility for fostering a problem-solving mindset conducive to continuous improvement and innovation lies with the TMT. They must allocate time for teams to engage with problem-solving tools and, crucially, ensure that the organisation's senior leadership is trained to facilitate these processes and appreciates the significance of leading problem-solving initiatives. Cultivating a culture of continuous improvement enhances effective problem-solving and bolsters employees' adaptability during uncertain times, as noted in the comment below:

*So, the main takeaway from that action was the skills, the knowledge, the diversity that they portrayed... for me, it included. Innovation and adaptability. [26:2 ¶ 8 in Participant 7](#)*

The TMT must be committed to instilling a culture of continuous improvement through decisive team-based problem-solving in the face of disturbances. This proactive approach not only builds confidence as individuals confront and resolve challenges but also establishes a rigorous discipline of learning when initial solutions fail.

The well-defined escalation process actively supports teams, strengthening trust in the TMT and promoting psychological safety throughout the organisation. By empowering teams across all levels, the TMT enables them to tackle problems independently, proving their capabilities and driving organisational success. Participants have clearly recognised the effectiveness of this empowerment strategy.

*I think that for me just highlighted how effective leadership in a moment of such a disruption can turn challenges into learning opportunities and also building resilience within the supply chain organisation. [19:6 ¶ 9 in Participant 2](#)*

*[The TMT must have an] element of trust and an element of letting go. [24:3 ¶ 23 in Participant 5](#)*

The TMT should cultivate a learning culture through applied team problem-solving, promoting innovation by encouraging critical thinking in crises. By seeking external expertise and benchmarking against other organisations, they can explore new technological solutions to assist during crises, as noted by Participant 1.

*You have an opportunity to draw back from that continuous culture of learning and innovation and revisit your notes in terms of who has been in that reality and how did*

*they respond to that and take learnings, as well as shortcomings of how they could have responded better with the innovation. I mean, you've seen that with the inclusion of AI now and with the big data being [at the] forefront... Now we are spoiled for choice, and tools are forever being introduced in the markets we compete in. So, for me, it's going beyond what I do on a day-to-day basis but look at it at an industry level and see the benchmark... of this world, how they've responded to it. The biggest players in this world in terms of how they've solved these challenges and bring it home, because what worked in one country does not necessarily mean it is going to work in my own supply chain arena. [17:31 ¶ 18 in Participant 1](#)*

A robust culture of reflection and learning, driven by effective team problem-solving initiatives, empowers an organisation to remain agile and responsive to upper management decisions. The TMT must lead the charge in creating an environment that fosters learning and innovation. By actively championing the implementation of ideas generated during team problem-solving sessions and consistently recognising employees who contribute impactful solutions, even during disruptions, they help drive the organisation forward.

Moreover, a culture of learning exemplifies strong organisational leadership, marked by clear and effective communication regarding any disruptions. The TMT must provide unwavering support and guidance to their teams during challenging times, while also inspiring employees to identify critical issues and harness the team's capability to resolve them. This can only be realised through transformational leadership traits that the TMT must embody, which are vital for motivating teams to work cohesively and effectively during periods of adversity.

## **VI. Transformational leadership**

The ability of the TMT to articulate the Crises is essential, but it alone will not suffice to motivate lower-level teams to support the response strategy or foster innovative problem-solving. If the TMT fails to connect the Crises to the organisation's purpose, inspiration may be lacking.

The TMT must craft a compelling narrative that urges action from everyone within the organisation to effectively implement the response strategy. This approach transcends mere incentives; it must also encompass a sense of duty and responsibility that extends not only to the TMT but to the entire organisation. This sentiment was succinctly captured by Participant 8, who highlighted the significance of communicating a clear sense of purpose during the disruptions caused by COVID-19.

*The public would not have food on the table [ caused by the quarantine of drivers and warehouse staff] and we knew if we did not make a plan, if we just gave up and say,*

*well, the depot will be closed for two weeks, and for two weeks, [The client] would have failed to deliver food products to the market have]. We would not have succeeded as an [organisation]. So, it's... the urge and the pride to make a difference in getting the food to the [client] or to the end user that needs it on the table, [this inspired the teams to] drive the solution [and] to make sure that you think outside the box and get the food.*  
[27:5 ¶ 20 in Participant 8](#)

The effectiveness of the TMT in inspiring and motivating the workforce during a Crises directly reflects their ability to communicate disruptions clearly and guide employees through adversity. A key element of this effectiveness is the strong self-belief that senior leaders must possess an unwavering conviction that the organisation will emerge from the Crises even stronger, equipped with new skills acquired during this challenging time. The TMT must take a decisive stand in leading the organisation, driven by a clear vision of success post-Crises. This focus empowers them to communicate assertively with employees, addressing the nature of the Crises and its implications. Most importantly, the TMT must cultivate a sense of hope throughout the communication process.

#### **5.2.1.2. Theme 2: Display confidence and transparent communication**

The effectiveness of applying transformational leadership principles is largely contingent upon the confidence demonstrated by the TMT. However, the significance of clear communication becomes even more pronounced in times of Crises.

The TMT communication skills establish the framework for how the organisation will respond to the Crises. Employees can discern whether a TMT member conveys a sense of fear or confidence through their communication approach. Effectively communicating information about the disruption is the initial step in determining the success of the response, which can lead to overcoming challenges and creating growth opportunities for the organisation. Conversely, if the messaging lacks inspiration or transparency, it could contribute to organisational decline, as highlighted by the participants.

*... if you think about what a leader should be able to do in situations like this [disruption], right? So, I would say some of the skills that assisted [me] in navigating the plans around [the] logistics disruption, I would say that communication, I think I mentioned it before, clear communication, right, you need to communicate clearly and communicate exactly what the problem is and what is the impact and what we need to do to improve.* [19:19 ¶ 18 in Participant 2](#)

*The one thing that I observed positively was the fact that there was clarity of the issue in the sense, [that] the [TMT was free] to be vulnerable in the room and say this is what*

*is going on, and like state the truth for what it is, it wasn't camouflaged.* [34:3 ¶ 9 in Participant 15](#)

The statement provided by the participants reflects a notable clarity in communication from the top management team. This suggests that the TMT has conducted a thorough analysis of the disruption and has formulated a communication plan to effectively engage with a wider audience, both internally and externally within the organisation.

*But I think the biggest, biggest one for me it's clear communication that has been value [adding]... as much as the vision is there. But how you communicate that vision... to the implementers on... that clear communication as an attribute and as a value.* [17:9 ¶ 20–21 in Participant 1](#)

The ability to communicate effectively is essential for TMT members to ensure clarity and alignment with their subordinates. Precise communication of the burning platform is crucial, as it prompts individuals to respond appropriately to a Crises, fostering a unified approach to enhancing organisational performance.

A TMT member who excels in communication can organise and inspire the team to take focused and motivating action to drive performance. As one participant highlighted, transparent communication plays a vital role in cultivating an environment of collaboration and trust.

*I am a global director, and I work with a big team here, and we have different topics now on different projects, but if there is a Crises and if there is a disruption, we all work for the same company, so it's affecting everyone. So, I have this open and transparent communication. I believe that it helped in maintaining the trust between the stakeholders. For example, in my case... I have stakeholders in sub-Saharan, Middle East, and North African regions. An open and transparent communication with them is reassuring and gives them peace of mind, which is invaluable in managing and responding to the disruptions.* [21:17 ¶ 14 in Participant 3](#)

Employees within an organisation need to have trust in their TMT during a Crises. This trust can be fostered through a well-coordinated communication strategy that ensures crucial information is shared throughout the business. Such transparency helps the TMT mitigate the risks of rumours and misinformation circulating among employees, who play a vital role in responding to the Crises, even when it directly impacts them, as highlighted by the participants.

*So, during a [period of] disruption, communication is absolutely critical. So, what we have done in the past is we will set up communication sessions. So, we will have a communication session with all our sites with our key teams, our key leadership. [22:3 ¶ 17 in Participant 4](#)*

Engaging in communication sessions is an essential strategy for initiating problem-solving, as it empowers team members to pose critical questions that reveal gaps overlooked during initial formal communications from the TMT. Ongoing, structured communication sessions, especially with senior leadership outside the TMT framework, are vital for tailoring the information that each department needs. This approach enables a focused response, allowing implementers to effectively leverage the insights shared by the TMT, driving actions that lead to tangible results.

This method is a powerful way to cascade information, equipping the TMT to turn crises into actionable milestones with well-defined success measures. It establishes a robust feedback mechanism regarding the risks associated with implementation. Success in this process is achieved through strong collaboration between strategic leaders and implementation managers to clearly define what success looks like.

*There's clarity. It's very clear in terms of what needs to happen, so they [cascade] the information, and it's very clear. [30:1 ¶ 12 in Participant 11](#)*

*So, let's say honest open communication is at the top of my list. What I mean by that is, you know, sitting the team down and agreeing honestly on the expected outcomes, and being clear that you know, this is my expectation, then are the expectations realistic or not? [25:6 ¶ 22 – 23 in Participant 6](#)*

A key benefit of organising communication sessions across various organisational levels with influential stakeholders is that it clarifies the definition of success during a Crises. These sessions provide teams with insight into how to tackle challenges and what it entails to achieve success.

### **I. Define key critical outputs**

TMT effective communication regarding the Crises and the necessary strategies to address the disruptions within the broader organisation motivates the teams to actively implement the outlined plan.

A fundamental aspect of taking ownership and refining the TMT communicated strategy is establishing a clear definition of what success looks like both during and after the disruption. Clear measurable key performance indicators (KPIs) are essential in guiding the teams to take

action efficiently and underscore the critical importance of conducting daily short interval control meetings throughout the Crises, as emphasised in the statement below:

*I think it is the continuous feedback and measuring [of] the outputs. So, it's continuously running. The KP[!] is comparing what is the service level [agreements]... outputs so [that] if [we] are running behind schedule... add resources, and if [we] see that [we] got too many resources, [we] can then reduce so leadership continuously are measuring them[outputs]. [27:10 ¶ 12 – 13 in Participant 8](#)*

Defining the critical outputs of the planned implementation, communicated by the TMT, aids implementers in addressing challenges encountered during the implementation phase. This allows the TMT to assist teams in overcoming bottlenecks.

Through well-structured and collaborative efforts, these outputs are developed via a consultation process with the implementers. This ensures that actions responding to the Crises are executed swiftly and with seamless coordination of resources, all led by the TMT.

## **II. Stabilise operations through coordinated effort**

The ability of the TMT to communicate effectively during a Crises is a crucial attribute that enables them to define success criteria both during and after a disruption. This indicates their objective of maintaining stability within operations.

Achieving stability during a Crises allows the TMT to coordinate and direct a responsive strategy that minimises confusion. It also ensures that teams are clear about their expectations and feel secure in the support available to them. Moreover, it is essential for the TMT to align at all levels to foster stability throughout the organisation, as highlighted by one participant.

*I believe that effective management is essential for coordinating and motivating teams during a Crises. You know, we can't just be all over the place and say what have you done? Why have you done this?... So, the critical factor in a successful management team like a top management team is... you got to work together, you got to support each other. So regardless of what the decision is, you can come together and say, OK, hold on, this is how we going forward doing it. [26:5 ¶ 27 – 28 in Participant 7](#)*

The alignment concerning the strategic plan and actions taken in response to the Crises enhances the attributes of the TMT in maintaining stability within the organisation. This is essential for effective coordination, ensuring that resources are used efficiently during periods of disruption, while promoting discipline and structure across the board.

*You had to determine [ who the key] role players, and you will need to put together the Crises committee. [27:2 ¶ 6 in Participant 8](#)*

*You have the warehouse pillar, the transport pillar, the subcontractor pillar, the IT pillar... Allocate [responsibilities] for each of those disciplines and then get them to work together. [27:11 ¶ 6–8 in Participant 8](#)*

Disruptions are characterised by chaos, and achieving stability is crucial for ensuring that the TMT remains informed about the challenges that need to be addressed. This awareness is essential for effective and impactful decision-making that the TMT must implement.

Another important attribute required by the TMT to promote stability and effective coordination, is their ability to enforce discipline and order during a Crises. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities are necessary, as highlighted by previous participants, and a coordinated approach is needed to escalate issues during critical times. Maintaining order is vital during a Crises, as it is essential to contain chaos by applying appropriate escalation processes.

*So, I think [what] works for me now [is] following the chain of command but still open... and speaking to the team and that. But I'm aligning with my managers. [24:12 ¶ 21 in Participant 5](#)*

The TMT ability to implement a structured approach for escalating issues empowers senior leaders to assess their current gaps that require urgent attention. This capability enables them to identify the necessary resources and key external stakeholders to neutralise and contain the Crises before progressing to the stage of performance improvement, as highlighted in the comments below:

*We took a proactive and coordinated approach, right? And this was to stabilise the operations and make sure that we have a consistent supply into the market. So, we prioritised transparent communication for all key stakeholders, that's internal, including external stakeholders that will be our suppliers, our transport providers, and everybody in the value chain. [19:2 ¶ 6 in Participant 2](#)*

The attributes of top management teams (TMT) in establishing internal stability and promoting a coordinated response to logistics crises is a vital skill set. This capability lays a strong foundation for engaging stakeholders, ultimately enhancing confidence among external parties during challenging times.

Creating an organisational environment characterised by stability and coordination necessitates significant contributions from the TMT. Effective management of communication flow through established structures is vital for a comprehensive understanding of the Crises.

This process empowers senior leadership to confidently engage, educate, and facilitate the solicitation of views and opinions from external stakeholders regarding the disruptions faced by the organisation. This engagement is crucial for securing support from the board of directors and clients for the TMT, which is essential for overcoming the Crises and achieving superior performance in the aftermath.

### **III. Prioritise stakeholder management**

Many participants emphasised that during a Crises, one of their most significant key stakeholders is the external customers. They invest substantial amounts of money in logistics companies for specialised services to deliver their products to the end user. Managing these stakeholders can often present challenges, as noted by several participants.

*You are the experts. How are you going to get [The stock to the customer]? So, it's changing that client mindset and expectation to say yes, we are. But at the same time, we also got to make you aware of the risk[s] because we are carrying your stock. So, it's not only a risk to the driver and our asset [but to your stock as well] ... how you communicate and how you put it forward is very, very important [because]... you cannot just go to a client and say, you know what? We grounded our [fleet], we're not sending [stock] because it's too volatile out there. But you got to explain because they may not have this insight. [22:14 ¶ 28 in Participant 4](#)*

The TMT must acknowledge that they are indeed experts in the logistics field and are trusted by customers to resolve any challenges that may arise, including those that are unpredictable and beyond their control. This trust is the foundation of their compensation.

Consequently, the TMT must effectively manage key stakeholders and provide expert and confident advice to both clients and other stakeholders. They need to instill confidence in their clients, assuring them that their best interests are a priority. This commitment involves offering the most effective solutions available to minimise potential losses for the client's business, as highlighted by Participant 3.

*So we engage[d] with our customers on our Crises and presented the alternative of bringing their cargo to Jebel Ali instead of taking it to Jeddah because, the Red Sea was blocked. [21:3 ¶ 6 in Participant 3](#)*

The TMT assumes the role of thought leaders during a Crises and may often find themselves offering guidance and advice to customers on how to safeguard their goods and ensure they reach their intended destinations. This is precisely the expertise that logistics companies are contracted to provide: guiding the movement of customers' products to their intended destinations, regardless of any challenges that may arise within the logistics sector.

*Our leadership maintained open dialogue with our customers, with our partners, with us as employees, to keep the relationship, let's call it like that, to reinforce the confidence and to have stability during this uncertainty. [21:6 ¶ 11 in Participant 3](#)*

Participant 12 emphasises that during logistics disruptions, it is vital for all stakeholders within the organisation, not just customers, to form partnerships and leverage their expertise. The goal is to unite these partners around a common vision, which is to effectively address the challenges customers face during crises.

*We would say to Supplier X I've got a full maintenance contract with you. My client is bleeding at the moment. Volumes are down. I'm not doing the kilometres. Can you give me some relief? So, you call on all the stakeholders to try and assist. Not just my own team, but suppliers [customers] as well. [31:6 ¶ 19 in Participant 12](#)*

Stakeholder management goes beyond just customers; it includes all participants in the logistics value chain. Successful organisations stand out during disruptions by having their TMT proactively engage with stakeholders. This highlights the TMT need to accurately identify the causes of logistics disruptions and their ability to communicate, collaborate, and unite key players to find effective solutions.

### **5.2.1.3. Theme 3: Possess operational excellence expertise**

The attributes of operational excellence within the TMT encompass the ability to conduct comprehensive analyses of data, including interpreting the process failures that contribute to logistics disruptions. This expertise is invaluable for strategic leadership in building confidence when addressing such disruptions.

During the data collection process, two key factors were identified that enhance the operational excellence of the TMT: (1) Educational background and relevant experience, and (2) Leadership through analysis and process optimisation.

## I. Background in education and experience

Participants emphasised the significance of education in addressing logistics disruptions, with 71% highlighting that both an educational background and experience are essential for effectively responding to a logistics Crises. Notably, 29% suggested that experience is crucial for leadership during such challenging times, indicating that education alone may not suffice in a Crises.

*But to answer your question, if it [education] helps in a disruptive environment, I don't think so. I think [managing] a disruptive environment comes from a place where you need to experience. I think if it happens once or twice, you get experience in how to handle it. So, I don't think a degree will help you. [27:9 ¶ 27–28 in Participant 8](#)*

*I have a Bachelor's in logistics. Education is paramount. But I do think experience in moments of Crises beats education, I think you learn to you master the skill of how to manage a Crises. [31:7 ¶ 31 in Participant 12](#)*

The participants' views clearly indicate that while education provides valuable theoretical knowledge, it is the decisive actions rooted in years of experience that truly guide an organisation through a logistical Crises. As highlighted by one of the participants, experience is paramount in overcoming challenges.

*I think there's just certain instances where decisions need to be made, and you don't really have to be an educated person to do that. [33:2 ¶ 14 in Participant 14](#)*

Many participants emphasised the importance of both experience and education, acknowledging that while experience is valuable, it is crucial to apply critical thinking throughout the logistics process. This approach not only facilitates effective problem-solving but also helps establish a communication structure that fosters sustainable solutions, ultimately benefiting the organisation during and after a Crises, as reflected in the comments below:

*Education has helped me refine and polish my tools needed to be the best in class in the logistics sector. [It] has helped me, but having experience is crucial. I would attribute 30% to education, and this is important because it has allowed me to think and develop frameworks in structuring the understanding of the Crises at hand... as far as the toolkit is concerned, but the 70% has been experience, and this is where emotional intelligence plays a role in applying both the experience and education to overcome a Crises. [17:16 ¶ 32 in Participant 1](#)*

Education and experience are intertwined and must be used together. Relying solely on experience is insufficient for effective leadership during a Crises. It is crucial to actively acquire new skills that empower the TMT to implement a collaborative approach in tackling the challenges at hand.

*I think the quality of my education has certainly helped me to add value to my team, to the company, and especially, for example, when we have to do a diagnosis or respond to any logistics Crises that requires global awareness and collaboration. [21:23 ¶ 24 in Participant 3](#)*

*... the more learned a leader is, the more open to different perspectives they are. I definitely think there's a lot of tact that... learned leaders have... Even for myself, I think... the more learned that I become the better I am able to accept different views and opinions. [25:5 ¶ 44 in Participant 6](#)*

The TMT must prioritise education and continuously seek to acquire new skills. This is crucial because a diverse educational background enables the TMT to develop the skill set necessary for enhancing collaboration and fostering an innovative culture. Confident leaders are more inclined to listen to various perspectives from different stakeholders, as emphasised by Participant 10.

*I still think it's vital to have an educational background because then you know how to handle your stakeholders, right? I think that's what helps, but. In terms of knowing your process, I think you gauge better firsthand from the guys on the floor and seeing it firsthand, how it works, what are the implications of doing it X way instead of YZ. So that's why I'm saying it's a give and take. You need both. But definitely walking the process is beneficial to me. [29:5 ¶ 25 in Participant 10](#)*

The ability of the TMT to communicate effectively and inspire confidence while engaging with both internal and external stakeholders does not occur by chance. It is cultivated over time through experience and intentional developmental efforts undertaken by the TMT.

Education plays a crucial role in grasping the intricacies of disruptions and in conveying this information clearly and confidently to key stakeholders and employees. This approach not only instils a sense of assurance but also fosters hope as they navigate through periods of disruption.

*Education is key, always, because it changes a person's perspective and thinking on how to address a certain matter. You might have the experience, and yes, experience do qualify. However, education creates an entirely different perspective, especially in*

*our modern times and age. With technology, I always say this to people. [28:2 ¶ 34 in Participant 9](#)*

TMT members must possess both experience and education in logistics, particularly during periods of disruption. This expertise equips them to swiftly diagnose and tackle the challenges that arise, allowing for prompt and effective communication of actionable strategies to the board of directors, customers, suppliers, and employees.

The ability to transform gathered Crises analysis into structured frameworks for effective problem-solving and communication is fundamentally shaped by the TMT educational background, as emphasised by participants. Therefore, having a strong foundation in education and experience in logistics is essential for the TMT, particularly in times of Crises, a point that participants firmly underscored.

## **II. Lead through process analysis and excellence**

Experience in the logistics sector is crucial, as it allows the TMT to understand both the inputs and outputs of operations. This comprehension equips the TMT to lead vital problem-solving sessions essential for addressing Crises challenges. In addition, the TMT needs to grasp the principles of a structured problem-solving process for effective diagnosis, as highlighted by Participant 15.

*I think there's a great element of problem solving and decision making that comes in, that's part of obviously solving it [Crises]. So just understanding what the gap is between what the current situation... and what the future... or the desired situation, and then also just looking at all the alternatives that are available, and obviously through that making a decision on how [to respond]? And we will resolve that disruption. [34:1 ¶ 4 in Participant 15](#)*

The TMT must gather insights from root cause analysis (RCA) sessions to identify the root causes of disruptions and make tough decisions for Crises resolution. These insights help TMT members recognise gaps between current performance and desired outcomes, enabling them to strategically address challenges and uncover growth opportunities beyond disruptions.

A solid understanding of operational processes is essential for the TMT, particularly in the logistics sector. This knowledge fosters flexibility and resilience in the value chain, enabling

the TMT to identify challenges and capitalise on opportunities during disruptions, which is crucial for informed, data-driven responses in a Crises.

*We conducted the root cause analysis and re-evaluated the entire value chain and found the areas of where the time was lost in the transportation of the material. [19:1 ¶ 4 in Participant 2](#)*

*The first thing was operational resilience and flexibility. As a company, we adjusted the shipping routes and the schedules to minimise the impact of the Red Sea disruptions. We needed to look for the alternative corridors. [21:9 ¶ 5 in Participant 3](#)*

The understanding and expertise of the TMT in the logistics process empower the organisation to adopt a dynamic approach in addressing customer challenges, especially during crises. A comprehensive analysis and ongoing refinement of the organisation's value chain are essential for TMT members, particularly from an operations standpoint. This capability is crucial for developing a resilient organisation that can effectively navigate logistics disruptions. By maintaining a broad perspective of the organisation, impactful problem-solving is fostered, as outlined below:

*Having a structured problem-solving that is end-to-end [Logistics flow: from raw material to customers] and not only focused on a business unit. [19:13 ¶ 9 in Participant 2](#)*

Once the detailed problem-solving process is complete, with a comprehensive analysis of the value-chain process and a clear understanding of the response to the Crises, the TMT members must take decisive action to implement the necessary measures. Timely decision-making and the ability to act swiftly are essential qualities that the TMT must exhibit in times of Crises, as emphasised in this analysis.

*[Having a] clear communication as an attribute and as a value, and then... [adding]...decisiveness and speed, so being decisive and being quick also plays a huge role in terms of how you come across as a resilient individual outside of just being a resilient organisation. [17:10 ¶ 21 in Participant 1](#)*

Effective communication, decisive action, and swift execution instil confidence in the TMT from both stakeholders and employees, demonstrating strong leadership ownership during periods of disruption. Timely communication about decisions made, along with clear evaluations of what succeeded and what fell short, showcases a leader who is firmly in control. Leaders inspire hope throughout the challenging learning phases of disruption by articulating the

rationale behind outcomes and outlining corrective measures for missteps. This proactive approach fosters an organisation committed to continuous improvement and learning.

### **5.2.2. Research Question 2: Findings**

*Research Question 2: How do the members of the Top Management Team establish a robust foundation for the organisation that enables it to foresee and capitalise on the opportunities presented by future disruptions?*

The purpose of this question was to clearly identify the decisive actions taken by the TMT that are crucial for effective sensemaking and anticipation of logistics disruptions. These actions empower the organisation to respond efficiently when faced with logistics crises. Furthermore, it aims to leverage participants' firsthand experiences regarding the strategies they implemented to prepare their organisations for disruptions, while also pinpointing valuable opportunities that arose from those experiences. All insights will be consolidated under a central theme that underscores the TMT unwavering commitment to the organisation's purpose in the face of disruption.

#### **5.2.2.1 Theme 4: Display commitment to the organisation's purpose in a mist of disruption**

Members of TMT must be both inspired and firmly convinced of the organisation's purpose. This fundamental "why" is primarily focused on long-term objectives rather than short-term disturbances.

The TMT serves as a voice of reason; thus, a strong connection to the organisational purpose provides a sense of stability, which participants noted when discussing the attribute of emotional intelligence. Theme 4 emphasises the qualities of TMT that establish a foundational framework for the organisation to anticipate and prepare for opportunities arising from disruptions. The main objective is to reduce the element of surprise associated with such disruptions. This section will explore the findings from participants, categorised into four key areas: (1) commitment to vision, (2) strategic decision-making, (3) leadership in risk management strategies, and (4) scenario planning and preparedness for unforeseen events.

## I. Commitment to vision

The TMT is essential in defining the vision and direction of the organisation. It is imperative that the members actively champion this vision, regardless of whether times are stable or uncertain, as it serves as the guiding reference point. During periods of logistical disruptions, their commitment to the vision becomes even more critical, clearly reflecting their strong belief in the actions they take and the values their organisation embodies. This steadfast dedication is evident in the feedback provided by Participant 3:

*We also leveraged our vision of providing end-to-end supply chain and logistics solutions to everyone, everywhere, from the factory floor to the customer's door. We expanded our multimodal solutions, including overland and rail services, to provide our customers with alternative options. [21:10 ¶ 6 in Participant 3](#)*

TMT members should be deliberate in their efforts to embody and showcase their passion for the company's vision. They must also tap into the established vision that steers the daily actions and behaviour within the organisation. This point is further emphasised in the following discussion:

*I think any company that will always refer to the vision and mission of the company, which, at the end of it all, defines who the company is and then who you are. In that company. [34:4 ¶ 10 in Participant 15](#)*

## II. Make strategic decisions

The TMT immediate concern during periods of disruption is to effectively contain the Crises and respond decisively. However, it is equally important to adopt a holistic view of the situation while implementing control strategies. A Crises can also reveal business opportunities for growth. Therefore, the TMT ability to approach a Crises from a strategic perspective presents a valuable opportunity for the organisation, as highlighted by Participant 3.

*... [the] commitment to the long-term strategy displayed by the leadership. They always think[ing] ahead, and they continue doing investments in technology, import development, and in sustainability. [21:15 ¶ 11 in Participant 3](#)*

*We must be ambitious and be optimistic even during a period of a Crises. [21:20 ¶ 17 in Participant 3](#)*

Logistics disruptions are indicative of a chaotic environment where inefficiencies prevail. In these circumstances, it becomes easy to attempt multiple actions simultaneously with limited resources to overcome the chaos. This mindset arises from a lack of coordination among the

TMT, resulting in frustration and increased workloads without producing meaningful outcomes, as noted below:

*Because of where we are in our business and in the industry, we are currently not thinking ahead. We're trying to close out the fires that we have right now. So, we're in Crises management. And what that does is cause disruption when coming down because we don't know how to prioritise. Right. You're doing so much, you're doing 100 stuffs because everything is a priority. And everything is a priority according to top management right now. So, I think it's how we sit and build a strategy for the future, and I feel like [the mindset now is] how do we get through one day, that's... what is being cascaded down, and... it's a different priority every single day. [29:7 ¶ 30 in Participant 10](#)*

The attributes of the TMT are essential for strategic decision-making during disruptions. They help structure business focus and optimise limited resources, enabling organisations to navigate challenges and improve performance in uncertain environments.

### **III. Leading risk management strategies**

Most participants expressed that having a risk management plan is instrumental in anticipating and preparing for disruptions in the logistics sector. They also highlighted its efficiency in their organisations, emphasising its invaluable role in guiding the organisation through a Crises.

*BCP [business continuity plan] is the foundation that guides our response to disruptions. [22:2 ¶ 9 in Participant 4](#)*

Several participants noted significant shortcomings in the efficacy of the Crises management plan in their respective business units by identifying inconsistencies in its application. This feedback suggests a pressing need for a comprehensive review or potentially a complete overhaul of the existing process. The key concerns articulated by the participants include:

*I'm going to be honest with you, I think firstly, having one would be nice because there's thought processes, right? But there's none in Company 1 that I've experienced. [28:4 ¶ 35 in Participant 9](#)*

*I don't think we have anything documented. We have everything. I think we have a lot of policies and procedures, lots of work instructions, probably millions of them [Documents, but there's no Crises management plan]. [24:11 ¶ 47 in Participant 5](#)*

Some participants emphasised the critical need for the comprehensive deployment of the Crises management plan across multiple levels within the organisation. This approach is essential for ensuring both organisational preparedness and the effective execution of the plan. Their insights underline the importance of a cohesive strategy that involves all levels of the organisation in Crises response initiatives.

*In our organisation, we have really good BCPs [business continuity plans], and what I think has worked and how I believe all companies should do it, especially in a logistic supply chain environment, is to ensure you have all the right people drafting that BCP. You need no single individual, and no single department is going to be able to think about and cater for everything that needs to be covered during disruption or a Crises. You need to involve all the right people, the right heads of departments in the organisation. [32:7 ¶ 28 in Participant 13](#)*

The TMT is encouraged to conduct simulations of the Crises management plan to enhance its effectiveness. By running and testing the plan, you create an opportunity for it to serve as a risk mitigation tool, allowing individuals to pinpoint gaps that must be addressed before a Crises occurs. Involving the appropriate team members is essential, as it fosters a collaborative approach to the development of the risk management plan, as outlined below:

*I think we need to do more simulations... so, obviously you got the [Crises management plan]. You've covered every angle but the only way you're really going to know is... to [test the plan] ... every six months... the one [simulation] that we did was for an accident, for example, right. We covered all the steps and we did the [entire] simulation and we finalised it... But maybe we need to do it more regularly or maybe to include more people when you're doing the simulation, because... we've got experts in our team that work in different depots. [37:4 ¶ 41 in Participant 17](#)*

*I think what we will have to do is to take your business [risk management] plan and test it against your different scenarios. [27:6 ¶ 29 in Participant 8](#)*

The simulation of the crises management plan, with the involvement of process experts, prepares the organisation for potential disruptions. If team members are not actively engaged, the organisation's ability to respond effectively comes into doubt, as the responsibility shifts solely to senior leadership rather than being shared among the entire team. This was a key observation made by Participant 12, who emphasised the necessity for leaders, rather than mere managers, in navigating times of Crises.

*I think where we could invest effort as an organisation is in meaningful leadership and leadership talent development. I think there's a limited pipeline, so in times of Crises you need leadership across every layer. I think everybody assumes leadership is just the most senior personnel in the company, in every layer of the organisation, and there's just not enough. We need leaders in a time of a Crises and not just managers so that there's enough skills to manage the Crises. [31:8 ¶ 33 in Participant 12](#)*

The TMT must take decisive action to ensure that all levels of the organisation are fully empowered to develop their own internal Crises management plans, significantly enhancing their preparedness for any potential disruptions. By doing so, they will hold the management structures below the TMT accountable, particularly when departmental Crises management plans are not in place.

A lack of a Crises management plan clearly indicates that an organisation or business unit is not future-focused, leaving it vulnerable to disruptions, as the participants have pointed out. The risk management strategies applied, regardless of their format, are part of a dynamic and iterative process. They will be refined continuously before, during, and after disruptions, ultimately driving the organisation's learning agility and resilience.

#### **IV. Plan scenarios and prepare for the unknown**

Scenario planning and risk assessment empower the organisation to anticipate uncertainties and serve as a vital component of the Crises management plan. The TMT member must not overlook the business environment in which they operate; they need to collect data regarding the political, environmental, and economic conditions that influence their operations. This information is essential for conducting effective sensemaking and foresight, enabling informed planning, a point that was succinctly emphasised by the participants.

*... they [client was] bleeding financially. So, I think that's a good example of... the global... geopolitical and economic pressures that have also spun off into South Africa. As well as our own lack of economic... I think luckily, we like to do a lot of scenario planning. I think we try and have foresight. So yeah, we pre-empted our challenges and luckily, we find alternative solutions that can work... I think we envisioned that some sort of disruption. [31:9 ¶ 4 – 6 in Participant 12](#)*

*When I speak of scenario planning, [asking ourselves] what if Durban port is not working tomorrow, what can we do differently? What if the United States of America can decide to shut down their borders as one of our biggest exporting markets that*

*we're focusing on as an entity, which other markets can we look into? How big can the market be compared to the US? So that's scenario planning as far as risk management is concerned. If the African National Congress [the governing party] was to be voted out of power, what impact will this have on the macroeconomics of the country and what risk management plan is in place to support the company's strategic vision and its imperatives? So, I think yeah, continuous learning and scenario planning with risk management are quite key. [17:32 ¶ 36 in Participant 1](#)*

The participants have emphasised the role of scenario planning in shaping the strategic Crises management plan. This suggests that the TMT must seek solutions to the uncertainties inherent in their business environment. In addition, it is crucial to identify potential risks and to develop actionable plans that will aid the organisation in understanding and anticipating disruptions, as outlined below:

*How do I make sure that you know our contingency plans that we have in place are ensuring that we have real plans and that they are not just based on paper, but some things are real that in scenarios like this one that I just explained, we are able to quickly turn things around. [19:17 ¶ 14 in Participant 2](#)*

Participants agree that scenario planning is vital for strengthening the business's strategic risk management. They emphasise that the TMT should focus on helping organisational units implement their risk management plans by conducting scenario planning sessions.

### **5.3. Conclusions of the findings**

This chapter effectively presents the findings derived from data collected in response to the two research questions posed to the study participants. The upcoming chapter provides a thorough discussion of the key findings highlighted in this chapter.

## CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

### 6.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the findings presented in Chapter 5, in relation to the literature review in Chapter 2. The insights derived from these chapters will inform conclusions regarding the themes identified in response to the research questions.

These themes will be examined in the context of existing literature to provide valuable insights into the characteristics of top management teams (TMT) that significantly enhance organisational resilience during logistics disruptions. The discussions will be systematically organised according to the research questions.

### 6.2. Research Question 1: Top management team behavioural characteristics

#### 6.2.1. Theme 1: Establish support systems and prioritise individual needs

- **RQ1 – Theme 1: Recap of findings: Establishing support systems and prioritising individual needs**

The key findings on overcoming logistics disruptions were that the disruptions must be communicated succinctly to employees affected by them and potentially expected to play a role in implementing the strategic decisions made at the TMT level. These employees must be empowered to play an important role in responding to the logistics disruptions. The TMT also sets the change agenda for the employees to lead the change by being clear on the direction that the organisation must take during the Crises. They also paint a picture of what success looks like.

- **RQ1 – Theme 1: Recap from the literature: Establishing support systems and prioritising individual needs**

The TMT is accountable for the agenda, leading the organisation out of a Crises and delivering expected results. They must demonstrate an unwavering commitment to establishing internal support and empowerment structures for the employees (Van den Berg et al., 2021). They further emphasised that the organisation must have confidence in its internal teams to participate in providing inputs during a Crises because they are involved in the day-to-day operational process during the period of certainty. Doing this creates sustainability in the organisation's performance after a Crises. Zahoor et al. (2024) further add that the TMT ability to unite the organisation during the Crises, based on trust and respect, is the genesis of the

performance excellence demonstrated during a Crises and a building block of organisational resilience. TMT deep-level attributes based on expertise and knowledge are crucial in initiating the change implementation structures to drive effective communication. Establishing performance measures during a Crises is crucial to building a culture of teamwork and collaboration across the various levels of the organisation. This requires skills, patience, and coaching and mentoring ability from the TMT members (Belderbos et al., 2020; Bengtsson et al., 2018; Weiser, 2020).

- **RQ1 – Theme 1: Conclusions: Establishing support systems and prioritising individual needs**

The research findings align closely with the existing literature on the essential role of the TMT in establishing robust support systems and prioritising employee needs during a Crises. This alignment is key to building trust between employees and the TMT, which is vital for fostering effective collaboration and teamwork throughout the organisation.

The findings underscore the imperative for the TMT to actively support and empower employees in challenging times. Crucially, this should be accomplished through the strategic cascading of plans and objectives, coupled with coaching that enables employees to develop the measures necessary for success. The TMT must take the lead in this process, ensuring that every staff member receives the comprehensive support they need to thrive (Kumar et al., 2023; Weiser, 2020).

The findings also confirmed what Zahoor et al. (2024) underscored, emphasising the importance of trust and respect as essential elements for unlocking individual capabilities within an inclusive culture. Such an environment is crucial for achieving performance excellence, particularly during periods of disruption.

#### **6.2.2. RQ 1 Theme 1: Emotional Intelligence attribute**

- **Recap from the findings: Emotional intelligence attributes**

The overall finding was that TMT ability to remain calm during a Crises is crucial for cultivating response strategies and galvanising the organisation at the time. The findings further suggest that logistics disruptions are characterised by chaos by nature, and this could lead to fear caused by the sudden change in the way operations are being conducted, resulting in adversity for both employees and the organisation. From the findings, it was emphasised that it is imperative that the TMT members be visible and remain calm so that panic does not spread across the various levels of the organisation. It was also established that in a Crises,

emotional intelligence enables the TMT to be resilient and identify opportunities, which is crucial to establishing the collaboration and teamwork structures needed to respond effectively to the disruptions.

- **Recap from the literature: Emotional Intelligence attributes**

Chandler et al. (2022) underscored the importance of thorough self-assessment among TMT members to identify their strengths and weaknesses during crises. This idea was further elaborated by Maldonado et al. (2021), who argued that TMT members should embody a teachability trait, allowing them to acquire the critical knowledge and skills necessary to navigate periods of disruption effectively. This suggests that TMT members need to adopt a humble leadership style during logistical challenges, bolstered by high levels of emotional intelligence.

Disruptions create chaotic environments that can lead to frustration, uncertainty, and adversity among employees, as highlighted by Hollands et al. (2023). Emotional intelligence empowers the TMT to foster a culture in which employees feel safe being vulnerable and seeking support. This approach greatly enhances collaboration at all levels of the organisation, as demonstrated by Prayag et al. (2020).

- **RQ1 – Theme 1: Conclusions: Emotional intelligence attributes**

The literature review underscores the importance of top management team (TMT) members exhibiting elevated levels of emotional intelligence during logistics disruptions, as detailed in the emotional intelligence findings section (Chapter 5.) This is particularly critical given that TMT members hold the highest positions of leadership within the organization.

Their behaviour and demeanour during such challenging times can have a profound impact on employees, potentially leading to either positive or negative outcomes (Hollands et al., 2023; Holmes et al., 2021; Samimi et al., 2020). Conversely, TMT members who remain uncomposed and demonstrate low emotional intelligence during these periods may inadvertently create a culture of fear and chaos among employees, which can heighten their anxiety levels (Raetze et al., 2021).

The literature is succinct in defining the upper echelons of power that underpin the roles and responsibilities of the TMT, including their attributes. Neely et al. (2020) and Samimi et al. (2020) state that the organisation's performance is the reflection of the belief system, values, and the characteristics of the organisation's TMT. This aligns with the findings that the TMT

trait of being calm is crucial during a Crises. It assists in gathering useful insights from the employees and external customers, which could be a catalyst for effective problem-solving.

Keleman et al. (2022) also suggest that humble leadership, as an attribute of the TMT, allows them to focus on the strengths and weaknesses of their employees, which empowers them to draw from their knowledge and offer support to mitigate their weaknesses, fostering a culture of collaboration built on the premise of trust in the organisation.

### **6.2.3. RQ1 – Theme 1: Ability to enhance collaboration**

- **Recap on findings: Enhanced collaboration**

The study findings on enhanced collaboration were clear; without collaboration and effective teamwork based on trust, it would be difficult for the organisation to perform during and after the Crises period, as a result of logistics disruptions. The study found that organisational departments that fragmented during a Crises may be an indication that TMT members have not done thorough work in ensuring that the strategic decisions have been cascaded effectively to the lower levels of the organisation. The findings also suggest that the organisation will fail to address the customers' needs during disruptions if they work in isolation.

- **Recap on literature: Enhanced collaboration**

Weiser (2020) claims that effective cascading of strategic decisions regarding the response to the logistics Crises initiates the change management process that the TMT must lead. This includes establishing change implementation teams that operate below the structures of the TMT, enabling effective problem-solving sessions through engagements that lead to the refinement of the decisions and improved collaboration between the TMT and employees.

Collaboration is the cornerstone of teamwork, which is fundamental in growing individual resilience in the organisation. It also indicates intentionality of the TMT in building a psychologically safe environment, where employees can escalate challenges they experience during adversity (Chapman et al., 2018). Hillmann and Gather (2020) note the vital role that the TMT must undertake to ensure that the prevailing culture of collaboration and teamwork exists during disruptions. They do this by ensuring that communication regarding the disruption is succinct and communicated effectively throughout the organisation. Collaboration and teamwork contribute to organisational resilience during disruption because they create a climate where effective problem-solving and innovation are apparent through employee engagement.

- **RQ1 – Theme 1: Conclusions: Enhanced collaboration**

The findings resonate with existing literature, highlighting a shared understanding of the importance of effective communication during challenging times. As noted by Jarrett and Vince (2023) and Prayag et al. (2023), it's essential for TMT members to carefully synthesise the information gathered regarding the disruption. This process of transforming information into an actionable plan is not just about strategy; it is about fostering collaboration and support among teams. Such collaboration is crucial as organisations navigate the complexities of a logistics crises, enabling them to respond effectively and cohesively.

#### **6.2.4. RQ1 – Theme 1: Ability to drive integration**

- **Recap on the findings: Ability to drive integration**

The theme of the ability to drive integration highlights the importance of having a well-structured and coordinated response plan to a Crises. This involves the TMT ability to effectively deploy the strategic decisions to be executed at lower levels within its structures. The TMT must make an effort to coach the teams on the execution of their communicated strategic decisions.

- **Recap on the literature: Ability to drive integration**

Jarrett and Vince (2023) highlighted that effective integration is characterised by a full grasp of the situation (a clear understanding of the disruptions), alignment, and engagement, ensuring the effective execution of actions when responding to the logistics Crises. The TMT must coordinate the resources required to respond decisively and in a controlled manner to support the teams dealing with the disruption. They must use these resources to drive internal integration, which is achieved through interdepartmental collaboration necessary to overcome the disruption by sharing resources (Cohen et al., 2022). An organisation that does not prioritise collaboration and integration is observed in the TMT attributes through the failure to implement strategic decisions to improve performance during a Crises; subsequently leading to a prolonged Crises that plagues the organisation (Liu et al., 2021).

- **RQ 1 – Theme 1: Conclusions: Ability to drive integration**

There are similarities between the findings and the literature review, as far as the TMT attribute of driving integration in the organisation during disruption (Weiser, 2020). The change management process that must be initiated by the TMT is effortful and complex, but necessary

to achieve synchronicity among all the organisation's departments to drive performance during disruptions.

Siangchokyoo et al. (2019) and Loyless (2023) claim that the TMT assumes the role of transformational leadership during disruptions by curating and owning the change story or messaging communicated to the employees. They must establish the much-needed support of resources to empower the teams in executing the imperatives of the strategic decisions in response to the disruptions.

#### **6.2.5. RQ1 – Theme 1: Respect and humility in leadership**

- **Recap on the findings: Respect and humility in leadership**

Respect and humility of leaders were highlighted as the gold standard that the TMT members must always display. This emphasises the importance of being people- and organisational-centric as a leader. This attribute must be consistently applied during times of certainty and uncertainty, not only during disruptions, as it is about the integrity of the leadership.

The findings demonstrated that prioritising the needs of employees during a Crises improves their well-being and health, and contributes extensively to their development in resilience, which is needed during adversity, particularly if the disruption impacts them directly.

Humble leadership during uncertainty improves collaboration throughout the organisation because of the visible and active leadership displayed by the TMT members. This sends the message that TMT members are approachable and willing to help the employees and learn from them in overcoming the disruption and creating a sustainable organisational performance post the situation. Humility also indicates that the TMT is prepared to learn from the experts regarding the Crises that the organisation might be wrestling with. This is not viewed as a weakness but rather a strength, as this enables the TMT to source assistance from internal and external expertise. By demonstrating this quality of seeking help concerning the disruption, the TMT highlights its commitment to creating a learning and development culture in the organisation.

The study also highlighted that humble leadership must not be attributed to weakness but it is highly focused on building accountability standards in the organisation. The humble TMT holds itself to higher standards, as well as cultivating the attribute of role modelling the needed behaviour during disruptions.

- **Recap on the literature: Respect and humility in leadership**

Gerschberger et al. (2023) suggested that organisational resilience is highly dependent on the organisation's employees, who can apply critical thinking and be innovative during a Crises. However, Hollands et al. (2023) highlight the pitfalls brought by disruptions, which include mental and physical strain to employees if the disruptions are not managed appropriately. This highlights the benefits and challenges for employees during disruptions, highlighting the importance of displaying respect and humility to the employees, which aims to create psychological safety and unlock the potential of employees (Leblanc et al., 2022; Lin & Lin, 2018).

Leblanc et al. (2022) point out that an organisation characterised as a learning organisation sees opportunities in times of disruptions by encouraging its employees to make mistakes and learn from them as they are implementing the strategic response decisions formulated by the TMT. Kelemen et al. (2022) warn against arrogance, overconfidence, and narcissistic behaviour, which could lead to the collapse of the organisation during a Crises by sidelining the employees' inputs and demonstrating a lack of respect towards them.

When the TMT demonstrates behaviour of empathy, approachability, and respect toward the employees, it is a crucial foundation for innovation in the logistics sector. The TMT is characterised by the organisation that values continuous improvement and the employees' well-being (Chandler et al., 2022; De Treville et al., 2023). Employee innovation and the culture of continuous improvement are enabled by the TMT ability to implement effective coaching and mentoring structures within the organisation during disruptions. This ensures that performance hindrances are removed and resources are made available in a coordinated manner to ensure that maximum performance is cultivated in the organisation when faced with adversity (De Treville et al., 2023; Quarato et al., 2025).

- **Conclusions: Respect and humility in leadership**

The findings and the literature review are similar in advancing the importance of respect and humility in leadership during a Crises in the logistics sector. Both highlight the importance of the role the TMT plays in ensuring support for employees and creating an environment characterised by empathy during uncertainty (Raetze et al., 2021). The traits of humility and respect displayed by the TMT promote collaboration and trust in the organisation, leading to cross-functional or interdepartmental problem-solving. It is crucial to communicate the magnitude of the disruption and the mitigation implemented to external stakeholders with

confidence, and a message that inspires hope to garner support for the efforts to alleviate the Crises (Acebo et al., 2021; Stock et al., 2022).

#### **6.2.6. RQ1 – Theme 1: Create a culture of learning and innovation**

- **Recap from the findings: Creating a culture of learning and innovation**

The findings reveal that the TMT members who prioritise collaboration in an environment anchored in trust and psychological safety, humility, and respect will intentionally foster a culture of learning and innovation in the organisation. This learning extends to benchmarking and learning from the external organisations that may have experienced similar disruptions, showcasing the TMT ability to access information in the least likely places. The findings also spotlight having diverse members of the TMT to enhance their problem-solving skills, which subsequently filters down to other organisational structures, enabling the development of individual and team-level problem-solving skills. Engaging, encouraging, and empowering employees to conduct a structured problem-solving process to address the disruptions enhances the learning agility and innovation mindset within the organisation.

- **Recap from the literature: Creating a culture of learning and innovation**

Azadegan and Dooley (2020) emphasise the importance of being disciplined in conducting the structured problem-solving process underpinned by the collaborative approach of responding to more complex disruptions within the logistics sector. This further highlights the importance of strengthening innovation and learning in the organisation by the TMT by involving the employees by communicating the disruption and setting out the direction for responding. This enables and empowers the employees to drive the actions and learn in the process of strategy implementation and refinement (Do et al., 2021).

- **Conclusions: Creating a culture of learning and innovation**

Both the findings and the literature emphasise the importance of encouraging problem-solving across multiple levels of the organisation in a collaborative manner. This has the benefits of creating a learning and innovative culture in the organisation. The TMT objectives must not only be surviving the disruptions or crises but also enhancing performance in post-Crises periods, by leveraging the learnings gathered by the employees during a Crises (Do et al., 2021; Liang & Li, 2024). Wu et al. (2021) emphasise the need for the TMT to be skilled in leading the organisation during the disruptions because they present an opportunity to change

the landscape of the logistics business sector by effectively cultivating an innovative mindset of the internal and external stakeholders.

#### **6.2.7. RQ 1 – Theme1: Transformational leadership**

- **Recap from the findings: Transformational leadership**

The findings highlight the importance of the TMT to be articulate when communicating the disruptive events in the logistics sector. Dull communication will lead to difficulties in inspiring action and total involvement of the employees when driving the implementation of change strategies to sustain and improve the performance of the organisation during disruptive periods.

It was highlighted that the messaging must be linked to the purpose, appealing to the organisation and employees, and it must answer the question of why. Therefore, transformational leadership was identified as an important trait that drives agility and ignites the innovative mindset and builds on individual resilience when the TMT invokes a sense of hope when communicating during adversity.

- **Recap from the literature: Transformational leadership**

The TMT members must be able to communicate to the employees what success looks like after the adversity, to galvanise them to take action to implement the TMT strategic decisions. They must not only dwell on the negatives of the change brought on by a disruption (Stock et al., 2022) but should be driven by the opportunities that disruptions present and continually challenge the logistics operations status quo. By doing so, they can achieve outstanding results for the organization, as emphasized by Samimi et al. (2020). Embracing this mindset is key to producing superior outcomes and ensuring long-term success.

Transformational leadership also enhances the element of collaboration through effective engagements between the TMT and the employees, particularly when deciding on how the successes and challenges are to be presented to the organisation (Kumar et al., 2023).

- **Conclusions: Transformational leadership.**

Both the findings and the literature refer to the importance that transformational leadership attributes bring to the disruptions in the logistics sector. Both highlight that the TMT must inspire employees to action and focus on the opportunities presented by disruptions.

The study reflected on the similarities of the findings compared to the literature with respect to Theme 1. with no significant differences highlighted.

#### **6.2.8. RQ1 – Theme 2: Display confidence and transparent communication**

- **Recap from the findings: Display confidence and transparent communication**

The main findings from the research study are that the TMT ability to communicate clearly and openly about the disruptions demonstrated the employees' confidence in them. From the study, the reality must be communicated succinctly, and the truth must be laid bare, garnering support from all levels of the organisation, including the key external stakeholders.

The findings indicate that the TMT should share information about the disruption through a series of sessions with employees, who will play a key role in communicating these changes within their respective teams. Participants emphasised the importance of multiple engagements with the TMT regarding disruptions, as this facilitates ongoing interaction between employees and TMT members about implementation efforts.

This approach promotes a robust and ongoing dialogue, thereby enhancing communication and problem-solving across the organisation. This is crucial as it empowers implementation leaders to relay accurate information to their teams while also improving feedback mechanisms to the TMT concerning progress and areas that need urgent attention.

- **Recap from the literature: Display confidence and transparent communication**

The TMT must display the level of confidence that is cultivated through deep-level attributes, such as expertise and knowledge of the logistics sector. They must be confident when communicating the disruption and strategic decisions. The TMT is rewarded for producing superior business results; therefore, they must ensure that the strategic decisions are executed by all levels of the organisation (Belderbos et al., 2020; Krieweth et al., 2024).

Saeed et al. (2024) and Weiser (2020) emphasise the importance of the TMT collaborating at the upper echelons because this provides direction to the broader ranks of the organisation's employees. As it is intentionally planned, there must be consistency and belief in the messages communicated by those team members below the TMT level.

Transparent communication and the display of confidence from the TMT are a foundation for building the non-negotiable change response implementation structures inside the

organisation. This is because the organisation must fully leverage the strengths and talents of the internal workforce (Van den Berg et al., 2021), which is an indication of trust and respect that the TMT has for its workforce. This virtue can only be displayed by open and transparent communication, accommodated by the levels of confidence in the strategic decisions taken to drive operational improvement in the organisation (Stoverink et al., 2018; Zahoor et al., 2024).

Effective communication and the display of confidence from the TMT enable effective integration of the organisation. It is crucial to have a coordinated effort internally to drive the change implementation, which further elevates the stature of the TMT internally and externally to the organisation, particularly when the disruption involves multiple organisation response plans (Cohen et al., 2022)

- **Conclusions: Display of confidence and transparent communication**

The findings demonstrate that open and transparent communication, delivered with confidence, is vital for cultivating trust between TMT members and employees. This correlates with existing literature indicating that such communication promotes employee engagement, which is essential for the effective implementation of responses originating from TMT structures (Van den Berg et al., 2021; Zahoor et al., 2024). Hillmann and Guenther (2020) and Raetze et al. (2021) believe that organisational resilience is derived from effective and transparent communication at both individual and team levels throughout the engagement process. This observation is emphasised in Chapter 5, which underscores that clear communication is essential for defining the expectations, duties, and responsibilities of employees throughout the change process. The evidence suggests notable correspondence between the findings and the existing literature.

#### **6.2.9. RQ 1 – Theme 2: Define key critical outputs**

- **Recap from the findings: Defining key critical outputs**

The study's findings emphasised the significance of establishing key performance indicators (KPIs) and assessing success throughout the Crises period. This approach is essential for identifying performance domains, including teams that require additional resources, to ensure that actions are addressed promptly. Establishing KPIs is also necessary for the TMT to facilitate structured and focused meetings, which require problem-solving sessions with the teams to identify the causes of failing to achieve the KPI targets. Defining KPIs also assists teams in not only illustrating what success entails for them but also motivating them to act and recognise early achievements.

- **Recap from the literature: Defining key critical outputs**

Weiser (2020) and Fabac (2022) recommend employing balanced scorecards (BSC) to evaluate the success of change initiatives implemented by the TMT. The identification of measures for the balanced scorecard (BSC) occurs through collaboration between the TMT and employees.

The TMT assumes a coaching role by enquiring about the rationale behind the development of KPIs. Subsequently, team leaders involved in the change implementation structures must report on the status of the change implementation using the BSC (Kumar et al., 2023; Weiser, 2020).

- **Conclusions: Defining key critical outputs**

The findings exhibit parallels with the reviewed literature regarding the identification of essential critical outputs to assess during periods of disruption. The literature suggests the balanced scorecard as the optimal instrument for presenting performance during such times, as it encompasses metrics focused on financial, customer, internal, learning, and development dimensions, as described by Fabac (2022).

#### **6.2.10. RQ1 – Theme 2: Stabilise operations through coordinated efforts**

- **Recap from the findings: Stabilising operations through coordinated efforts**

The findings indicated that the TMT must have the capability to stabilise operations during periods of disturbance. The results section also underscored identifying important stakeholders and upholding the chain of command regarding the escalation process, which is essential for establishing order among chaos. It was also proposed that forming task teams with specialisations in certain areas is essential for organising resources to uphold high-quality standards in the execution of the transformation strategy.

It was determined that upholding order and discipline during periods of adversity assists the organisation in formulating a coherent communication strategy for external stakeholders. This is organised and reassuring, which establishes a foundation for the TMT to engage confidently with external stakeholders, including customers, regarding the disruptions.

- **Recap from the literature: Stabilising operations through coordinated efforts**

Weiser (2020) stated that the establishment of change implementation mechanisms, including a team to spearhead organisational change initiatives at several levels, must be undertaken by the TMT members to facilitate the change process. This team, although not part of the TMT, will cooperate with TMT members to guarantee a coordinated delivery of change, using their leadership positions within the organisation to influence the response plan.

Raetz et al. (2021) state that organisational resources, such as human capital and financial assets, are crucial for enhancing performance during periods of uncertainty; however, these resources must be used in a coordinated fashion to address areas requiring immediate focus.

- **Conclusion: Stabilising operations through coordinated efforts**

The findings in Chapter 5 are similar to the literature review, and both place an emphasis on the TMT members to drive change in an orderly fashion. The change implementation structures allow teamwork and collaboration to be at the heart of the change implementation process.

#### **6.2.11. RQ1 – Theme 2: Prioritise stakeholder management**

- **Recap from the findings: Prioritising stakeholder management**

The findings clearly indicated that the TMT must adopt a holistic perspective of its stakeholders and address their requirements; nevertheless, during crises, its major stakeholders are the external consumers who compensate the organisation for its services. These consumers must be engaged, and the TMT must exhibit confidence in conveying the specifics of the interruption, the strategic response plan, as well as the difficulties and opportunities arising from the adversity. The study's findings indicate that TMT members in the logistics sector emerge as thought leaders in the eyes of customers during the logistics phase, since customers outsource this aspect of their business to them due to their expertise in logistics. Other players, including suppliers and governments, are essential in empowering the TMT in the logistics industry to deliver exceptional service to external clients. They are the essential partners and collaborators of the TMT in safeguarding the business of external clients against logistics interruptions, whether caused by human actions or natural calamities.

- **Recap from the literature: Prioritising stakeholder engagement**

Weiser (2020) and Wu et al. (2021) underscore the significance of a diverse TMT in the upper echelons, possessing profound attributes, such as advanced Crises management skills and expertise in the logistics sector, along with the confidence to engage stakeholders concerning

logistics disruptions. These stakeholders include customers, suppliers, investors, the board of directors, and employees. Harrison et al. (2019) suggest that the TMT responsibilities extend beyond shareholder focus to encompass fulfilling customer value propositions, positively impacting the communities in which the organisation operates, adhering to ethical standards, adopting a collaborative approach with suppliers, and investing in employees' well-being.

The TMT members possess a comprehensive perspective of the business, rendering them accountable for the organisation's overall success, especially during a logistics Crises. This broad viewpoint enables the TMT to be dynamically effective and to comprehend not only the organisation but also the entire value chain, along with its contextual factors essential for articulating the necessity for change. Consequently, this empowers them to engage in transparent dialogue that adds value to both the organisation and its stakeholders (Luciano et al., 2020). Firk et al. (2021) suggest that possessing a diverse top management team with profound attributes, such as expertise and knowledge in the logistics sector, is essential for facilitating collaborative dialogues with various stakeholders. This approach re-envision the entire value chain, characterised by investments in innovation, technology, and employee development, to enhance organisational performance. In addition, it aims to establish a system with antifragile characteristics that embraces disruptions as opportunities to foster a learning culture within the organisation (Munoz et al., 2022). Subsequently, the TMT that fails to comprehend both external and internal contextual factors of the organisation will struggle to communicate effectively and establish collaborative relationships with key stakeholders. This is essential for creating an organisation resilient to logistical disruptions, ultimately resulting in its demise (Raetze et al., 2021).

- **Conclusions: Prioritising stakeholder engagement**

There are similarities between the findings and the literature review that maintain the TMT must prioritise all the stakeholders. The findings highlighted that, to some extent, having a good relationship with the suppliers has benefits in the long run. To provide service excellence to the customers, the literature was clear in prioritising the stakeholders equally (Harrison et al., 2019).

#### **6.2.12. RQ1 – Theme 3: Background in education and experience**

- **Recap from the findings: Background in education and experience**

The study findings emphasised that higher education and experience in the logistics industry are essential for TMT members. The study suggested that neither education nor experience is superior; rather, they must function in harmony to effectively address the disturbances.

Experience in the logistics sector significantly aids in diagnosing the causes of disruptions; however, education becomes paramount when implementing structured frameworks and organising feedback mechanisms for key stakeholders regarding the diagnosis and response plan. It also assists the TMT in crafting a well-articulated communication strategy surrounding the disruption. Lacking education while possessing experience may hinder engagement with both internal and external stakeholders, therefore, complicating the initiation of change and the application of transformational leadership, which is essential for motivating employees to embrace the change process. Ultimately, this may lead to inadequate collaborative efforts, which are fundamental to fostering organisational resilience.

- **Recap from the literature: Background in education and experience**

Maldonado et al. (2021) argue that the TMT educational background is crucial for organising and retrieving knowledge important for developing strategic decisions required to confront the Crises. Agnihotri and Bhattacharya (2020) agree that the educational backgrounds of the TMT must be diverse to foster an intellectually stimulating environment that promotes creativity in generating ideas crucial for tackling the logistical problem. Experience is crucial for identifying interruptions in the logistics sector; nevertheless, acquiring the ability to evaluate and understand the complexities stemming from these disturbances requires training in data analysis and interpretation. Prayag et al. (2023) suggest that the implementation of change, the facilitation of effective communication, and the promotion of collaboration in response to disruptions require TMT members to be trained in relevant frameworks and possess educationally supported experience to execute effective change mechanisms. Consequently, possessing both experience and education in the logistics field is essential.

- **Conclusions: Background in education and experience**

There are commonalities between the findings and the relevant literature about educational background and experience. The literature emphasises the essential traits that TMT members must possess to develop successful reaction strategies in the logistics sector, therefore, enhancing performance during and after disruptions. These traits, a synthesis of experience and education, are essential for establishing successful communication strategies that inspire change and facilitate collaboration within the organisation to enhance performance (Weiser, 2020). Gerschberger et al. (2023) suggest that individuals with cognitive capacity are essential to strengthen organisational resilience, as they facilitate the understanding of data provided by the TMT, hence influencing the strategic plan for performance enhancement.

### **6.2.13. RQ1 – Theme 3: Lead through process analysis and excellence**

- **Recap from the findings: Lead through process analysis and excellence**

The findings suggest that the TMT must possess a comprehensive grasp of logistical operations to effectively advocate for and conduct problem-solving sessions in response to interruptions. The study highlighted the necessity for TMT executives to comprehend the logistics value chain comprehensively, with significant attention on the touchpoints related to movement, people engagement, and the specifics of operations till customer expectations are fulfilled. This capability of visualising logistical operations enables the TMT to swiftly pinpoint pressure areas resulting from interruptions and efficiently organise resources to mitigate such bottlenecks. Effective problem-solving is enhanced by process specialists, primarily internal, with participation from TMT members, fostering collaboration and bolstering team morale and confidence during the diagnosis of logistics problems.

- **Recap from the literature: Lead through process analysis and excellence**

Saeed et al. (2024) argue that the tenure of TMT members in the logistics sector is essential for enabling effective disruption diagnosis, while also improving their networks within the sector, in so doing, facilitating access to expertise for addressing challenges. This diagnostic approach, facilitated by collaborative teamwork, fosters a culture of operational excellence rooted in cooperation across teams. Acebo et al. (2021) claim that empowering teams at the operational level of logistics and establishing decentralised structures enables team leaders within the change implementation framework to exercise autonomy, thus enhancing problem-solving efficacy within the organisation. Consequently, the role of the TMT is to comprehend the business value chain to effectively delegate responsibilities to process owners.

- **Conclusions: Lead through process analysis and excellence**

The study's findings were descriptive concerning the TMT capacity to conduct thorough analyses of the value chain to initiate problem-solving processes while involving employees. In contrast, the literature was less descriptive regarding the value chain; however, Weiser (2020) emphasises the TMT collaborative approach with employees in developing KPIs using the balanced scorecard format, which focuses on financial, customer, internal processes, and learning and development. This can only be achieved by evaluating organisational performance across multiple departmental layers, as suggested by Fabac (2022). This demonstrates concisely the evidence of similarities between the literature and the findings.

### **6.3. Research Question 2: Organisational resilience foundational practices influenced by the TMT**

#### **6.3.1. RQ2 – Theme 4: Commitment to vision**

- **Recap from the findings: Commitment to vision**

The study's findings emphasise that a deliberate approach to formulating the company's vision and mission is essential for fostering organisational resilience during periods of Crises because the vision serves as a compelling reminder of the company's purpose. The findings also add that a vision is significant, occasionally motivating, and often guiding the strategic actions the organisation must undertake to remain competitive in the logistics industry. This is the basis upon which the performance of the TMT is evaluated. It is, therefore, essential for the competent and forward-thinking TMT members to formulate and continually strengthen the organisational vision to ensure its significance and utility as a reference point during periods of disruption, as pointed out in the study.

The study also suggests that the organisation's vision must assist the TMT members in making prioritised choices concerning investments necessary to capitalise on possibilities arising from disruptions. This encourages the TMT members to be ambitious and consistently consider long-term potential while addressing the logistical challenges.

- **Recap from the literature: Commitment to the vision**

Prayag et al. (2023) argue that TMT members should be directed by the organisation's vision while devising and articulating strategic decisions in reaction to disruptions. Chapman et al. (2018) and Raetze et al. (2021) substantiate this claim by asserting that a shared vision within cross-functional teams fosters commitment to the execution of strategic decisions at a tactical level, thus enhancing organisational resilience following disruptions. Stock et al. (2022) claim that TMT members must be dedicated to the organisation's goal to recognise crucial opportunities that may be leveraged to enhance organisational commitment during a Crises. This underscores the need to link their message to the goal as they motivate employees to take action in response to the Crises through alignment and collaboration.

- **Comparison of key findings and literature: Commitment to vision**

The study findings and literature suggest that the TMT must have a long-term perspective for the organisation while formulating and executing solutions to address the logistical difficulties (Samimi et al., 2020). Their response strategy must align with the company's ultimate objective and purpose; although it is imperative to extricate the company from a Crises, the TMT short-term measures must not compromise the organisation's future profitability (Kelemen et al., 2022).

- **Conclusions: Commitment to the vision**

The study and the literature provide a comparable finding on the commitment of top management teams to the vision while guiding the organisation through a Crises.

### **6.3.2. RQ 2 – Theme 4: Plan scenarios and prepare for the unknowns**

- **Recap the findings: Plan scenarios and prepare for the unknown**

The study findings emphasised the necessity of having TMT members with a thorough comprehension of the dynamics in both internal and external business contexts. This requires a comprehensive analysis of these events using available data to achieve a clear understanding of the hazards inherent in the logistics environment. The findings underscore the necessity of enhancing scenario planning for TMT within the logistics sector. A lack of understanding or lack of active pursuit of crucial information undermines the organisation's ability to operate effectively during disruptions. By neglecting vital information about the business environment, the TMT hinders its preparedness and, consequently, the overall effectiveness of the enterprise. Highlighting this attribute is important for competently resolving problems with assurance and urgency.

Scenario planning, deeply rooted in the organisational vision, must be collaboratively developed by the TMT members to construct a cohesive narrative of transformation. This story is an essential element of the communication strategy intended to stimulate behaviour across multiple levels of the organisation, as indicated by the study's results. Furthermore, possessing a broad team of management members with logistical knowledge is crucial, as it enables the team to evaluate all potential risks stemming from interruptions. This collaborative interaction with knowledge not only clarifies future possibilities but also cultivates creativity inside the TMT, facilitating the formulation of successful response plans.

- **Recap from the literature: Plan scenarios and prepare for the unknown**

Nikookar et al. (2025) suggests that TMT attributes of visualising the logistics business environment through data gathering and synthesis, flexibility, collaboration and decisiveness in the response to the disruptions are the crucial hallmarks of an organisation that possess the characteristics of organisational resilience in the midst of the disruption, This point elevates the necessity of the TMT to invest their time in running the scenarios to formulate the plans for their organisation. Krieweth et al. (2024) also add that the TMT team with diverse backgrounds operating in an environment that is underpinned by collaboration, strengthens the TMT attribute of relying on sensemaking and building the anticipation response plans, which are at the heart of building organisational resilience.

- **Comparison of key findings from the literature: Plan scenarios and prepare for the unknown.**

It is evident from both the findings and the literature that scenario planning is fundamental to preparing an organisation for disruptions and enables the TMT to have a well-thought-out response strategy. This is showcasing a forward-looking TMT that is motivated by its commitment to the vision of the organisation (Fisher et al., 2022). This suggestion is important because it highlights the TMT ability to prepare the organisation for the change. This enables them to be proactive in initiating the change initiatives that are crucial for the organisational growth characterised by resilient performance during and after disruptive periods (Van Den Berg et al., 2021).

- **Conclusions: Plan scenarios and prepare for the unknown**

The literature supports the findings of the study in that the TMT must prioritise and run the scenarios to strengthen the organisation's resilience efficacy

### **6.3.3. RQ 2 – Theme 4: Leading risk management strategies**

- **Recap from the findings: Leading risk management strategies**

The findings underscore the necessity of disseminating the strategic decisions derived from the finished sensemaking process, which must also be converted into actionable strategies. The TMT must ensure that the strategic response plan is successfully disseminated for further refinement to the change implementation structures, which include employees below the TMT. This study highlighted the necessity of conducting simulations of risk management plans to evaluate their effectiveness during interruptions.

The implementation and enhancement of scenario planning are essential activities undertaken by teams, supported by proficient personnel and external specialists, who do simulations guided by the highest levels of authority. This collaborative effort is crucial for the efficacy of business unit strategies, business continuity plans, and Crises management techniques. If these strategies are not communicated and appropriately executed at the operational levels, they will inevitably collapse in the event of a Crises.

Analyses have highlighted that a lack of senior management's participation in the simulations of the Crises management plan might result in considerable organisational failures during challenging times. The findings also pointed out that there are instances in the logistics sector, where managers essential for spearheading change initiatives, may be either unaware of the existence of the risk management plan or find it excessively intricate to understand.

- **Recap from the literature: Leading risk management strategies**

The TMT is responsible for formulating strategic plans based on completed scenario planning events for sense-making and anticipation. Therefore, it assumes the ultimate responsibility for ensuring the implementation of these strategies within the organisation to enhance organisational resilience (Firk et al., 2021; Ke et al., 2021).

Van den Berg et al. (2021) claim that the TMT must engage employees in the execution and enhancement of the risk management plan formulated by upper management. Disseminating the risk management Crises plans to employees bolsters organisational resilience, as process experts contribute to and refine the actions from the sensemaking process undertaken by the TMT.

The TMT decision to involve employees in the execution and simulation testing of the Crises management plan fosters a culture of continuous improvement and learning within the organisation. This collaboration between the TMT and employees enhances transparent communication and develops multi-level team capabilities to be prepared in the event of disruption (Acebo et al., 2021).

- **Comparing key findings to the literature: Leading the risk management strategies**

The study findings are similar to the literature in that both acknowledge that the TMT must devise strategic plans that address the gaps identified in the scenario planning sessions.

These risk management strategies must be executed by disseminating the process to the team below the TMT leadership structure for refinement by means of simulations. This ensures that the entire organisation is prepared to respond in the event of logistics disruptions. Therefore, the collaboration between the TMT and employees improves the organisation's resilience capabilities through the execution of the strategic decisions.

- **Conclusions: Lead risk management strategies**

The study reflects similar outcomes about the TMT leading the risk management strategies, which include formulation and execution.

#### **6.4. Conclusion**

This chapter provided an in-depth analysis of the data presented in the findings chapter, integrating insights from Chapter 2's literature review. The primary goal was to articulate well-founded conclusions regarding the research topic, as initially outlined in Chapter 3. The findings highlight significant parallels between the existing literature and the data we collected, which were explored extensively throughout this discussion Chapter.

This study underscores the TMT's critical role not only in identifying logistics risks but also in implementing effective risk mitigation strategies. The analysis reveals that an organisation's capability to manage logistics disruptions is intricately linked to the TMT's proficiency in developing and establishing mechanisms for the early detection of potential risks. This proactive approach is essential, as it enables the formulation of pre-emptive measures rather than merely reactive responses to incidents.

Moreover, incorporating scenario planning exercises and Business Continuity Planning (BCP) simulations is a vital tool. These practices equip organisations to respond appropriately during times of disruption by enabling teams to envision potential future scenarios and prepare tailored strategies accordingly. This forward-thinking perspective enhances the organisation's overall resilience, as highlighted by Liang and Li (2024).

In addition, the study investigated the behavioural dimensions of leadership that are imperative for the formulation of comprehensive, multi-layered organisational response strategies. These dimensions align closely with existing literature, which emphasises the importance of leadership behaviours in cultivating adaptable and responsive organisational cultures. Effective leadership behaviours foster an environment of trust and collaboration, where team members feel supported and empowered to respond to challenges (Acebo et al., 2021).

To facilitate an effective response during periods of disruption, we identified 12 key strategies to ensure that all individuals within the organisation receive the necessary support, resources, and guidance. This support is crucial not only for the successful execution of strategic decisions but also for turning them into actionable outcomes. By doing so, organisations can ensure that they meet their objectives, deliver expected results, and build a solid foundation for growth following disruptions. The research indicates that implementing these strategies can enhance organisational performance, as noted by Liang and Li (2024), Raetze et al. (2021), and Weiser (2020).

Ultimately, the application of these strategies enables organisations to not merely endure disruptions but to emerge stronger and more agile within the logistics environment. By leveraging the insights and lessons derived from past challenges, organisations can foster an atmosphere of growth and innovation. This positions them favourably for future opportunities, as emphasised by Van Den Berg et al. (2021). Such a proactive approach equips organisations to navigate the complexities of their logistics operations with confidence and strategic foresight, ensuring long-term sustainability in an ever-evolving landscape.

In light of the insights gleaned from our analysis, we will build upon the conceptual framework established in Chapter 2, particularly as it relates to our comprehensive literature review. The studies and cases presented in the findings chapter effectively capture the lived experiences and emotional landscapes of the participants in this research, particularly regarding the pivotal characteristics of the TMT. These attributes are essential for steering the organisation through the tumultuous waters of logistics disruptions.

The findings from our literature review reveal not only commonalities in how organisations respond to logistics disruptions but also underscore the critical roles of sensemaking and anticipation. It is imperative for the researcher to illuminate these constructs as foundational elements that help align stakeholders, facilitate information access, and generate meaningful insights. Such insights empower the TMT to envision and architect operational strategies that enable the organisation to respond adeptly to disruptions while simultaneously fostering opportunities for growth and recovery.

It cannot be overstated that employees serve as the backbone of logistics operations. Disruptions can precipitate significant, long-lasting adjustments in their work and personal lives.

Consequently, the TMT must cultivate an acute awareness of these realities and demonstrate genuine empathy in addressing the challenges that arise. This may involve engaging external experts to provide guidance and support, thereby informing strategic decision-making processes that consider both organisational goals and employee welfare.

Moreover, the concept of humble leadership emerges as a vital attribute during periods of disruption. This leadership style, characterised by the TMT's commitment to self-awareness and a people-centred focus, plays a crucial role in ensuring that the organisation achieves its performance objectives amidst adversity. Humble leadership encourages collaboration not only within the TMT but also extends to the upper executive team (UET), thereby ensuring that employees are equipped with the necessary resources, support, and encouragement. This approach also nurtures an organisational culture that perceives mistakes as valuable learning opportunities, enhancing the organisation's overall learning and adaptability.

As a result, it is unmistakably evident that the TMT must devote time and resources to refining its strategies for responding to disruptions. This entails deliberately integrating sensemaking, anticipation, and the principles of humble leadership into their operational mindset. Together, these practices significantly bolster the organisation's resilience in the face of logistics disruptions. To further illustrate this refined understanding, Figure 6.1 presents an enhanced model outlining the critical factors influencing organizational resilience within logistics, with heightened focus on the core practices of sensemaking, anticipation, and humble leadership as instrumental in navigating challenges effectively.

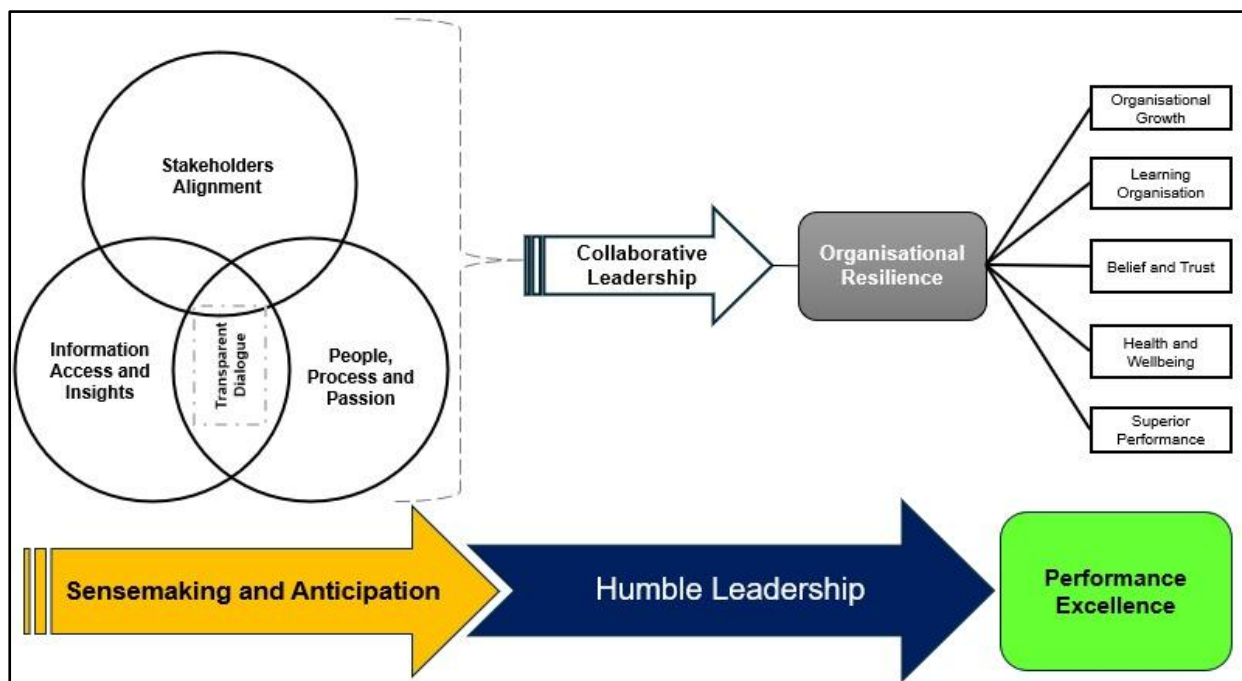


Figure 6.1: Factors influencing organisational resilience in the logistics sector (Author's Own)

## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

### 7.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the results from the study related to the enquiries addressed in Chapter 6. The research examines the characteristics of the TMT that influence organisational resilience in navigating disruptions within the logistics sector. It analyses the leadership behaviour and traits of senior leaders functioning at both the strategic and operational tiers of the business.

The study's objective was to answer the following research questions:

- **Main research question:** How do top management team leadership attributes influence organisational resilience in navigating disruptions within the logistics sector? (To explore and gain insights on the key attributes and their enablers)
- **Sub-question 1:** How do the behavioural characteristics of the top management team contribute to enhancing the organisational multi-level resilience response mechanism during periods of disruption?
- **Sub-question 2:** How do the members of the top management team establish a robust foundation for the organisation that enables it to foresee and capitalise on the opportunities presented by future disruptions?

The research outcomes are organised according to the research questions. The chapter concludes with recommendations for management and stakeholders, outlines the study's limitations, and proposes future research.

### 7.2. Principal theoretical conclusions

The conclusions regarding the research questions are discussed in this section, including discussions on the similarities to the literature outlined in Chapter 6. The summary is in Table 7.1 below.

Table 7.1: Conclusions of the research and similarities to the literature

Research Question	Theoretical Construct	Theme	Sub Theme	Similarity to literature
1. How do the behavioural characteristics of the top management team contribute to enhancing the organisational multi-level resilience response mechanism during periods of disruption?	Attributes	Support structures and individual needs	Enhance collaboration	Similarity
	Attributes		Drive integration	Similarity
	Attributes		Respect and Humility	Similarity
	Attributes		Transformational leadership	Similarity
	Attributes		Emotional intelligence	Similarity
	Attributes		Learning and Innovation	Similarity
	Attributes	Confidence and transparent communication	Clear Communication	Similarity
	Attributes		Critical Outputs	Similarity
	Attributes		Coordinate Efforts	Similarity
	Attributes		Stakeholder management	Similarity
	Enabler	Operational excellence	Education and experience background	Similarity
	Enabler		Analysis and process excellence	Similarity
2. How do the members of the top management team establish a robust foundation for the organisation that enables it to foresee and capitalise on the opportunities presented by future disruptions?	Enablers	Commitment to the organisation's purpose	Commitment to the vision	Similarity
	Enablers		Scenario planning	Similarity
	Enablers		Lead risk management strategies	Similarity

### **7.2.1. Conclusions: Sub-research Question 1**

*How do the behavioural characteristics of the top management team contribute to enhancing the organisational multi-level resilience response mechanism during periods of disruption?*

Research Question 1 identified the key attributes of top management teams (TMT) that enhance organisational resilience during disruptions in the logistics sector. The performance of an organisation is significantly shaped by its TMT, regardless of external challenges. Stakeholders, including shareholders and the board, expect outstanding performance from the TMT, which is essential for achieving significant results (Samimi et al., 2020).

The study highlighted that TMT attributes must effectively boost organisational performance during and after logistical disruptions. Chapter 6 identified these attributes, aligned with the literature, such as the TMT ability to establish supportive structures, demonstrate confidence and transparent communication, and showcase expertise in operational excellence.

The establishment of strong support structures and the prioritisation of individual needs are essential responsibilities of the TMT in addressing logistics crises (Weiser, 2020). The TMT diverse traits, such as skills, understanding, and emotional intelligence, are crucial for maintaining harmony across organisational tiers, enabling successful resilience-building initiatives during disruptions (Liang & Li, 2024).

Effective interaction between TMT members and employees, along with fostering support and mentorship, is vital for navigating logistics challenges. Humble leadership, characterised by respect and empathy, plays a significant role in sustaining organisational stability and promoting collaboration, which are essential for problem-solving and innovation (Chandler et al., 2022). This style of leadership enhances an organisation's post-disruption success by striking a balance between focusing on people and organisational needs.

The research highlights the crucial role of the TMT in fostering emotional intelligence and strengthening organisational resilience in the face of logistics disruptions. The TMT that exhibits confidence and engages in transparent communication play a vital role in establishing effective support mechanisms, and in so doing, cultivating trust and collaboration among stakeholders (Hillmann & Guenther, 2020; Kelemen et al., 2022).

Moreover, the capacity of the TMT to clarify success criteria and involve employees in developing key performance indicators (KPIs) is essential for effectively navigating disruptions

(Weiser, 2020). This collaborative approach, supported by the literature, enhances alignment and teamwork throughout the organisation (Fisher et al., 2022).

The expertise of the TMT in logistics, grounded in their educational backgrounds and professional experiences, is critical for accurately diagnosing disruptions and conveying analyses effectively (Samimi et al., 2020). In addition, their ability to interpret data generated post-disruption supports the organisation's pursuit of innovative technologies, thus bolstering resilience (Firk et al., 2021).

The study's findings indicate that collaboration with employees directly involved in implementing change is crucial. A workforce characterised by high cognitive abilities significantly enhances the TMT understanding of process optimisation during logistical challenges. Continuous engagement and feedback mechanisms serve to reinforce this relationship (Munoz et al., 2022; Van den Berg et al., 2021).

In conclusion, the study affirms that attributes, such as confidence, effective communication, and operational excellence, are essential for the TMT in their collective efforts to enhance organisational resilience within the logistics sector.

### **7.2.2. Conclusions: Sub-research Question 2**

*How do the members of the top management team establish a robust foundation for the organisation that enables it to foresee and capitalise on the opportunities presented by future disruptions?*

The research question focused on identifying the key enablers of organisational resilience that the top management team (TMT) must implement. Understanding the foundational phase for building this resilience enables the firm to perform effectively during disruptions and achieve sustained improvement through valuable learnings, ultimately leading to an innovative organisation characterised by antifragility (Hillmann & Guenther, 2020; Munoz et al., 2022).

Chapter 6 explores the theme of "Display Commitment to the Organisational Purpose Amid Disruption", with Chapter 7 concluding with three essential sub-themes: (1) commitment to the vision, (2) scenario planning and preparedness for the unknown, and (3) leadership in risk management strategies.

### **I. The commitment to the organisational vision.**

The relevance of organisational commitment to the vision is underscored in both the findings chapter and the existing literature, highlighting its crucial role in enabling the TMT to formulate response strategies that prioritise long-term objectives, even in the face of crises. Stock et al. (2022) emphasise that for communication regarding operational disruptions to be truly effective, it must resonate with the organisation's overarching vision.

Such alignment not only provides clarity and transparency into the rationale behind strategic decisions on logistical challenges, but also fosters a shared understanding among team members of the organisation's direction. By focusing on long-term strategies, TMT members can enhance their resilience and maintain composure during challenging times, enabling them to navigate obstacles effectively and secure the sustainability of the organisation's objectives (Liang & Li, 2024).

### **II. Scenario planning and preparation for the unknown**

The ability to anticipate disruptions in the logistics sector is increasingly recognised as a vital component for maintaining operational continuity and competitive advantage. Engaging in thorough environmental scanning and comprehensive scenario planning not only prepares organisations for potential challenges but also significantly strengthens their overall resilience capabilities (Nikookar et al., 2025).

A diverse top management team (TMT) is essential in this process, as it brings together a range of perspectives and expertise that enhance the quality of scenario planning. Such diversity fosters collaboration and encourages honest risk assessments, allowing teams to identify vulnerabilities and respond more effectively to market uncertainties (Christianson & Barton, 2020). By leveraging the unique insights of each team member, organisations can develop more robust resilience strategies that are adaptive to changing circumstances.

### **III. TMT leadership in risk management**

The significance of this attribute is underscored in both the findings and literature review chapters, highlighting it as a critical advantage in effectively implementing strategies formulated during scenario planning. Leadership in risk management is not merely a procedural step; rather, it is an effortful, often iterative, cascading process that enables the effective execution of strategic decisions made by the TMT in response to the disruptions.

This process emphasises the importance of collaboration with employees at all levels. By engaging team members, the TMT empowers them, fostering an environment that supports the ongoing application and continuous refinement of these strategies (De Treville et al., 2023; Quarato et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the TMT cultivates a culture that prioritises the identification and proactive management of operational risks. This approach is essential for achieving the organisation's long-term vision. It is facilitated through an effective change leadership process that relies on the continuous enhancement of comprehensive Business Continuity Plans (BCPs) across multiple organisations and departments (Weiser, 2020). By integrating insights from across the organisation, the TMT not only ensures that risks are systematically addressed but also aligns the organisation's efforts towards a shared objective, ultimately reinforcing the sustainability and effectiveness of its strategic initiatives (Azadegan & Dooley, 2020).

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In conclusion, the research findings underscore that the TMT commitment to the organisational purpose during logistics crises is markedly influenced by several key factors. Notably, a strong alignment with the organisation's vision cultivates a sense of shared purpose and direction, which is crucial for effectively navigating challenging circumstances. Additionally, robust scenario planning allows TMT members to anticipate potential disruptions and formulate proactive strategies to mitigate risks (Jarrett & Vince, 2022)

Moreover, exemplary risk management leadership is essential for empowering teams to respond to unexpected challenges with agility and confidence. These interconnected elements not only enhance decision-making processes but also foster a culture of resilience, which is vital for organisations in the logistics sector. The convergence of these factors, supported by existing literature, highlights their significance in establishing a solid framework for organisational resilience capable of withstanding the pressures of logistics crises.

### **7.3. Research contributions**

The study investigated the collective attributes of the TMT that influence organisational resilience in navigating disruptions within the logistics sector. It sought to contribute to the existing literature regarding the role of the TMT in ensuring the success of organisations within this industry.

The findings highlighted the enablers of organisational resilience specific to the logistics sector in the South African context. In addition, the study identified the collective attributes that TMT

members should possess to effectively lead organisations during periods of adversity and challenges.

This research underscores the importance of humble leadership as a key trait for effective leadership within the logistics sector. Such a leadership style is essential for achieving sustained performance excellence at various organisational levels, particularly by fostering collaboration and teamwork (Lin et al., 2024). The humble leadership paradigm emphasises building resilience at the team level, a concept currently being explored in relation to both individual and organisational resilience (Hernes et al., 2024). The central premise of the study is to promote collaboration throughout all organisational levels, which can be achieved by cultivating a mindset focused on developing resilience capabilities within teams.

Furthermore, the study advocates for the qualities associated with humble leadership in the logistics sector. It challenges the misconception that humble leadership is synonymous with weakness or a lack of focus on results, performance, and accountability (Chan et al., 2024).

#### **7.4. Recommendations for management**

This study assisted the top management team in enhancing the organisational resilience mechanisms across all levels of the organisation. It also guides the TMT in understanding the necessary steps required to build a future-ready organisation in the logistics sector. It outlines the efforts management must undertake to navigate potential disruptions.

Furthermore, the study emphasises the importance of collaboration and humility in leadership as essential traits for cultivating an organisation characterised by an antifragile mindset and a commitment to continuous improvement. This highlights the importance of recruiting highly qualified members to the TMT to serve in this influential structure at the apex of the organisation. The diversity of the TMT, combined with critical thinking and prioritising simulations of scenarios and sense-making processes, prepares the TMT to tackle the challenges brought by logistics disruptions.

Finally, by examining the attributes of the TMT, this study illustrates that disruptions in the logistics sector can hinder growth opportunities if the organisational culture does not prioritise the implementation of principles that respect and empower employees.

## **7.5. Limitations of the study**

The following limitations are highlighted:

- The study primarily concentrated on collecting data from companies that provide logistics services to clients. However, it overlooked the perspectives of customers, including their roles and the specific areas of frustration they experience with the logistics companies during the logistics process. This gap in the research could potentially limit the understanding of the overall logistics service experience and the effectiveness of these companies in meeting customer needs. Addressing customer feedback and experiences could provide valuable insights for enhancing logistics services.

## **7.6. Suggested future research**

The study undertook a thorough examination of the internal processes that cultivate resilience across various organisational levels, with particular emphasis on the attributes exhibited by the TMT. It highlights the need to broaden the scope of research to identify potential gaps in engagement between the TMT and external stakeholders, as such gaps may significantly hinder the organisation's ability to adapt and thrive during challenging times. Furthermore, future research should explore the systems and strategies the TMT can implement to enhance collaboration with these external stakeholders. This might involve refining client engagement processes and ensuring effective collaboration during logistical disruptions, thereby reinforcing the organisation's overall resilience.

Additionally, there is a significant opportunity for an in-depth investigation into logistics sensemaking and scenario-planning processes. This research must aim to provide the TMT with essential insights that will support more informed decision-making during difficult periods. By engaging experts in the logistics sector, the study must aim to gather rich qualitative insights that illuminate the complexities and nuances of sensemaking and scenario planning practitioners' or experts' experiences and strategies in dynamic environments.

Through detailed interviews and case studies, the research must aim to examine how effective logistics sensemaking and robust scenario planning can improve the Top Management Team's preparedness and foster resilience. Ultimately, this investigation must aim to empower organisations to navigate adversity more effectively by equipping the TMT with the tools and frameworks needed for proactive planning and responsive action in the face of uncertainty. By understanding and applying these concepts, organisations can better position themselves to withstand disruptions and emerge stronger in their aftermath.

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## LIST OF APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Consent form

#### Informed consent for interviews

I am conducting research on the exploration of the influence of the **Top Management Team leadership attributes on navigating disruptions within the logistics sector**.

Our interview is expected to last 45–60 minutes and will help us understand **how top management team leadership attributes influence organizational resilience in navigating disruptions within the logistics sector**.

**Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time without penalty.** By signing this letter, you are indicating that you have given permission for:

- The interview to be recorded;
- The recording to be transcribed by a third-party transcriber, who will be subject to a standard non-disclosure agreement;
- Verbatim quotations from the interview may be used in the report, provided they are not identified with your name or that of your organisation;
- The data to be used as part of a report that will be publicly available once the examination process has been completed; and
- All data to be reported and stored without identifiers.

If you have any concerns, please contact my supervisor or me. Our details are provided below.

Researcher name:  
Email: [24126374@mygibs.co.za](mailto:24126374@mygibs.co.za)  
Phone: +27 79 895 1832

Research Supervisor name: Dr Renjini Joseph  
Email: [josephr@gibs.co.za](mailto:josephr@gibs.co.za)  
Phone: +27 79 199 4707

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_

Signature of researcher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: .

## Appendix 2: Research Questions

Source: Author's own

#	<b>The Top Management Team's leadership attributes in responding to the logistics disruptions.</b>
Introduction	
1	How did you respond to the recent disruptions that you may have experienced in your logistics environment?
2	What actions did you observe the Top Management Team take in response to the recent logistics disruptions? What are your main takeaways from their actions?
Crisis Management	
3	What actions did you take to lead the organisation during the period of logistics disruptions? What worked, and what are the areas for improvement?
4	Which values and principles from your experience helped the team navigate logistics disruptions?
5	What skill set assisted you in navigating the logistics disruption?
6	Based on your experience, has humility in leadership been crucial in leading the teams during a crisis? Please elaborate using examples?
7	What is your educational background, and based on your experience, did your educational background assist the TMT in adding value during a logistics crisis diagnosis? Why?
Conclusions	
8	What would you do to enhance the existing crisis management plan that the TMT has implemented in your company to address logistics disruptions?

### Appendix 3: List of codes

Codes	Category
Boosts collaboration within TMT.	Emotional Intelligence.
TMTs must stay calm and recognise opportunities.	
TMTs can't lead a team in panic.	
TMTs must provide clarity in a leader's mind.	
Aids in setting the team's direction.	
A leader understands and adapts to their team.	
brings clarity to a leader's vision and helps direct the team.	
Enables effective brainstorming sessions to occur.	Enhance Collaboration.
TMTs use a consultative coaching approach for solutions.	
Enhances team-based problem-solving.	
Collaboration gaps lead to ineffective logistics solutions.	
Working in isolation perpetuates disruption.	
Open communication and a willingness to adapt improve collaboration with employees.	
TMT's collaboration with employees during disruptions boosts the organisation's learning agility.	
TMTs must create a safe environment for employees to voice concerns and address disruptions.	
Better teamwork between senior managers and employees strengthens crisis management plans.	
The TMTs cannot deliver results without the team's support.	
The team cannot deliver results without the TMT's support.	
TMT should lead with a clearly communicated shared goal during the crisis to enhance collaboration.	
Stakeholder engagement on alternatives.	Ability to drive integration.
On the Job floor Collaboration.	
Specialists to advise the TMT on the best alternatives.	
Cascading the Plan to the team and guiding them.	
Communicate the strategic decision and consult with process owners.	
Maintain composure, resilience, grit, and transparent relationships with TMT members.	Respect and Humility in Leadership.
TMT must lead in building a resilient organisation.	
Enhance cross-functional collaboration and strengthen trust with employees.	
Demonstrate a strong commitment to establishing support structures.	
The TMT must be open to learning from employees and other stakeholders during crises.	
TMTs must actively participate and be visible during crises; remote management is not an option.	

TMT needs to develop higher self-awareness when leading diverse cultures during logistics crises.	
TMT must ensure that they are clear on the priorities.	
Concentrate on fostering inclusivity within the organisation.	
TMT focuses on enhancing team performance during a logistics crisis.	
Emphasises the importance of listening attentively to employees.	
Avoids constantly directing and giving orders; instead, prioritise collaboration.	
Coaches, guides, and follows up with employees to ensure they understand the expectations.	Respect and Humility in Leadership (Continued).
Build trust, openness, and confidentiality with employees.	
Provides employees with the resources they need to succeed.	
Respect employees and uphold integrity in the organisation.	
TMT must understand their own TMT must recognize their own Archetype.	
TMTs should not hesitate to reflect on their leadership.	
Humility may not be effective during a period of uncertainty.	
TMT should promote cultural integration at all levels.	
TMT needs to create support structures for individuals.	
Align the TMT structure with the disruption.	
Link the need for change to personal and organisational purposes.	
Communicate opportunities that arise from disruptions.	
The TMT (Top Management Team) must possess strong interpersonal skills.	
TMT must increase their self-awareness levels.	
TMT must be decisive and act with speed.	
Proactive in the decision-making process.	
My way or the highway during disruption.	
No focusing on blaming during a logistics disruption.	
Previous experiences with areas of improvement identified during and post-disruptions.	
Benchmarking and learning from other companies	
Turn Challenges into learning Opportunities.	
Trusting the team and letting go	
Diversity in skills includes innovation and adaptability.	
Focus on multi-level leadership talent development.	
The right people are collaborating in developing Business Continuity Plans.	
Cross-skills learning.	
TMT must be decisive.	
TMT must drive agility and speed.	
Build teams to adapt under pressure.	
Focuses on opportunities brought by the disruption.	
Inspires action across the organisation.	

Strengthen the change management & Implementation structures.	Transformational Leadership.	
Drives Leadership visibility.		
Strengthens and fosters a culture of collaboration.		
Strengthen data visibility.		
Establishes an escalation mechanism		
Build a business unit that structures problem-solving.		
TMT must remove the blame culture when responding to a crisis.		Transformational Leadership (Continued).
TMT leaders must be confident during chaos.		
Effective communication should be informed and aligned with the company's vision.	Communicate clearly and transparently.	
TMTs must clearly convey their response strategy vision to implementers.		
Clearly communicate what the problem is and its impact.		
TMT must identify and communicate the areas that need improvement.		
TMTs should model open and transparent communication.		
Reassure the team and build trust through transparent communication.		
TMT must hold sessions to address the disruption.		
Collaborate with employees to define desired outcomes for managing disruptions.		
TMT must ensure that clear messaging is effectively communicated throughout the organisation.		
Effective communication should always maintain clarity and professionalism.		
TMTs must treat effective communication as a value.		
Effective communication enables adaptability and inspires action during disruptions.		
Ensure a steady supply to the market by providing alternative options.		Stabilise operations through coordinated effort.
Prioritise transparent communication with stakeholders.		
Unlock additional resources to respond to the crisis effectively.		
Establish a transparent chain of command and ensure effective communication.		
The TMT must be organised effectively during a crisis.		
There should be a unified voice from the TMT.		
TMT must form a crisis committee from various departments.		
TMT must create workstream pillars to execute decisions.		
Translate decisions into metrics for continuous improvement.		
Perform Root Cause Analysis.	Lead through process analysis and process excellence.	
Reassess the value chain mapping.		
Foster resilience and adaptability in the processes.		
Optimise operations and implement cost management systems.		
Focus on driving solutions.		

TMTs must engage with stakeholders to improve and clarify the response strategy.	Prioritise stakeholder management	
TMT must take the lead in managing customer interactions.		
Reinforce confidence and stability during the logistics crisis.		
Provide solutions when engaging with the client.		
Customers view the TMT as subject matter experts during a logistics crisis.		Prioritise stakeholder management
Communicate confidently with stakeholders.		
Prioritise customers in a period of logistics disruptions.		
The client expects the TMTs to perform miracles during the disruptions.		
TMT must commit to lifelong learning in the logistics sector.	Background in Education and Experience	
TMTs must be trained in conducting methodical problem-solving		
Provides the TMT with an advantage in crisis management		
Education quality enhances team effectiveness in crisis diagnosis.		
TMT's adaptability to various business environments.		
Strengthens TMT's cross-cultural communication.		
A leadership course is essential for TMTs.		
A learned leader is open to different perspectives.		
TMT skills enhance decision-making.		
Logistics requires experience over education during disruptive times.		
Improves TMT's use of technology to understand disruptions better.		
Essential to manage stakeholders in a crisis.		
assist in a clear communication plan for addressing disruptions.		
Experience in moments of crisis beats education.		
You don't have to be an educated person to make decisions.		
Education enhances TMTs' analysis of disruptions.		
A lack of education and experience hampers skill development, leading to confusion at lower levels.		
Strengthen data visibility and the contingency planning process.	Leading the Risk Management Strategies	
TMT must Prioritise risk detection		
Detect risks early to develop mitigation and improvement actions.		
The BCP document is an engagement tool with the stakeholders.		
BCP guides the response plan to the logistics disruptions		
Alignment with the operational teams to ensure knowledge on the next steps is clear.		
Continuous reference to the BCP document to track changes and update learnings.		

BCP documents are cumbersome to understand and are not always applied.	Leading the Risk Management Strategies (Continued).
No knowledge of an existing BCP document.	
Develop multi-layer leadership capability to own and refine BCPs.	
Significant BCP documents are only effective if you have the right people developing them.	
Run BCP simulations with the process owners to ensure applicability and drive continuous improvement.	
Actions need to be taken at the operational level to address any gaps in the Business Continuity Plan (BCP).	
TMT must stay focused on its long-term strategy.	Commitment to Vision
TMT must be ambitious and deliver growth even in a crisis.	
TMT must offer comprehensive end-to-end supply chain solutions.	
TMT should refer to its mission and vision during a crisis.	
Not thinking ahead causes chaos and frustration.	
Strategic decision-making drives agility.	
Vision-driven actions will provide stability for the business.	Plan Scenarios and prepare for the Unknown.
Focus on the most critical actions that need to be completed during the disruption.	
Develop a risk management plan based on the strategic vision.	
Develop awareness of patterns in the external environment.	
Analyse potential external issues, particularly political ones.	
Develop and test the established contingency plans.	
TMT must pay special attention to the economic activities.	
Drive Continuous learning	
What should the TMT do if the USA decides to shut down its borders?	
What should the TMT do if the Durban port ceases operations?	
What are the risks if the governing party is voted out of office?	
The economic climate is nearing a recession; how should the TMT sector respond?	
Foster a culture that emphasises the importance of scenario planning simulations.	

## Appendix 4: Ethical Clearance

**Gordon Institute  
of Business Science**  
University of Pretoria

**Ethical Clearance  
Approved**

Dear Kenneth Thobejane,

Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been approved.

You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.

We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.

[Ethical Clearance Form](#)

Kind Regards

This email has been sent from an unmonitored email account. If you have any comments or concerns, please contact the GIBS Research Admin team.