



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

The integration of Ubuntu into leadership practices of leaders in multinational companies: a South African perspective

By

Mr O.A. Theledi	Student Number 22613936	E-mail address ofentset@nedbank.co.za
-----------------	----------------------------	--

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
PhD: Leadership

in the

FACULTY OF ECONOMIC AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

at the

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

Subject:

Research Thesis (PHD_L)

Study leader:

Prof W Fourie

Date of submission: March 2025



DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Declaration Regarding Plagiarism

The Department of Business Management emphasises integrity and ethical behaviour with regard to the preparation of all written assignments. Although the lecturer will provide you with information regarding reference techniques, as well as ways to avoid plagiarism (see the “*Guidelines on Referencing*” document), you also have a responsibility to fulfil in this regard. Should you at any time feel unsure about the requirements, you must consult the lecturer concerned before submitting an assignment.

You are guilty of plagiarism when you extract information from a book, article, web page or any other information source without acknowledging the source and pretend that it is your own work. This does not only apply to cases where you quote the source directly, but also when you present someone else’s work in a somewhat amended (paraphrased) format or when you use someone else’s arguments or ideas without the necessary acknowledgement. You are also guilty of plagiarism if you copy and paste information directly from an electronic source (e.g., a web site, e-mail message, electronic journal article or CD-ROM) without paraphrasing it or placing it in quotation marks, even if you acknowledge the source.

You are not allowed to submit another student’s previous work as your own. You are furthermore not allowed to let anyone copy or use your work with the intention of presenting it as his/her own.

Students who are guilty of plagiarism will forfeit all credits for the work concerned. In addition, the matter will be referred to the Committee for Discipline (Students) for a ruling. Plagiarism is considered a serious violation of the University’s regulations and may lead to your suspension from the University. The University’s policy regarding plagiarism is available on the Internet at <http://www.library.up.ac.za/plagiarism/index.htm>.

For the period that you are a student at the Department of Business Management, the following declaration must accompany all written work that is submitted for evaluation. No written work will be accepted unless the declaration has been completed and is included in the particular assignment.

	Student
I (full names & surname):	Ofentse Alec Theledi
Student number:	22613936

Declare the following:

1. I understand what plagiarism entails and am aware of the University’s policy in this regard.
2. I declare that this assignment is my own, original work. Where someone else’s work was used (whether from a printed source, the Internet or any other source) due acknowledgement was given and reference was made according to departmental requirements.
3. I did not copy and paste any information directly from an electronic source (e.g., a web page, electronic journal article or CD ROM) into this document.
4. I did not make use of another student’s previous work and submitted it as my own.
5. I did not allow and will not allow anyone to copy my work with the intention of presenting it as his/her own work.

Signature: Student

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	V
LIST OF TABLES	VI
LIST OF ACRONYMS.....	VII
DEDICATIONS	VIII
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	IX
ABSTRACT.....	X
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 OVERVIEW OF STUDY	2
1.2 SCHOLARLY CONTEXT	4
1.2.1 Culture in leadership studies	5
1.2.2 Leadership and culture	6
1.2.3 Leadership and culture in Africa	7
1.2.4 Leadership and Ubuntu	8
1.3 PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTION.....	10
1.4 METHODOLOGY	10
1.5 MAIN CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY	11
1.6 DELIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS	12
1.7 OUTLINE OF THESIS.....	12
CHAPTER 2: LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE.....	13
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	14
2.2 CULTURE IN LEADERSHIP STUDIES.....	15
2.3 LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE	22
2.3.1 Hofstede cultural framework	24
2.3.2 The GLOBE effectiveness framework.....	33
2.4 LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE IN AFRICA	38
2.4.1 African cultures and their positive impact on leadership	42
2.4.2 African cultures as an inhibitor of effective leadership	43
2.5 LEADERSHIP, CULTURE AND DEFINING LEADERSHIP	44
2.6 CONCLUSION	46
CHAPTER 3: LEADERSHIP AND UBUNTU.....	48
3.1 INTRODUCTION.....	49
3.2 UBUNTU AND ITS COMPLEXITIES.....	50
3.3 THE COMMON VALUES ASSOCIATED WITH UBUNTU	53

3.3.1 Care.....	55
3.3.2 Collectivism	56
3.3.3 Compassion.....	57
3.3.4 Group solidarity.....	57
3.3.5 Harmony	58
3.3.6 Interdependence.....	58
3.3.7 Respect and dignity	59
3.3.8 Relations with others	60
3.4 THE ABILITY TO LEAD THROUGH UBUNTU.....	60
3.5 UBUNTU AND ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE	63
3.6 UBUNTU AND ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE	64
3.7 UBUNTU AND BUSINESS ETHICS.....	65
3.8 SOCIETY AND UBUNTU	66
3.9 CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH PUTTING UBUNTU INTO PRACTICE	68
3.10 CONCLUSION	71
CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY	73
4.1 INTRODUCTION.....	74
4.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	75
4.3 ONTOLOGY	76
4.4 EPISTEMOLOGY.....	78
4.5 METHODOLOGY: THE QUALITATIVE SURVEY AS RESEARCH DESIGN.....	79
4.6 PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH	81
4.7 SAMPLING.....	81
4.7.1 Context and unit of analysis.....	82
4.7.2 Sampling methods	82
4.7.3 Sample size	85
4.8 DATA COLLECTION	86
4.8.1 Pre-test interview	86
4.8.2 One-on-one interviews.....	87
4.9 DATA ANALYSIS	89
4.9.1 Data organising.....	90
4.9.2 Familiarising yourself with the data.....	90
4.9.3 Interpretation and clarifications of the data	91
4.9.4 Writing the findings	92
4.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	92
4.10.1 Credibility	92

4.10.2 Dependability	94
4.10.2 Confirmability	94
4.10.4 Transferability	94
4.11 LIMITATIONS	95
4.12 SUMMARY	95
CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH FINDINGS.....	97
5.1 INTRODUCTION.....	98
5.2 DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS.....	101
5.3 THEME 1: THE LEADER’S DEFINITION OF UBUNTU	102
5.4 THEME 2: LEADERSHIP PRACTICES INTEGRATING UBUNTU	107
5.5 THEME 3: ORGANISATIONAL INITIATIVES INTEGRATING UBUNTU	116
5.6 THEME 4: OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO INTEGRATING UBUNTU	121
5.7 THEME 5: THE INFLUENCE OF UBUNTU ON PERFORMANCE.....	128
5.8 CONCLUSION	131
CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION	135
6.1 INTRODUCTION.....	136
6.2 CONCEPTUAL STRUCTURE	138
6.3 UBUNTU AS AFRICAN RESOURCE WITH UNIVERSAL APPEAL	141
6.4 UBUNTU AS AN ENABLER OF EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES	145
6.4.1 Ubuntu and its limitations on effective leadership.....	153
6.5 UBUNTU AND THE IMPROVEMENT OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE	155
6.6 UBUNTU AND ENHANCEMENT TO PERFORMANCE	158
6.7 CONCLUSION	159
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION.....	161
7.1 INTRODUCTION.....	162
7.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS.....	162
7.3 ANSWERS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS (RQS)	165
7.3.2 To what extent do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage integrate Ubuntu into their leadership approach?	165
7.3.1 How do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage define Ubuntu?.....	168
7.3.3 How do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage put Ubuntu into practice within their organisations?	169
7.3.4 How do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage view the influence of Ubuntu in their team/organisational performance?.....	170
7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	171

7.5 CONCLUSION	172
8: LIST OF REFERENCES	173
9: INTERVIEW GUIDE.....	199
ELEMENT 1: TABLE WITH RQ'S VERSUS IQ'S	199
ELEMENT 2: DISCUSSION GUIDE	202
APPENDIX A:- LETTER OF INTRODUCTION AND INFORMED CONSENT -	205
APPENDIX B:- EDITORIAL LETTER	207

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Culture and leadership framework	4
Figure 2: Outline of Chapter 2.....	15
Figure 3: Outline of Chapter 3.....	49
Figure 4: Ubuntu values.....	55
Figure 5: Outline of Chapter 4.....	74
Figure 6: Data analysis process as recommended by Rowley (2012)	89
Figure 7: Main themes	99
Figure 8: Sub-themes	100
Figure 9: Main themes, and the number of codes linked to RQs and SRQs.....	134
Figure 10: Framework for integrating Ubuntu into the leadership approach	139
Figure 11: Effective leadership practices	146
Figure 12: Outline of Chapter 7.....	162
Figure 13: Summary of findings	163

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Small versus large power distance	25
Table 2: Individualism versus collectivism	26
Table 3: Weak versus strong uncertainty avoidance	28
Table 4: Femininity versus masculinity	29
Table 5: Long-term orientation versus short-term orientation	30
Table 6: Indulgence versus restraint.....	31
Table 7: Ubuntu values	54
Table 8: Five approaches to conducting a qualitative study (Cresswell , 2012).....	80
Table 9: Unit of analysis and unit of observation	82
Table 10: Unit of analysis and unit of observation	83
Table 11: Research Methodology	95
Table 12: Overview of the participants.....	101
Table 13: Theme 1: The leader's definition of Ubuntu	106
Table 14: Theme 2: Leadership practices integrating Ubuntu.....	115
Table 15: Theme 3: Organisational initiatives integrating Ubuntu.....	121
Table 16: Theme 4: Overcoming barriers to integrating Ubuntu	127
Table 17: Theme 5: Influence of Ubuntu on performance.....	131
Table 18: Themes and Sub-themes linked to RQs	132
Table 19: High-level summary of the findings	137
Table 20: Interview Questions	199

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CLT	Culturally Endorsed Implicit Leadership Theory
COO	Chief Operations Officer
CSI	Corporate Social Investment
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DEI	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
EMS	Economic and Management Sciences
ESG	Environmental, Social and Governance
EXCO	Executive Committee
GBVF	Gender-Based Violence and Femicide
GLOBE	Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness
IBM	International Business Machines
ILT	Implicit Leadership Theory
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Intersex
RQ	Research Question
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SRQ	Sub-Research Question
UP	University of Pretoria
USA	United States of America
VP	Vice President

DEDICATIONS

This study is dedicated to my beloved late grandparents, Matilda Themba, Donald Themba, and Sarah Duma. I am profoundly grateful to the Lord for the wisdom you have imparted in my life. Your exemplary leadership embodied the spirit of Ubuntu, inspiring all whom you encountered. Matthew 20:26.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To the Almighty God, I express my heartfelt gratitude for the wisdom, courage, and understanding bestowed upon me, which enabled me to successfully complete this qualification. You have truly illuminated my path and renewed my strength throughout this journey. I give glory to You, Almighty God. Modimo ka nnete wa phela.

A PhD requires the invaluable contributions and support of numerous individuals. While it is not feasible to acknowledge everyone who played a role in this journey, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to those who were most directly involved. Their assistance has been instrumental in my journey.

To my supervisor Professor Willem Fourie, thank you for your valuable time invested in this study. I sincerely appreciate your patience, and the guidance provided, which has encouraged me to expand my thinking. My thanks also to the following:

- My editor, Marielle Tappan, for editorial work done.
- The interview participants for sharing your knowledge so openly. To Dr RJ Khoza, thank you for your contribution and insights provided.

My deepest gratitude goes also to my support system:

- My kids: Agape Theledi and Kgosi Theledi, thank you for your support and understanding during this process. I can't wait to catch up on all the things we have put on hold.
- My mother Betsie Nyokong, siblings (Josey, Portia, Tebogo, Karabo, Matsebo, Khutso), and the extended family at large, thank you for being my biggest cheerleaders.
- My late Dads, Jappie Theledi and William Nyokong, you will always be in my heart.
- To a friend and a brother, Xolani Zikalala, I thank you for planting the seed to commence on this journey. Your prayers and support are greatly appreciated.
- To Mr M Moloto, Dr L Moitsheki and Thabiso Majola, thank you for all your prayers during this process.

ABSTRACT

In this thesis, titled **The integration of Ubuntu into leadership practices of leaders in multinational companies: a South African perspective**, the researcher explored the intersection of culture and leadership. The study focused on this intersection in Africa, specifically focusing on Ubuntu and the extent to which business leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage can integrate Ubuntu into their leadership approach. Interviews were conducted with 20 participants who confirmed that Ubuntu is part of their cultural heritage.

The findings suggest that Ubuntu can therefore be integrated into the leadership approach of leaders through a range of practices that embrace to embody the principles of Ubuntu. These included strong self-awareness, learning from lived experiences, fostering open communication, maintaining authenticity, adopting a humanistic approach, consistently greeting colleagues and subordinates, and mentoring team members. Leaders also mentioned expecting excellence, engaging in active listening, demonstrating emotional intelligence, exhibiting humility, employing a consultative decision-making style, empowering others, embracing diversity, leading by example, remaining grounded, and cultivating contentment. Furthermore, leaders perceived leadership as a socially constructed process influenced by their upbringing and personal experiences. They attributed their successes in corporate environments to the foundational role that Ubuntu values played in their leadership practices.

The findings further indicated that Ubuntu is viewed as an African expression of humanness and is acknowledged for its universal relevance, with leaders recognising that similar values and practices may be expressed differently across diverse cultures and regions. The influence of Ubuntu significantly shaped the leaders' interactions and relationships, informed by the core values they associated with the concept. Additionally, the significance of ancient African practices, such as dikgoro, emerged as a crucial factor, continuing to inform leadership styles of the participants.

The integration of Ubuntu extends beyond individual leadership methods and is also reflected within organisational practices. Ubuntu's integration can occur through strategic alignment with Ubuntu values, the establishment of organisational values that resonate with Ubuntu, performance management systems that complement Ubuntu, and a commitment to sustainability and related initiatives. These initiatives, would, as a result, have an impact on the culture within organisations.

Despite the leaders' efforts to incorporate Ubuntu into both their leadership styles and organisational practices, leaders faced various challenges that required navigation. The primary challenges identified included flawed human behaviour, negative perceptions of leadership informed by Ubuntu values, misalignment between personal and organisational values, and personal struggles regarding the integration of Ubuntu into their leadership practices.

Although there might be challenges with the integration of Ubuntu into leadership and organisational practices, this study argued that incorporating Ubuntu values created a more humane culture within an organisation. This will result in an enhanced team environment, enhanced team performance, enhanced team commitments, and organisational and personal success.

Keywords: Leadership, culture, multinational organisations, Ubuntu, African leadership, cross-cultural leadership

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW OF STUDY

The foundational Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness (hereafter, GLOBE) study was conducted across multiple cultures and published in 2004. The study defined leadership as “the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute to the effectiveness and success of the organisations of which they are members” (House, Dorfman, Javidan, Hanges & De Luque, 2013:17). This definition underscores the significance of fostering organisational effectiveness, extending beyond the mere achievement of objectives. There is a growing movement within research arguing that it is important for leadership to be understood within the context in which it is practised (Avolio, Walumbwa & Weber, 2009; Posner, 2013). Leadership studies recognise the importance of not only the leader but also the contributions of followers and the broader environment, including cultural factors (Avolio *et al.*, 2009). This interest is significantly influenced by the globalisation of organisations, which often necessitates that leaders work across a wide range of settings and cultural environments. Consequently, there is a growing emphasis on cross-cultural leadership research (Gelfand *et al.*, 2007; House *et al.*, 2004). Culture, in this context, refers to the shared norms and values that bind a society together (Roberts, 1970).

In this context, scholars such as Mendelek-Theimann, April and Blass (2006), and Nkomo (2011) have highlighted a significant gap in the literature on leadership and cultural studies. They specifically argue that the existing body of knowledge is incomplete due to the insufficient representation of African perspectives and contexts. The theories of leadership have ‘omitted’ the voices of non-Western views that are prevalent in Africa, thus rendering the current generated knowledge deficient (Mendelek-Theimann *et al.*, 2006; Nkomo, 2011).

According to Kuada (2010), leadership in Africa is largely shaped by culture and historic events. Africa as a continent went through a period of colonisation which had an impact on cultural and leadership practices within the continent. It is, therefore, important for leaders to understand Africa’s cultural heritage, challenges, and future priorities to translate African values such as humanness and interdependence into leadership and business practices (Edozie, 2017).

African philosophy places significant emphasis on the dignity of individuals and the collective brotherhood of humanity, encapsulated in the concept of Ubuntu (Mbigi, 2007). Ubuntu, as a cultural resource, has been a topic of discussion for several years. Some research has focused on how leaders can lead through cultural values with an emphasis on collectivism, participative decision-making, compassion, and treating everyone with respect and dignity. Woermann and Engelbrecht (2019:35) have highlighted that Ubuntu can have a positive impact on the leadership and business practices of an organisation by allowing for employee participation in the strategic decision-making processes. Muller, Smith and Lillah (2019:22) have argued that Ubuntu values, such as being of service to others, have a positive influence on employee engagement and organisational performance. Furthermore, leaders can embrace African shared human values associated with Ubuntu. These leaders, however, must be cognisant of the unique cultural phenomenon that might be evident in South African organisations, such as organisations that may still predominantly follow Western individualistic values systems (Eyong, 2017).

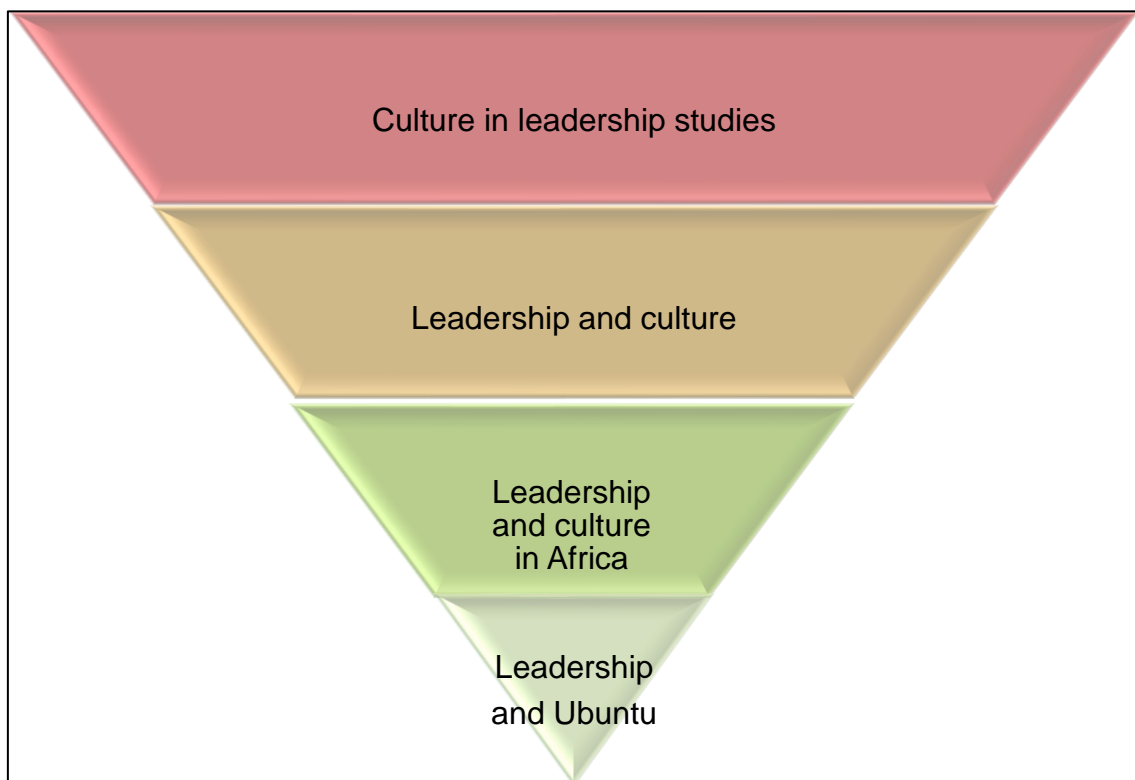
With this as the background, the current study seeks to explore the intersection of culture and leadership. It focuses on this intersection in Africa, specifically focusing on Ubuntu and the extent to which business leaders (for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage) can integrate Ubuntu into their leadership approach. This study explores how Ubuntu as African cultural resource can be an enabler for effective leadership when certain practices are adopted. As will be shown, the study confirms that Ubuntu can have an influence on organisational culture through the adoption of organisational initiatives such as Ubuntu being central to the strategy of organisations, values of the organisation being similar to Ubuntu, and organisations focusing on sustainability and related initiatives.

The study must, however, acknowledge the limitations to Ubuntu. Although it has universal appeal, Mutwarasibo and Iken (2019) noted that people from different cultural backgrounds may find it difficult to understand Ubuntu, which can hinder its adoption. Mwipikeni (2018) argued that the individualistic and neoliberal nature of global economic and political systems is not aligned with Ubuntu, raising questions surrounding its capacity to address social issues such as the unequal distribution of wealth and the empowerment of marginalised and impoverished members of society. Additionally, challenges such as corruption, poor corporate governance, high levels of inequality, corporate failures, and scandals in Africa

continue to cast doubt on whether Ubuntu can truly be integrated into the communities' lived experiences (Woermann & Engelbrecht, 2019:31).

Taken together, studying Ubuntu in the context of leadership could provide valuable insights into its impact on effective leadership practices and the development of organisational culture. Figure 1 below outlines the culture and leadership framework followed for this study, starting with exploring how culture has been viewed in traditional leadership studies. This is then followed by an exploration of how culture is explicitly linked to leadership. Thereafter, the interaction of leadership and African cultures is discussed; finally, an investigation on leadership in the context of Ubuntu is performed.

Figure 1: Culture and leadership framework



1.2 SCHOLARLY CONTEXT

The following sub-sections provide more detailed summaries of the image above. This includes discussions on culture in leadership studies, leadership and culture in general, leadership and culture from an African perspective and finally how Ubuntu can influence leadership.

1.2.1 Culture in leadership studies

Earlier research on leadership made little reference to the influence of culture on leadership. The traits theory mainly focused on identifying traits and characteristics possessed by individuals who are regarded as great leaders (Stogdill, 1974); while the situational paradigm only emphasised that leadership will be influenced by particular situations as opposed to by the leader's traits or behaviours (Bass & Stogdill, 1990; Benmira & Agboola, 2021:3-4; Hunt & Fedynich, 2019:23-24).

However, leadership studies as a field have matured, with culture increasingly becoming a substantive topic. Numerous studies have examined how culture affects the relationship between follower engagement and various leadership styles. These styles include transactional leadership (Judge & Piccolo, 2004); transformational leadership (Hoch, Bommer, Dulebohn & Wu, 2018); servant leadership (Hunter, Neubert, Perry, Witt, Penney & Weinberger, 2013); charismatic leadership (Chen & Huang, 2016); ethical leadership (Bedi, Alpaslan & Green, 2016), and authentic leadership (Hoch *et al.*, 2018).

A tension between somewhat a-cultural and cultural embedded approaches to leadership remains. Bass (1997), for example, argued that both transactional and transformational leadership are inherently universal. However, Budur (2020) suggested that transformational leadership is more effective in countries that foster innovation and are more developed, rather than in cultures that prioritise group orientation. Scholars studying charismatic leadership have noted that cultural context can significantly influence its effectiveness. Additionally, Shamir and Howell (1999) claimed that charismatic leadership is more effective when an adaptive culture is supported and embraced.

A study conducted by Zhang, Guo, Zhang, Xu, Liu, and Newman (2022) investigated the moderating effect of culture on the effectiveness of authentic leadership. They found that authentic leadership is particularly effective in societies with high individualism or where power distance is significantly high. These findings aligned with earlier research by Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, and Walumbwa (2005:358-363), which suggested that authentic

leaders tend to communicate their values and goals while focusing on the personal development and needs of their followers.

Ethical leadership emphasises establishing high ethical standards for leaders and their followers (Brown & Treviño, 2006). It has been proposed that national culture influences ethical leadership, as ethical behaviour is often determined by adherence to social norms and rules (Brown & Mitchell, 2010). For instance, followers may find it easier to report problems or concerns to their leaders in cultures with lower power distance (Brown & Mitchell, 2010).

In contrast, the primary focus of servant leadership is to foster a caring society (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). According to Li, Sun, Taris, Xing, and Peeters (2021), national culture positively affects servant leadership and followers' engagement, as followers feel valued and cared for. This perspective was supported by De Clercq, Bouckennooghe, Raja, and Matsyborska (2014). They argued that servant leadership enhances employee engagement within organisations through high-quality relationships and social interactions, thereby generating positive energy within the workplace.

The relationship between leadership and culture has, therefore, increasingly been the subject of research with numerous studies highlighting that culture provides valuable insights into understanding the phenomenon of leadership (Bolden & Kirk, 2009; Dorfman *et al.*, 2006; Kuada, 2010).

1.2.2 Leadership and culture

Research on leadership and culture as a standalone theme first received scholars' attention during the 1980s (Smircich & Morgan, 1982), paying particular attention to how the research on leadership and culture has evolved and has shaped the various scholarly perspectives of leadership. The perspective of culture and leadership was popularised in Hofstede's (1980) work. The author argued that "many national differences in work-related values, beliefs, norms, and self-descriptions, as well as many societal variables, could be largely explained in terms of their statistical and conceptual associations with four major dimensions of national culture" (Hofstede's, 1980).

The GLOBE study is another influential study on leadership and culture and used Hofstede's work as its foundation to understand the interplay between culture and leadership effectiveness (House, Javidan, Hanges & Dorfman, 2002). The GLOBE research study conducted a comprehensive examination of the role of culture across various countries, industries, and organisations, engaging leaders from 951 organisations in 62 countries (House *et al.*, 2004). The findings from this study offered valuable insights into the cultural dimensions of leadership, revealing how individuals from different cultural backgrounds perceive and expect effective leadership differently or similarly.

The GLOBE research project has made significant contributions to the discourse surrounding leadership by exploring the characteristics of effective leaders within various contexts, particularly across different nation-states and regions. As noted by Madanchian, Hussein, Noordin, and Taherdoost (2017), conceptualising leader effectiveness presents considerable challenges. These challenges arise from the diversity of theoretical frameworks and the empirical findings regarding what constitutes i) an effective leader and ii) appropriate metrics for evaluation. Metz (2018) further highlighted the difficulties in achieving a universal consensus on the attributes of effective leadership, particularly in light of the conflicting value systems that exist globally. Additionally, there is a growing scrutiny of leadership practices that are traditionally rooted in Western paradigms (Bolden & Kirk, 2009; Eyong, 2017).

1.2.3 Leadership and culture in Africa

When looking at African leadership in the context of research on leadership and culture, it is noteworthy that African leadership has been an area of research interest that emerged between 1950 and 1959, with a strong focus, initially, on political leadership (Fourie, Van der Merwe & Van der Merwe, 2017). In the 2000s, nearly half a century later, there was a major development in African leadership research. Increasingly, within leadership and culture as a standalone theme, emphasis was placed on the specifically leadership and African cultural resources. It included themes such as leadership and African values and systems, and leadership, ethnicity, and traditional leadership. Although there has been growing interest in African leadership, few studies have focused on how leadership is

practised in Africa, noting that leadership practices are geographically specific (Lerutla & Steyn, 2022).

The importance of incorporating African values into leadership and business practices has been highlighted by Vilakati and Schurink (2021). The authors argued that the incorporation of African values can create a more humane culture within an organisation, thereby improving the financial and social performance of an organisation. Metz (2018:43) further contended that "a firm led by Afro-communal values would exhibit solidarity with consumers, meaning that it would do what is expected to enable them to live objectively better lives, particularly socio-moral ones". The focus on people's needs could enable reflection amongst leaders within an organisation regarding whether the organisation is contributing towards the good of society.

1.2.4 Leadership and Ubuntu

Focusing on specific African cultural resources of relevance to the study of leadership and culture in Africa, Ubuntu is described by Himonga, Taylor and Pope (2013:26) as a traditional African worldview shaped by societal conduct and a distinct set of values. Ubuntu finds its origin in pre-colonial African rural settings and is associated with indigenous methods of conflict resolution (Swanson, 2007:53-54). These methods have played a crucial role in sustaining communities in sub-Saharan Africa for centuries (Mnyaka & Motlhabi, 2005:215; Ramose, 2010:300). It originates from the Nguni phrase "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu," which translates to "a person is a person through other persons" (Mbigi, 2007).

Ubuntu captures the essence of humanness through universal values such as the compassion, community, harmony, hospitality, respect, and responsiveness that individuals and groups exhibit towards one another (Mangaliso, 2001:23). Ubuntu is represented through fundamental values that are evident in the thoughts and behaviours of African people in their interactions with all individuals they encounter (Sulamoyo, 2010:41). It signifies a unique African way of life, embodying a cultural philosophy that is relevant to other value systems across diverse cultural traditions and heritages.

Edozie (2017) emphasises the significance of leaders acknowledging and valuing the continent's rich cultural heritage, along with its inherent challenges and future aspirations, to effectively incorporate Ubuntu into leadership and business practices. Ubuntu can be integrated into organisational operations through a practice-based approach (Wenger, 1999), where Ubuntu is regarded as an essential component of business functionality. This integration must be backed by the appropriate human capital, capable of translating these values into the organisation's processes, strategies, and protocols (Vilakati, Schurink & Van Wyk, 2018:231).

Ubuntu, like any other concept, has been criticised over the years. Prinsloo (2000) contended that it is not a unique, noting that similar principles, such as "sharing", "brotherhood", "dignity", and "trust", can be observed across various Western and other cultural frameworks. The interpretive flexibility of Ubuntu has led several scholars to scrutinise its validity (McAllister, 2009:2; Metz, 2011:534; West, 2014:57). For instance, West (2014:57) indicated that there are multiple interpretations of Ubuntu, some of which may conflict with one another. They raised the point that achieving a single, coherent understanding of Ubuntu might be impossible. Furthermore, Mokgoro (1998:2-3) characterised Ubuntu as a nuanced concept with diverse representations that are conditional upon the social context in which it is practised.

Sachikonye and Ramlogan (2024:5-6) highlighted the significance of Ubuntu in practice and how it played a role in South Africa during the post-apartheid era. Ubuntu was endorsed by leaders such as former presidents Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki, as well as Archbishop Desmond Tutu during South Africa's earlier post-apartheid era. These leaders guided the concept of African Renaissance and urged the importance of re-engaging with African values during South Africa's reform processes post-apartheid. Ubuntu has been instrumental in shaping the reform of education and public services in post-apartheid South Africa (Sachikonye & Ramlogan, 2024:5-6). This philosophy served as a foundational framework for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which aimed to address the injustices of the apartheid era by providing a platform for the voices of both perpetrators and victims (Sachikonye & Ramlogan, 2024:5-6). In the context of this study, according to Molose, Goldman and Thomas (2018:193), incorporating values such as respect,

compassion, dignity, and group solidarity in leadership practices would have a positive impact on employee commitment and team performance within organisations.

1.3 PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTION

The purpose of this study is to explore the extent to which Ubuntu, as an African cultural resource, is integrated into South African business leadership's approach. By doing so, this study explores the link between culture and leadership.

This study seeks to contribute towards understanding the extent to which Ubuntu, as a cultural resource, is integrated into the leadership approach of business leaders in South Africa by answering one research question (RQ) and three sub-research questions (SRQs). These are:

- RQ1: To what extent do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage integrate Ubuntu into their leadership approach?;
- SRQ1: How do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage define Ubuntu?;
- SRQ2: How do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage view the influence of Ubuntu in their team/organisational performance?; and
- SRQ3: How do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage put Ubuntu into practice within their organisations?

1.4 METHODOLOGY

A comprehensive literature review that focused on leadership and its intersection with culture established the foundation for this study. This review contributed to the researcher's understanding of the evolution of leadership research and its implications. The literature review also explored African leadership and connections with culture, specifically Ubuntu. As argued by Engler and Stausberg (2021:34), a comprehensive literature review should form the basis of any study to enable a full understanding of the phenomenon being studied, including all the limitations. The literature review enabled the identification of an existing gap in the body of knowledge focusing on Ubuntu and its impact on leadership. The gap identified relates to understanding the extent to which leaders can integrate Ubuntu into their

leadership approach (Vilakati & Schurink, 2021). A main RQ and SRQs were developed to enable addressing the research gap identified as mentioned above.

A qualitative phenomenological research design was followed. The sample of participants included entrepreneurs, C-suite executives, senior executives, and senior managers from various multinational companies within South Africa. As the origins of Ubuntu can be traced to the Southern African Bantu people (Bolden & Kirk, 2009), participants were only selected from South Africa. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews. All the participants had to confirm that Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage before data were collected.

From an ontological perspective, the researcher adopted a critical realism stance. According to Creswell (2012), critical realism is well-suited for qualitative research, as it acknowledges the multiple realities experienced by participants. In terms of ontology, critical epistemology occupies a space between objectivist and constructivist epistemological viewpoints (Gabriel, 2015). This critical epistemology emphasises the connection between human subjectivity, agency, and creativity, as well as broader goals of human progress, freedom, equality, and justice. This analytical framework is particularly valuable for researchers aiming to enhance understanding of individuals and groups who face oppression from various ideological, economic, and political forces in society (Bauman, 2013). Therefore, the researcher positioned this study within a critical epistemological framework.

Data were collected from 20 participants who identified Ubuntu as a part of their cultural heritage. The data collection involved semi-structured interviews. The analysis yielded 507 codes, which were further categorised into five main themes and 44 sub-themes. These themes and sub-themes were crucial for addressing the research gaps identified. The researcher then linked each theme to the specific RQ it aims to answer. The methodological approach adopted during the research process thus ensured the credibility and confirmability of the study and its findings.

1.5 MAIN CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

This study explored the interplay between culture and leadership, with a particular emphasis on the concept of Ubuntu in the African context. It explored the extent to which business leaders can integrate Ubuntu as a cultural resource into their leadership practices. Consequently, this research enriches the understanding of the relationship between culture, specifically Ubuntu, and effective leadership.

1.6 DELIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

The major limitation of this study lies in the fact that the study only focused on the participants who self-identified as Ubuntu being part of their cultural heritage. The study further only focused on leaders within South Africa, which is deemed to be one of the birthplaces of Ubuntu. The perspective of what constitutes effective leadership that embraces Ubuntu was mainly provided by those in leadership positions, without sufficient voice being provided by those in a followership role. The methodological choices supporting this study are further discussed in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

1.7 OUTLINE OF THESIS

The thesis is structured in the format of seven chapters. The present chapter, which is the first chapter, introduced the study and outlined the main objectives of this study. This chapter is followed by Chapter 2, which explores how culture interacts with leadership, including the understanding of leadership within the African context. Chapter 3 shifts towards providing an overview on leadership through Ubuntu alongside the evolution of Ubuntu. The most common values associated with Ubuntu are also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 4 documents the methodology that was followed to conduct this study. The data collection and analysis strategies are elaborated upon and the ethical considerations contributing to the accountability of the research process are explored. This is followed by Chapter 5, which presents the findings of this study. These findings are categorised into common themes for ease of discussion and presentation purposes. Chapter 6 discusses the findings of this study. The finale chapter, Chapter 7, summarises the key findings, the limitations of these findings, the contribution of this study to the leadership literature and the recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER 2: LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

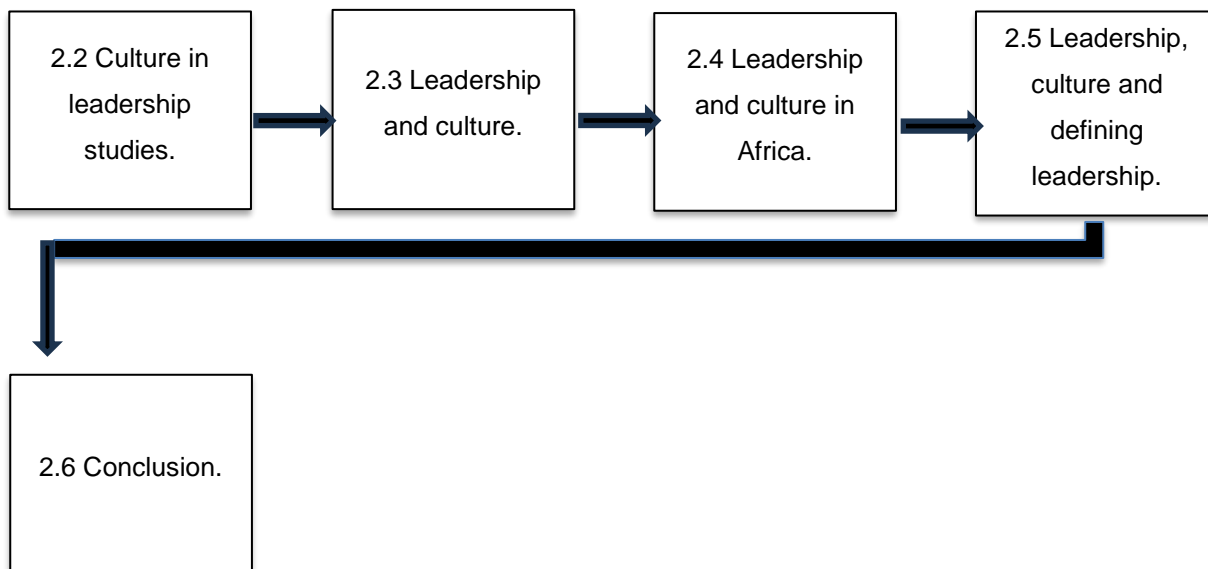
Leadership is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has been the subject of extensive study over the years (Wilson, 2013:1). Its significance has only increased in today's fast-paced and increasingly globalised environment (Benmira & Agboola, 2020:3). Despite the depth of research, the intricacies of leadership continue to evoke stimulating and sometimes perplexing discussions (Wilson, 2013:1). As noted by Bennis (2009), "leadership is the most studied and least understood topic in the social sciences," highlighting the ongoing challenges in fully grasping this essential subject.

Mangaliso (2001:23) argued that a significant portion of leadership theory is founded on the writings of 20th-century Western scholars, whose perspectives are predominantly influenced by economics and classical sociology. These theories often depict individuals as primarily individualistic, utility-maximising, and transaction-oriented. Consequently, they can portray human behaviour in a mechanistic manner, often neglecting cultural and regional variations (Mangaliso, 2001:23). In reality, individuals are not solely economic entities; they are also social and communal beings, with their actions frequently driven by cultural and societal norms rather than purely rational considerations (Mangaliso, 2001:23). Furthermore, the influence of these factors on leader and follower behaviour can vary considerably across different cultures.

The complexities of the world, characterised by globalisation, rapid change, and disruptive technological advancements, have resulted in an evolution in leadership practices (Benmira & Agboola, 2020:3). Leadership is increasingly recognised as a multifaceted interaction involving the leader, followers, the broader system, and the specific context (Benmira & Agboola, 2021:4). Leadership can, therefore, not simply focus on one dimension or aspect of leadership. A significant theme in leadership literature is the evolving impact of culture on leadership practices, highlighting the need for a comprehensive approach to effective leadership. Mangaliso (2001:23) suggested that by acknowledging these complexities, the global leadership discourse can advance towards developing more holistic and inclusive theories of leadership practices and leadership behaviours. This understanding is crucial for fostering effective leadership strategies in diverse environments.

In this context, this chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the literature surrounding leadership and examines the evolution of current understanding regarding the relationship between culture and leadership. It further articulates a definition of leadership pertinent to the fields of leadership and cultural studies. The chapter concludes with insights into the complexities of culture and its effects on leadership practices. Figure 2 below outlines the structure of this chapter.

Figure 2: Outline of Chapter 2



2.2 CULTURE IN LEADERSHIP STUDIES

As stated, the complexity of the world has necessitated the shift in leadership from a top-down process to a dynamic interaction among the leader, followers, the system, and the context, requiring leaders not to only focus on one dimension of leadership (Benmira & Agboola, 2021:4). Recent literature on leadership has increasingly recognised the influence of culture on leadership. This section will, therefore, examine the role of culture within the most prominent leadership theories, aiming to highlight its importance in the field of leadership studies. The analysis will commence with earlier leadership theories and advance toward more recent theories.

It should be noted, though, that earlier research on leadership has often overlooked the role of culture in shaping leadership effectiveness. The primary focus of early theories (such as

the traits theory) was to identify the specific traits and characteristics associated with individuals recognised as exceptional leaders (Stogdill, 1974). It was commonly asserted that these leadership traits were innate and uniquely possessed by certain individuals, contributing to their effectiveness as leaders (Stogdill, 1974). These traits were categorised into five distinct groups, namely biophysical, cognitive, character, emotional competency, and social competency. The trait theory therefore did not adequately address the influence of cultural factors on leadership effectiveness. The situational leadership paradigm also failed to adequately address the impact of culture on leadership. It posits that a leader's effectiveness is primarily determined by specific situational factors rather than individual traits or behaviours (Bass & Stogdill, 1981:3-21; Benmira & Agboola, 2021:3-4; Hunt & Fedynich, 2019:23-24). As such, leaders must adapt their leadership styles to meet the demands of varying circumstances. This adaptability suggests that followers' developmental levels can significantly impact the leadership style employed. Additionally, it is pertinent to note that the assumption that leaders can easily modify their behaviours overlooks the inherent complexities of human interactions (Bolden, Gosling & Hawkins, 2023).

A central theme in the evolution of leadership literature - since the development of the traits and the situational theories - is the influence of culture on leadership theories. This highlights the essential need for a comprehensive approach to fostering effective leadership. The earlier findings by Bass (1997) contended that transactional leadership and transformational leadership are culturally universal in nature. The focus of transactional leadership is on conventional exchange relationships, where the follower's obedience is exchanged for rewards and disobedience would result in some sort of punishment (Bass & Stogdill, 1990). Transformational leadership, however, emphasises that leadership is a process of engagement between the leader and the follower to create a connection that raises motivation and morality levels in both (Bass & Avolio, 1990).

Scholars have increasingly examined Hofstede's (1980) individualism/collectivism dimension as the field of leadership studies progressed; specifically, its implications for both transactional and transformational leadership approaches. Notably, research conducted by Jung and Avolio (1999) investigated the moderating effects of individualism and collectivism on responses to these leadership styles within a controlled laboratory environment. Their findings revealed that collectivists were more inclined to generate innovative ideas when

working with a transformational leader, whereas individualists demonstrated greater creativity in collaboration with a transactional leader. Jung and Avolio (1999) concluded that individual differences may have significantly influenced the levels of motivation and performance observed in their study.

Cross-cultural leadership literature (Gelfand, Erez & Aycan, 2007) reveals that cultural value orientations, defined as individually held cultural values and beliefs, influence follower responses to various workplace elements. Within the leadership domain, these cultural value orientations shape perceptions regarding the behaviours, skills, and personality traits regarded as effective in leadership (Javidan, Dorfman, de Luque & House, 2006). To successfully lead a culturally diverse workforce, leaders must comprehend how these cultural orientations affect followers' reactions to different leadership approaches. Moreover, understanding the interplay between leadership behaviours and followers' cultural value orientations is crucial for influencing their emotional, cognitive, and behavioural outcomes. Initial findings indicated that cultural value orientations are particularly impactful in shaping followers' responses to transformational leadership (Walumbwa & Lawler, 2003; Walumbwa, Lawler & Avolio, 2007).

More recent studies on leadership have highlighted the impact culture can have on transactional and transformational leadership, especially the leader-follower relationship (Kirkman, Chen, Farh, Chen & Lowe, 2009; Lian, Ferris & Brown, 2012) and organisational performance (Gelfand *et al.*, 2007). Further research contends that certain cultural values will have moderating effects on leadership, as culture may influence an individual's behaviours based on their traditions and beliefs (Rabl, Jayasinghe, Gerhart & Kühlmann, 2014). These theorists have argued that cultural differences would dictate the effectiveness of leadership styles in different countries (Rabl *et al.*, 2014). A study by Mujkić, Šehić, Rahimić and Jusić (2014) explored the impact of transformational leadership in German, Bosnian and Herzegovinian cultures and found that transformational leadership was more influential in Germany in comparison. Furthermore, Budur (2020) argued that transformational leadership is more effective in countries where innovation is encouraged and the country is more developed, rather than in countries where the culture is group oriented.

Charismatic leadership is profoundly shaped by the concepts introduced by early sociologist Max Weber. The author characterised this form of leadership as one that derives influence not from traditional or formal authority but from the followers' perception that the leader possesses exceptional qualities or powers (Weber, 1947). Weber (1947, in Yukl, 2010) argued that charisma tends to emerge during periods of social crisis, when a leader articulates a transformative vision that addresses the crisis and captivates followers who resonate with that vision. Earlier literature on charismatic leadership, however, did not express views on the influence of culture on leadership. The contemporary evolution of charismatic leadership theory is often associated with Robert House's work (Luthans, 2010). According to House's framework, followers are inclined to attribute extraordinary leadership abilities to individuals who exhibit certain observable behaviours (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Robbins & Judge, 2013).

Charismatic leaders are, therefore, seen as being able to motivate followers toward achieving exceptional results (Conger & Kanungo, 1994). Charismatic leadership theory reflects the implicit assumptions associated with heroic leadership. Charismatic leaders therefore tend to influence people into strong supporters or bitter opponents (Yukl, 1999). There was, however, limited earlier research on the impact of culture and charismatic leadership. Therefore, scholars such as Shamir and Howell (1999) argued that charismatic leadership was not fully understood, as the contextual factors that influenced charismatic leadership were not explored. It was a widely held belief among both practitioners and academics that charismatic leadership is inherently effective across all organisational environments. However, a closer examination of the organisational context revealed specific conditions under which charismatic leadership may demonstrate greater or lesser effectiveness (House *et al.*, 1991; Howell & Avolio, 1993; Pillai & Meindl, 1991; Waldman & Ramirez, 1992). Empirical research thus began to explore various contextual elements that impact the emergence and effectiveness of charismatic leadership, including crises, environmental uncertainty, and the influence of culture (House *et al.*, 1991; Howell & Avolio, 1993; Pillai & Meindl, 1991; Waldman & Ramirez, 1992).

Research indicates that national culture plays an important role in shaping leadership. It mostly looks at how cultural values and assumptions influence the way leaders act and make decisions. With this in mind, scholars of culture and its influence on charismatic leadership

evolved, arguing that culture can indeed influence the effectiveness of charismatic leadership. Shamir and Howell (1999) argued that charismatic leadership will be more effective where adaptive culture is encouraged and embraced. Kotter and Heskett (2008) defined adaptive culture as a system that is characterised by values which emphasise teamwork, innovations, honest communication, enthusiasm, risk taking and integrity. Adaptive culture, therefore, enables charismatic leaders to reinforce organisational values and identities as justification to contribute to the collective mission within an organisation. These findings are supported by a study by Janićijević (2019:134), who argued that charismatic leaders will be more effective in collectivist cultures as they are often pleased to relate to others within a group and share a common vision or goals. Janićijević (2019:134) further stated that it is difficult for charismatic leaders to be effective in individualistic cultures, as individuals within these societies are driven by their interests.

Research by Avolio and Luthans (2003) highlighted the importance of leaders being true to themselves to gain credibility and influence with their followers. This brought forth discussions focusing on authentic leadership (Avolio & Luthans, 2003). There are multiple definitions relating to authentic leadership; however, there are three components that are common across these definitions (Gardner, Karam, Alvesson & Einola, 2021). The first is accepting organisational and personal responsibilities for actions taken and mistakes made; the second is followers not being manipulated, and the third is the prominence of the self over role requirements (Gardner *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, authentic leaders display “actions that are guided by the leaders’ true self as reflected by core values, beliefs, thoughts and feelings, as opposed to environmental contingencies or pressures from others” (Gardner *et al.*, 2021). Research on authentic leadership has indicated that authentic leadership can have a positive impact on team performance by leaders practicing and supporting desired habits and actions (Rego, Vitória, Magalhães, Ribeiro & e Cunha, 2013).

A study by Zhang *et al.* (2022) explored the moderating effect culture may have on the effectiveness of authentic leadership. The study found that authentic leadership is highly effective in societies with a high level of individualism or when the power distance is high (Zhang *et al.*, 2022). Gardner *et al.* (2005:358-363) also argued that authentic leaders tend to communicate their values and goals and are focused on their followers’ personal development and needs. These behaviours are consistent with the values placed by people

in individualistic cultures on their interests. Furthermore, the reason authentic leadership has a high moderating effect in societies with high power distance is because authentic leaders tend to share critical information with their followers as they want to empower them. This behaviour contradicts the expected behaviour, where the unequal distribution of information and authority is institutionalised in high power distance culture (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans & May, 2004:815-816).

Brown and Treviño (2006) define ethical leadership as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making”. Ethical leadership, therefore, focuses on establishing high ethical standards for leaders and their followers (Brown & Treviño, 2006). This leadership approach requires leaders to be aware that their actions influence and affect others – thus, they must pay attention to the values and ethics they exhibit (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Ethical leaders therefore place great emphasis on conducting their lives and leadership responsibilities ethically, with the belief that ethical leadership represents a critical component to effective leadership. The initial research on ethical leadership therefore sought to define ethical leadership from both normative and social scientific (descriptive) perspectives within the realm of business ethics. The normative perspective, grounded in philosophical principles, emphasises the importance of prescribing how individuals should ideally conduct themselves in the workplace (Brown & Mitchell, 2010).

Brown and Treviño's (2006) review of ethical leadership studies found that most research has mainly looked at the United States of America (USA) and other Western cultures. This limited perspective could lead to some 'incorrect conclusions' when these findings are applied to different cultural settings. It has been argued that national culture does influence ethical leadership as ethical behaviour is determined by compliance with norms and rules (Brown & Mitchell, 2010). As an example, it might be easier for followers to report problems or concerns to leaders in societies where the power distance culture is lower (Brown & Mitchell, 2010). Furthermore, it is highly likely for followers to tolerate abusive and unethical leadership in high power distance cultures.

Wang, Lu and Liu's (2017) study suggested that a collectivistic orientation is important for understanding how loyal subordinates are to their ethical leaders in Chinese cultures. Wang *et al.*'s (2017:538) study found that:

“ethical leadership was positively related to subordinate's loyalty to supervisor; interactional justice, that is the perception of fair treatment received by followers from his/her supervisor, mediated the positive relationship between ethical leadership and loyalty to supervisor; collectivistic orientation moderated the positive relationship between ethical leadership and interactional justice; collectivistic orientation moderated the indirect effect of ethical leadership on loyalty to supervisor via interactional justice, and the mediated relationship was stronger for high collectivistic subordinates than for low collectivistic subordinates”.

This research has also indicated a positive correlation between collectivism and followers' loyalty to ethical leaders. This is because followers affected by decisions made by ethical leaders are treated with dignity and respect (Wang *et al.*, 2017).

The main emphasis of servant leadership is to build a society that is caring (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). The principle of servant leadership is that of being a servant first and not leading first (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). Greenleaf (2002) proposed that:

“...becoming a servant-leader begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve ... then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. He or she [sic] is sharply different from the person who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions”.

Earlier research by Dorfman, Howell, Hibino, Lee, Tate and Bautista (2006) that focused on leadership in Western and Asian countries concluded that servant leadership is universal. According to De Sousa and Van Dierendonck (2014:893), organisations have begun to recognise the universal nature of servant leadership, therefore acknowledging it as a legitimate leadership approach across different national cultures. De Sousa and Van Dierendonck (2014:893) have further argued that servant leadership has a positive effect on employee engagement and could result in an improvement in the performance and well-being of employees. These arguments are supported by De Clercq *et al.* (2014:206), who stated that servant leadership increases employee engagement within organisations through high-quality relationships and social interactions, thereby stimulating positive energy levels within organisations. Li *et al.* (2021:12) suggested that national culture has a

positive effect on servant leadership and followers' work engagement as followers are cared for, and the leadership-follower engagement relationship is stronger in countries where there is low uncertainty avoidance.

Research on leadership and culture has indicated a positive correlation exists between followers' engagement and various leadership styles. These include i) transactional leadership (Judge & Piccolo, 2004); ii) transformational leadership (Hoch *et al.*, 2018); iii) servant leadership (Hunter *et al.*, 2013); iv) charismatic leadership (Chen & Huang, 2016); v) ethical leadership (Bedi *et al.*, 2016), and vi) authentic leadership (Hoch *et al.*, 2018). These findings underscore the importance of understanding cultural dynamics, which have significantly influenced the evolution of multiple leadership theories.

2.3 LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE

The earlier sections of this literature review chapter discussed the relationship between culture and leadership more generally, emphasising how culture has been perceived in traditional leadership studies. This section will specifically examine the direct connection between culture and leadership by exploring the Hofstede cultural framework and the GLOBE effectiveness framework. These two frameworks provide a model of national culture and have been widely studied in the fields of cross-cultural leadership and international business.

The interaction between leadership and culture has been extensively explored in academic literature, highlighting its significance in organisational dynamics. Several studies suggested that culture serves as a lens through which leadership behaviours can be comprehended (Bolden & Kirk, 2009; Dorfman *et al.*, 2006; Kuada, 2010). Others have investigated the effectiveness of various leadership styles within specific cultural contexts (Lerutla & Steyn, 2022). It is, therefore, crucial to consider the unique cultural environments in which leaders operate, as they often manage teams characterised by diverse and sometimes contrasting cultural backgrounds (Mbigi, 2007; Perry, Witt, Penney & Atwater, 2010; Theimann & April, 2007).

The study of leadership and culture began to gain prominence in the 1980s (Smircich & Morgan, 1982). Research conducted by House, Wright, and Aditya (1997) indicated that a leader's behaviour regarding their understanding of effective leadership is influenced by the cultural values and dynamics surrounding them. Implicit leadership theory (ILT) asserts that individuals differentiate leaders from non-leaders based on their beliefs, cultural perceptions, and expectations (Lord & Maher, 2002:90-98). ILT posits that these individual beliefs significantly influence leaders' behaviours (Eden & Leviatan, 1975:740). Implicit theories therefore act as frameworks through which people process, encode, and recall information regarding specific events and behaviours (Shaw, 1990). Lord and Maher (2002:98) noted, "While leadership perceptions may not reflect reality, observers employ them to assess and distinguish between leaders and non-leaders, as well as effective and ineffective leaders. This attribution process is foundational to social power and influence". Consequently, ILT serves as an informal mechanism legitimising the attributes and behaviours of leaders, while also affecting individuals' preferences regarding leader classification. It is essential to recognise that followers' perceptions of effective leadership are deeply rooted in their cultural values, which results in variations in ILT across different countries and cultural contexts.

Culturally endorsed implicit leadership theory (CLT) enhances our understanding of ILT by arguing that individuals within a society who share similar values tend to have aligned perspectives regarding the qualities that characterise an effective leader (House *et al.*, 2013). A study by Muralidharan and Pathak (2018) found that leaders are more likely to gain acceptance from their followers when they demonstrate traits that align with these implicit expectations. Furthermore, the study emphasised the importance of cultural context and the settings in which leadership shapes leadership discourse (Muralidharan & Pathak, 2018).

Understanding leadership from a cross-cultural perspective has, therefore, enhanced knowledge regarding the conditions conducive to effective leadership across various countries and has contributed to the identification of potential universal aspects of leadership (Mittal & Elias, 2016:61). This literature review will further expand on the predominant cross-cultural frameworks, focusing on Hofstede's dimensions and the findings from the GLOBE research, in particular.

2.3.1 Hofstede cultural framework

The Hofstede cultural framework originated in 1980. Hofstede gained access to a large survey database relating to a study on International Business Machines (IBM) employees. The study focused on the values and related sentiments of IBM employees in over 50 countries around the world (Hofstede, 1980). The initial analysis of the data at an individual level did not provide a meaningful correlation; however, further analysis found a correlation being found at the country level. This resulted in the identification of Hofstede's first four dimensions, namely i) power distance; ii) individualism/collectivism; iii) femininity/masculinity, and iv) uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1980).

The research in its original form was regarded as a breakthrough in cross-cultural studies. This is because it has several salient characteristics, namely (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011):

- Culture was often treated as a single variable in earlier cross-cultural research, however, the Hofstede framework identified independent dimensions;
- The four dimensions were formed at a national level and supported by variables constructed across national and not at an individual or organisational level;
- The dimensions addressed social problems;
- The dimensions revealed national differences;
- The research provided large data evidence of the impact of national culture on leadership philosophies, organisational behaviours, and society; and
- The research provided country measures (indexes) on the dimensions.

This early work, however, received its fair share of criticisms, including that the data relied upon for the study was outdated (Roberts, Boyacigiller, Staw & Cummings, 1984). To address these concerns, Hofstede replicated their study to include 76 countries (Hofstede, 2011). This resulted in two new dimensions, namely long-term orientation and indulgence/restraint, being added (Hofstede, 2011). Hofstede's cultural framework (Hofstede, 2011) has been extensively researched in diverse fields, including accountancy, administration, economics, leadership, and sociology (Rattrie, Kittler & Paul, 2020; Vollero, Siano, Palazzo & Amabile, 2020). Recent studies have replicated Hofstede's framework and

highlighted negative results for some of Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Beugelsdijk & Welzel, 2018; Minkov, 2018; Minkov & Kaasa, 2021).

The dimension of power distance describes the extent to which individuals in a society accept and expect unequal distribution of power (Hofstede, 2001). It can, therefore, be argued that leaders and followers endorse the unequal distribution of power. Table 1 provides a view of the difference between small power distance and large power distance, as articulated by the Hofstede cultural framework.

Table 1: Small versus large power distance

Small power distance	Large power distance
The use of power has criteria of good and evil and should be legitimate.	Society is built on the foundation of power where its legitimacy is irrelevant.
Children are treated as equals by their parents.	Children are taught to be obedient.
There are no fears of older people and older people are not overly respected.	There are fears of older people and older people are respected.
Hierarchy is established for convenience and means inequality of roles.	Hierarchy is established for empirical inequality.
There is an expectation by followers to be consulted.	Followers expect to be told what to do.
The establishment of governments is through majority votes, and there is a peaceful transition of power.	The establishment of governments is through autocratic processes and changed by revolution.
There is even a distribution of income.	There is an uneven distribution of income.
Corruption is rare within the society and scandals are dealt with seriously.	Society is filled with corruption and scandals are covered up.
Religion encourages equality.	Religion reinforces inequality.

Source: Hofstede (2001)

According to Hofstede (2011), power distance tends to be higher in African, Eastern European, Asian and Latin countries, whereas power distance was seen to be lower in English-speaking Western and Germanic countries; “with people in countries high in power distance more likely to accept and expect differences in power among them, whereas in countries with low power distance, people expect that the differences in power should be

minimised”. Social classification is prominent in cultures with higher power distance and power is considered to enable stability and social order.

Studies have been conducted to understand the effect of power distance and the relationship between transformational leadership and follower outcomes, with these studies providing varying outcomes. Newman and Butler (2014:1038) found that “follower power-distance orientation served as a weakener of the positive relationship between leader transformational behaviours and follower affective commitment”. This is, however, inconsistent with the finding made by Sheikh, Newman and Al Azzeh (2013); they argued that power distance did not significantly moderate the relationship between transformational leaders’ behaviours and the job involvement of followers.

The Hofstede cultural dimension of individualism/collectivism describes how individuals within a society regard themselves as integrated members or how individuals are encouraged to be independent (Hofstede, 2001). This cultural dimension could therefore guide in terms of which leadership approach could be most effective in different countries. Table 2 provides a view of the difference between individualism and collectivism as articulated by the Hofstede cultural framework.

Table 2: Individualism versus collectivism

Individualism	Collectivism
Individuals are expected to take care of themselves, including immediate family members only.	Individuals regard themselves as integrated members of extended families, clans, and society.
Greater emphasis on “I” identity.	Greater emphasis on “We” identity.
Right of privacy.	The importance placed on belonging.
Individuals are encouraged to speak their minds.	It is important to maintain harmonious relations.
The use of “I” in language is essential.	The use of “I” in language is avoided.
Personal viewpoints and opinions are expected.	The group/collective predetermines viewpoints and opinions.
Completion of tasks prevails over relationships.	Maintenance of good relationships prevails over task completion.

Individualism	Collectivism
High context communication: everything needs to be specified, therefore communications can be extensive.	Most of the things are obvious, therefore communication can be short.
Individual freedom and choices are encouraged.	Collectivism values tradition, conformism, and submission.

Source: Hofstede (2001)

Hofstede (2011) argued that so-called developed and Western countries tend to be individualist, while 'less developed' and Eastern countries are more collectivist in their cultural approaches. The cultural dimension of individualism/collectivism has been studied extensively throughout the years with varying conclusions highlighting the complexity of relying on Hofstede's individualism/collectivism dimension. In their research, Minkov (2018) argued that although the USA is regarded as a developed society, it is, however, not an individualist country. This is because the USA's society is still far more religious, it has lower concern for out-groups, the rights concerning the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, and intersex (LGBTQI+) community are constantly debated, the death penalty is still practised and female rights to abortion are a permanent hot topic. There is, therefore, greater emphasis on adherence to laws within a collectivist society. However, this does not include personal rule orientation, which indicates that there is a greater focus on others following the rules, as opposed to individuals themselves following the rules (Minkov & Kaasa, 2021).

The cultural dimension of individualism/collectivism has been studied extensively, with some studies arguing that collectivist cultures would have an impact on leadership and team performance. Schaubroeck, Lam and Cha (2007) found that collectivism strengthened team potency and team performance. Jung, Yammarino and Lee (2009) found collectivism had a positive impact on leaders' behaviours and effectiveness. Newman and Butler (2014) argued that collectivism can have a positive relationship between leaders' behaviours and followers' outcomes. Additionally, Sertel, Karadag and Ergin-Kocatürk (2022) found that leadership can increase performance in cultures where there is greater emphasis placed on achieving group, team or organisational goals as opposed to individual goals. This also translates to individuals within the team or organisation being committed to shared goals.

Although there have been differing views by scholars on Hofstede's individualism/collectivism dimension, Minkov (2018) argued that Hofstede identified the accurate facets of individualism/collectivism. Research by Minkov and Kaasa (2021) also concluded that prominent cultural facts in collectivist cultures include avoiding conflict, restrictiveness, and conformism due to low levels of judgment by individuals to choose which societal rules are sensible or outdated.

The dimension of uncertainty avoidance describes the extent to which members of society can tolerate situations that do not provide certainty (Hofstede, 2001). Table 3 provides a view of the difference between weak and strong uncertainty avoidance, as articulated by the Hofstede cultural framework.

Table 3: Weak versus strong uncertainty avoidance

Weak uncertainty avoidance	Strong uncertainty avoidance
The uncertainties of life are accepted, and situations are dealt with as they come.	The uncertainties of life are regarded as a threat that must be fought.
Lower levels of stress and anxiety.	Higher levels of stress and anxiety.
Society is comfortable with dealing with ambiguous and chaotic situations.	Society is not comfortable with dealing with ambiguous and chaotic situations.
Teachers are comfortable with indicating that they do not know all the answers.	Teachers are expected to know all the answers.
Changing roles is accepted.	It is the norm for individuals to stay in jobs that they dislike.
There is a dislike of rules.	There is a need for rules to be in place.
Citizens are regarded as competent.	Citizens are regarded as incompetent.

Source: Hofstede (2001)

According to Hofstede (2011), it can be expected for societies embracing weak uncertainty avoidance to be more tolerant of different opinions; have fewer rules, and for philosophical and religious citizens to be pragmatists. People within these cultures are calmer and more reflective, and not expected to express emotions. Countries with stronger uncertainty avoidance include Eastern and Central European countries, Latin countries, Japan, and

German-speaking countries. Countries with weaker uncertainty avoidance include English-speaking, Nordic, and Chinese culture countries.

Uncertainty avoidance is one of the most controversial of Hofstede's dimensions and has been criticised on theoretical grounds. Several studies have highlighted the inability to replicate Hofstede's findings on uncertainty avoidance (Beugelsdijk & Welzel, 2018; Merritt, 2000; Minkov, 2018), therefore bringing to question the validity of this dimension.

The dimension of femininity/masculinity describes the extent to which values and roles are distributed based on gender (Hofstede, 2001). Table 4 provides a view of the difference between femininity and masculinity as articulated by the Hofstede cultural framework.

Table 4: Femininity versus masculinity

Femininity	Masculinity
There are minimal societal roles and emotional differences between genders.	There are extreme societal roles and emotional differences between genders.
All genders are modest and caring.	All genders are ambitious and assertive.
Work-life balance is encouraged.	Work is regarded as more important than family.
The mother would decide on the number of children.	The father decides the size of the family.
There is a strong female presence in politics.	There is a strong male presence in politics.
The primary focus of religion is fellow human beings.	The primary focus of religion is God.
There is sympathy for the weak members of society.	There is admiration for the strong members of society.

Source: Hofstede (2001)

Countries with high masculinity culture include Japan, Italy, Mexico, and German-speaking countries (Hofstede, 2011). English-speaking Western countries have a moderately high masculinity culture, while some Latin and Asian countries such as France, Spain, Portugal, Chile, Korea, and Thailand have a lower masculinity culture. Some studies have argued that individualism/collectivism and femininity/masculinity dimensions are similar in nature and may not be able to exist separately in the context in which they were created (Minkov & Kaasa, 2021; Minkov, Dutt, Schachner, Jandosova, Khassenbekov, Morales & Blagoev, 2019). Furthermore, the femininity/masculinity dimension has received a lot of criticism for

reinforcing sexist stereotypes (Minkov *et al.*, 2019). It is worth noting that several studies have highlighted the inability to replicate Hofstede's findings on femininity/masculinity (Beugelsdijk & Welzel, 2018; Merritt, 2000; Minkov, 2018). This brings into question the validity of the dimension. Minkov *et al.* (2019) have, therefore, concluded that Hofstede's femininity/masculinity is another dimension of individualism/collectivism.

The long-term orientation dimension describes the extent to which society can embrace future commitments that are long-term in nature over those that are short-term, thereby distinguishing the ability of societies to embrace change (Hofstede, 2001). Table 5 provides a view of the difference between long-term and short-term orientation as articulated by the Hofstede cultural framework.

Table 5: Long-term orientation versus short-term orientation

Long-term orientation	Short-term orientation
Notable life milestones will occur in the future.	Notable life milestones occurred in the past or will occur in the short term.
The ability to adapt to changing circumstances translates to individuals being regarded as good people.	The ability to be stable would translate to individuals being regarded as good people.
Circumstances would dictate what society would regard as good or evil.	Universal guidelines would dictate what society would regard as good or evil.
It is important to try to learn from other countries.	It is expected of the members of society to be proud of their country.
There is a culture of saving and investment,	There is a culture of consumption,
Change in circumstances would result in traditions being reviewed.	Traditions are rarely reviewed.
Rapid economic growth with a focus on prosperity.	Lower economic growth.

Source: Hofstede (2001)

The African continent, Latin America, Australia, and the USA are short-term oriented. East Asia, Eastern and Central European countries are regarded as long-term oriented (Hofstede, 2011).

The indulgence dimension describes the extent to which society freely allows the gratification of basic and natural human desires, while restraint describes the extent to which

society controls gratification (Hofstede, 2001). Table 6 provides a view of the difference between indulgence and restraint as articulated by the Hofstede cultural framework.

Table 6: Indulgence versus restraint

Indulgence	Restraint
The majority of the society indicates that they are happy.	Fewer members of the society indicate that they are happy.
There is a likelihood of remembering positive emotions.	There is a likelihood of remembering negative emotions.
The majority of the members in the society are involved in sports.	Fewer members of the society are involved in sports.
Greater importance is placed on leisure.	Less importance is placed on leisure.
Members of society place greater importance on freedom of speech.	Members of society place lesser importance on freedom of speech.
Lesser importance is placed on maintaining order within society.	Greater importance is placed on maintaining order within society.

Source: Hofstede (2001)

Countries in South and North America, and parts of Sub-Saharan Africa tend to indulge. Contrastingly, Eastern Europe and Asian countries are more restrained (Hofstede, 2011).

The Hofstede cultural framework has highlighted the impact cultural values such as individualism, collectivism, and power distance can have on the leadership approach adopted by leaders depending on the cultural context. It is, therefore, important for leaders to be cognisant of the fact that culture will influence the performance of followers, including how to motivate and reward followers (Rowe, Cannella Jr, Rankin & Gorman, 2005). Leaders operating in an organisation where there are multiple cultural dimensions will also be expected to figure out this complexity while paying attention to cultural sensitivity.

Research utilising Hofstede’s cultural dimensions has examined the significant role that follower traits and cultural values play in shaping leadership behaviours and follower outcomes (Zhang, Kwan, Zhang & Wu, 2014). It is imperative to acknowledge diversity among followers, as understanding these differences enhances insights into effective leadership practices (Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe & Carsten, 2014:92). Followers’ cultural values and traits represent critical boundary conditions for leadership, enabling a more thorough

understanding of leadership dynamics within specific cultural contexts. Uhl-Bien *et al.* (2014:94) argued for a shift in focus towards a role-based perspective on followership. This perspective underscores the influence of follower cultural values on leader behaviours, thereby affecting the leadership process. For example, followers who value teamwork and collectivism can significantly influence leader responses. Research indicates a positive correlation between followers' cultural value of collectivism and corresponding leader behaviours, which can lead to beneficial outcomes such as enhanced team performance and effectiveness (Schaubroeck *et al.*, 2007); improved individual performance (Yang, Zhang & Tsui, 2010); increased job involvement (Sheikh *et al.*, 2013), and heightened commitment from followers (Newman & Butler, 2014).

In 2021, researchers performed a study focusing on followers' participation in organisational decision-making processes across European countries, employing Hofstede's six cultural dimensions (Valverde-Moreno, Torres-Jimenez & Lucia-Casademunt, 2021). The study found that organisations operating within individualist cultures are more inclined to adopt participative decision-making practices (Valverde-Moreno *et al.*, 2021). These findings challenge earlier research that implied a strong correlation between collectivist cultures and participative decision-making (Valverde-Moreno *et al.*, 2021). Thus, promoting follower participation in decision-making can yield positive effects on both team and organisational performance. Consequently, leaders need to understand how cultural values influence decision-making processes within their organisations (Lam, Chen & Schaubroeck, 2002). Engaging followers in this manner can provide valuable insights that shape organisational decisions and enhance information exchange processes (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012).

Several studies have been conducted to understand the interaction of culture - using Hofstede's cultural framework - and leadership. Although Hofstede's cultural framework remains one of the most influential cross-cultural studies (Beugelsdijk & Welzel, 2018), it has received criticism. The criticisms of Hofstede's cultural framework regard the validity and representativeness of the data used (Minkov, 2018). For instance, Hofstede had few respondents from African countries, and respondents from South Africa were only White employees (Minkov & Kaasa, 2021). The data relied upon for the study is argued to be dated, and therefore cannot reflect the current national cultural norms as cultures would have

evolved over the decades, and what might have correlated in previous years would have diverged (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011).

Scholars have also argued that Hofstede's sample was inappropriate for understanding national differences in culture (Minkov & Kaasa, 2021). Thus, the results of the studies might have reflected differences between IBM's subsidiaries, however, these should not be regarded as a true reflection of the different national cultures. Some of the cultural dimensions could not successfully be replicated in newer studies. An attempt by Merritt (2000) to replicate Hofstede's model across 19 countries did not necessarily yield the same outcomes as Hofstede's model. While power distance and individualism/collectivism replicated satisfactorily, femininity/masculinity and uncertainty avoidance did not. These findings are supported by Minkov's (2018) study, which concluded that Hofstede's femininity/masculinity and uncertainty avoidance measures do not predict the key national indicators that they are supposed to predict. As an example, uncertainty avoidance does not elaborate on national differences in innovation. Hofstede's study also portrayed Sub-Saharan Africa as culturally homogeneous, even while trying to argue for the uniqueness of national cultures (Minkov & Kaasa, 2021).

2.3.2 The GLOBE effectiveness framework

The GLOBE study was initiated not to replicate the Hofstede cultural framework but to address some of its shortcomings (House *et al.*, 2002). The first compilation of the GLOBE study was issued in early 2000 and included data collected from 62 different societies. The GLOBE study built on Hofstede's earlier work and identified nine cultural dimensions (House *et al.*, 2002). These dimensions include i) power distance; ii) institutional collectivism; iii) in-group collectivism; iv) humane orientation; v) performance orientation; vi) assertiveness; vii) gender egalitarianism; viii) uncertainty avoidance, and ix) future orientation (House *et al.*, 2002). These are discussed in more detail hereafter.

Power distance measures the extent to which individuals within a society expect and accept an unequal distribution of power (House *et al.*, 2002). In societies characterised by high power distance (such as Russia, Thailand, and Spain), there is a clear distinction between those in power and those without, often leading to an expectation of compliance from

individuals in lower-status roles (House *et al.*, 2002). In contrast, societies with low power distance, such as Denmark and the Netherlands, tend to foster a culture that encourages less differentiation between those in positions of power and the general populace (House *et al.*, 2002).

Collectivism I refers to institutional collectivism, which measures the extent to which organisations and societies support collective resource distribution and collective actions (House *et al.*, 2002). In collectivist cultures (such as those in Singapore, South Korea, and Japan), group harmony and cooperation are prioritised (House *et al.*, 2002). In these societies, rewards are more likely to be distributed to the group rather than to individuals. In contrast, in more individualistic societies (such as Greece, Hungary, and Argentina), autonomy, self-interest, and individual freedom are emphasised, leading to a greater focus on rewarding individual performance (House *et al.*, 2002).

Collectivism II refers to in-group collectivism, which assesses how individuals demonstrate pride, loyalty, and cohesion within their organisations or familial structures (House *et al.*, 2002). Countries that score high in this dimension (such as Iran, India, and China), place considerable value on membership in families and close-knit friend groups (in-groups) (House *et al.*, 2002). In these cultures, fulfilling the expectations of such groups is deemed essential. Conversely, countries with lower levels of in-group collectivism (such as Denmark, Sweden, and New Zealand), do not generally expect preferential treatment among family and friends. As a result, individuals in these societies are less inclined to disregard rules for the benefit of their close associates (House *et al.*, 2002).

Humane orientation refers to the extent to which individuals within organisations or societies promote and reward behaviours such as altruism, caring, friendliness, fairness, generosity, and kindness towards others (House *et al.*, 2002). In cultures characterised by a highly humane orientation (such as Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia), there is a significant emphasis on fostering strong interpersonal relationships and providing support to those in need, particularly the vulnerable (House *et al.*, 2002). Individuals in these cultures place a high value on a sense of belonging and the well-being of others. In contrast, in cultures with a low humane orientation (such as Germany, Spain, and Singapore), there tends to be a greater focus on power, material possessions, self-enhancement, and independence. These

societies may prioritise individual achievement over collective problem-solving and place less emphasis on promoting obedience among children (House *et al.*, 2002).

Performance orientation pertains to the degree to which an organisation or society fosters an environment that encourages and rewards its members for their efforts in enhancing performance and striving for excellence (House *et al.*, 2002). In nations that exhibit a high ranking on this cultural dimension (such as Hong Kong, Singapore, and New Zealand), organisations place a significant emphasis on training and development (House *et al.*, 2002). Conversely, in countries with lower rankings (such as Russia, Argentina, and Greece), there is a stronger focus on family connections and individual backgrounds (House *et al.*, 2002).

Assertiveness orientation denotes the degree to which individuals within organisations or societies engage in confrontational, assertive or aggressive behaviour in their social interactions (House *et al.*, 2002). Countries that rank high in this dimension (such as Austria, Spain, and Greece), often exhibit a proactive attitude and a strong competitive spirit in their business practices (House *et al.*, 2002). Conversely, cultures with low assertiveness scores (such as New Zealand, Sweden, and Japan), tend to prioritise compassion towards vulnerable individuals, emphasising the importance of harmony and loyalty within their communities (House *et al.*, 2002).

Gender egalitarianism refers to the degree to which society reduces differences in gender roles and discrimination (House *et al.*, 2002). Countries that score highly in this dimension (such as Hungary, Denmark, and Sweden), recognise and promote female's higher status and stronger roles in decision-making processes (House *et al.*, 2002). This is in contrast to male-dominated societies (such as South Korea, China, and Egypt), where males typically hold greater status, and fewer females occupy positions of authority (House *et al.*, 2002).

Uncertainty avoidance refers to the degree societies strive to mitigate uncertainty by adhering to social norms, rituals, and bureaucratic practices (House *et al.*, 2002). Societies with high levels of uncertainty avoidance (such as Switzerland, Sweden, and Denmark), place a premium on order, consistency, structured lifestyles, and clearly defined rules and regulations (House *et al.*, 2002).

Future orientation refers to the degree to which individuals within organisations or societies engage in behaviours that emphasise future planning, investment, and the ability to delay immediate gratification (House *et al.*, 2002). Cultures exhibiting a high score in future orientation, such as Switzerland, Singapore, and Canada, typically adopt a long-term perspective in their decision-making processes and utilise systematic planning methods (House *et al.*, 2002). Conversely, countries characterised by lower future orientation, including Russia, Argentina, and Poland, may lean towards opportunistic behaviours and exhibit less structured planning approaches (House *et al.*, 2002).

Approximately a decade later, a subsequent round of data compilation and analysis was undertaken, concentrating on chief executive officers (CEOs) across various countries. The GLOBE study sought to understand the relationship between cultural factors and the effectiveness of leadership. The study drew upon CLT, which posits that individuals within a society who share similar values often possess comparable perspectives on the qualities that characterise effective leadership. It identified six culturally endorsed leadership styles, namely i) charismatic; ii) team-oriented; iii) humane-oriented; iv) autonomous; v) participative, and vi) self-protective (House *et al.*, 2013).

The charismatic leadership style refers to the ability to motivate, inspire, and expect others to perform at high standards based on the core values observed (House *et al.*, 2013). This leadership style includes six leadership dimensions, including visionary, inspirational, self-sacrifice, integrity, decisive, and performance-oriented (House *et al.*, 2013). Earlier research on leadership attributes by Dorfman, Hanges and Brodbeck (2004) argued that charismatic leadership is universally endorsed. The findings from the GLOBE study, however, argued that the charismatic leadership style is more prominent in Anglo, Germanic Europe, Latin America, Sub-Saharan African, and Nordic European countries; while it is less prominent in the Middle Eastern countries (House *et al.*, 2013). Wanasika, Howell, Littrell and Dorfman (2011:238) also argued that “in modern Sub-Saharan African societal and organisational institutions, charismatic/value-based attributes are increasingly offering a path to leadership roles. Modern African leaders often exhibit characteristics of charismatic/value-based leadership, especially through the art and skill of oratory.” This is aligned with the findings of the GLOBE study, as the data indicated that Sub-Saharan African countries viewed charismatic leadership as important for outstanding leadership.

The team-oriented leadership style refers to the ability to implement a common purpose or goal among team members, resulting in effective team-building (House *et al.*, 2013). This leadership style includes five leadership dimensions, namely collaborative team orientation, team integration, diplomatic, malevolent, and administratively competent (House *et al.*, 2013). The findings from the GLOBE study argued that the team-oriented leadership style is more prominent in Latin American countries, followed by Confucian Asia; while it is less prominent in Middle Eastern countries (House *et al.*, 2013).

House *et al.* (2013) stated that the participative leadership style "reflects the degree to which managers involve others in making and implementing decisions. It includes two primary leadership dimensions labelled nonparticipative and autocratic", Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa scored within the higher range for this dimension (House *et al.*, 2013).

Humane-oriented leadership style reflects the ability of a leader to be compassionate and generous and includes dimensions such as modesty and humane orientation (House *et al.*, 2013). Wanasika *et al.* (2011) argued that humane orientation plays an important role in what is regarded an outstanding leader in Sub-Saharan African countries due to the higher level of corruption, poverty, and violence. Noticeable similarities can, therefore, be found between African modes of leadership and humane-oriented leadership. This leadership style is, however, less prevalent in Nordic European countries (House *et al.*, 2013).

Autonomous leadership "refers to independent and individualistic leadership attributes. It is measured by a single primary leadership dimension labelled autonomous leadership, consisting of individualistic, independent, autonomous, and unique attributes" (House *et al.*, 2013). Countries in Germanic Europe scored high in this dimension while countries in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa scored low. The low score in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa means that autonomous leadership is viewed as inhibiting outstanding leadership in these countries (Wanasika *et al.*, 2011:238).

Self-protective leaderships focus on the extent to which leaders ensure the safety of other individuals and groups through status enrichment (House *et al.*, 2013). It includes five primary leadership dimensions, namely self-centred, status-conscious, conflict inducer, face saver, and procedural. The GLOBE study argued that self-protective leadership is lower in

Anglo, Germanic Europe, and Nordic European countries (House *et al.*, 2013). This is supported by a recent study by Kroumova and Mittal (2023), who argued that self-protective leadership is regarded as less effective by leaders in multinational companies who are trained in Western leadership practices.

Some of the criticisms of the GLOBE study include that the classification of countries was conducted on similarities in terms of location, language, ethnicity, and belief based on cultural values. However, these classifications did not sufficiently account for the uniqueness of each country (Bolden & Kirk, 2009). Other studies have argued that research such as the GLOBE on culture and leadership has not sufficiently understood the cultural dynamics in Africa due to generalisation and cultural homogenising being applied to the entire sub-region. For example, certain findings were presented as being from 'West Africa', implying that such findings are representative of all countries (and their various cultures) in that sub-region (Iwowo, 2015). It is, therefore, important that research on leadership and culture considers contextual differences to provide further meaning to the studies' findings (Aliye, 2020). Another example of a reductionist approach is the clustering of Russia with Eastern European countries such as Albania, Greece, Hungary, Kazakhstan, and Slovenia. Balabanova, Efendiev, Ehrnrooth and Koveshnikov (2015) argued that the clustering of such diverse cultures and societies resulted in the leadership methods within Russia not being sufficiently addressed or understood by the GLOBE study. This, therefore, undermines the complexity of the leadership-culture nexus.

Muenich and Williams (2013) further argued that the GLOBE study did not provide a clear definition of the six leadership dimensions, and the charismatic leadership dimension is not universally endorsed, and thus may not be effective in every society. Although the GLOBE study made significant contributions towards the understanding of cultural differences, the study, however, failed to sufficiently recognise cultural differences within the different country clusters used for the study (Balabanova *et al.*, 2015).

2.4 LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE IN AFRICA

The previous sections of this literature review chapter discussed the relationship between culture and leadership, highlighting how culture has been regarded in traditional leadership

studies. This was followed by an examination of the explicit connection between culture and leadership through an exploration of the Hofstede cultural framework and the GLOBE effectiveness framework. This section specifically focused on the interplay between leadership and African cultures.

Africa is a large continent with 54 distinct countries with several socio-cultural and ethnic groups dispersed across its unique geography. This socio-cultural and ethnic diversity is also evident in each country. Africa as a continent went through a period of colonisation which impacted cultural and leadership practices. Scholars have argued that the historic colonialism of the African continent influenced African identities, values, cultures, and even how knowledge was formed (Nkomo, 2015; Okazaki, David & Abelmann, 2008). Africa's knowledge about leadership was, therefore, strongly influenced by Western leadership theories (Nkomo, 2015).

African leadership as an area of research interest emerged during the period of 1950 to 1959, with a focus on political leadership (Fourie *et al.*, 2017). This continued to be a topic of research interest through the 1960s and 1970s, with articles focusing on the connection between political leadership, traditional leadership, and post-independence leadership (Fourie *et al.*, 2017). The 2000s was a period where there was a major development in African leadership research, with themes such as leadership and African values and systems, as well as leadership, ethnicity, and traditional leadership being of major interest. Although there has been growing interest in African leadership, few studies have focused on how leadership is practised in Africa, noting that leadership practices are geographically specific (Lerutla & Steyn, 2022).

The topic of leadership development in Africa has been explored through a variety of theoretical frameworks. Research in this area highlights two contrasting perspectives on the nature of leadership within the continent. The first is that Western knowledge has influenced mainstream leadership discourse (Eyong, 2017; Mbigi, 2007; Nkomo, 2011). This, therefore, brings forth the reasons for the dominance of Western leadership theories in the leadership discourse within Africa. According to Nkomo (2011), Western theories on leadership have, however, previously omitted the views of Africans or other non-Western leadership theories perspectives. When such knowledge is used to research African leadership, a certain

amount of distance and misunderstanding relating to some of the African leadership concepts must be kept in mind (Nkomo, 2011).

Researchers have also contended that mainstream leadership theories are largely culturally disconnected and inconsistent with the philosophical fabric of societies in Africa. Furthermore, Western leadership theories may not effectively address Africa's unique socioeconomic problems and sociocultural contexts (Iwowo, 2015). These arguments, therefore, have implications concerning our understanding of what leadership is and how it should be practised, as leadership will have different meanings to different people. This then counters the appropriateness of 'mainstream' leadership theories based on Western knowledge frameworks, which are epistemologically unaligned with non-Western subjectivities.

Scholars have, therefore, advocated for a postcolonial perspective (Nkomo, 2015; Okazaki *et al.*, 2008), arguing that Western mainstream leadership concepts are largely imported and may not be suitable for application within the African context (Eyong, 2015:70). The postcolonial approach has started emphasising that alternative indigenous modes of leadership should be explored, especially in the field of cross-cultural leadership (Nkomo, 2011). The term 'indigenous' can be described as "that which is inherent within a given society and subsequently, has become innate or instinctive to it" (Murithi, 2008:17). Nkomo (2011) argued that African leadership scholars could enhance the development of African leadership theories based on their sociocultural experiences. There is a belief that reclaiming and reinstitutionalising indigenous African leadership theories will result in a positive effect on resolving the significant challenges facing the continent (Nkomo, 2011).

Bolden and Kirk (2009) argued that leadership in Africa aspires to be based on humanity, collectivism, and serving others. Leaders operating in Africa must, therefore, have an appreciation of core cultural values to lead effectively, as culture is embedded in how people think and live. Giorgi, Lockwood and Glynn (2015) have also argued that culture guides practices within organisations. As such, in "this way, leadership is connected to a culture that comprises collective and individual beliefs, and that works as the basis to analyse leadership as a manifestation of a whole collective" (Vilas-Boas, Davel & Bispo, 2018:11). Metz (2018) emphasised the Afro-communal type of leadership which is communal in nature

and encourages the concept of African humanism - meaning putting people first. Mbigi (2007) argued that leadership in Africa is about being of service to society to the best of your ability, which will inevitably result in individuals being able to achieve their own goals.

A good leader is, therefore, seen as a leader who assists in meeting the needs of others above their own needs by prizing communal relationships (Metz, 2018). Within this context, collective participation is needed to enable leadership effectiveness, including achieving social equality (Eyong, 2017). Furthermore, appointed leaders may not necessarily act on their own accord and may share the overall power with others (Eyong, 2017). This view is supported by April and Peters (2011), who argued that the leadership role can be seen as interchangeable whereby the appointed leader can be a follower when required. This is different from the Anglo-Saxon view of leadership, which has a strong focus on a linear hierarchy, where the leader maintains the power and the leadership role (April & Peters, 2011:7). Leaders are also regarded as custodians of culture, where traditions, rituals, customs, and symbols influence governance procedures within the African interconnected system (April & Peters, 2011:7).

Iwowo (2015) proposed an alternative leadership development model that seeks to understand the mainstream leadership theories within the prevailing socio-cultural environment. Iwowo (2015:423-424) specifically argued that:

“...mainstream knowledge is continually and creatively appropriated, grounded in the lived experiential reality of African leaders (and managers) and of those who follow them. It is believed that such creative experimentation is not only needful but indeed may well be a prerequisite necessary to evolve more contextually robust knowledge frameworks. Pursuing this approach, mainstream leadership theory would therefore be critically and comparatively examined with a view to creatively appropriating these in the socio-cultural context of ‘those who must practice it’, in a way that is not only recognisable to them, but that is contextually resonant of their lived and experienced forms of work”.

Iwowo (2015) also argued that this hybrid approach has been explored in some organisations within South Africa. An example is that of the University of Cape Town’s Graduate Business School, which developed a Graduate Business Programme that merged European and African cultural and economic ideologies in post-apartheid South Africa. This

was because of the tension experienced by many students of colour, as the Anglo-American literature used as part of the Graduate Business Programme did not acknowledge these students' indigenous knowledge base and as such did not seem to understand the business context of post-apartheid South Africa. The hybrid approach is argued by Iwowo (2015) as a more pragmatic approach, as it allows for the complexities of Africa to be understood within the context of the rest of the world; it also places greater emphasis on traditional indigenous knowledge.

Vilakati and Schurink (2021) studied African leaders' experiences and perceptions regarding the translation of shared African human values into leadership and business practice. They found that African leaders can embrace the human values of harmony and respect, and establish good relations in their daily actions and decision-making. The study also highlighted negative aspects, such as racial tensions (especially in South Africa), paternalistic tendencies, and entitlement by those who participated in the struggle for independence, which may cause challenges for leaders (Vilakati & Schurink, 2021).

2.4.1 African cultures and their positive impact on leadership

Incorporating African cultural resources more explicitly into leadership scholarship and practice can play an important role in addressing the challenges highlighted in the literature. These include unequal distribution of wealth, poor health, and education systems, deteriorating economies and multiple conflicts in the continent (Gumede, 2017:76). As argued by Oloruntoba (2015), African leadership should drive for solutions to these problems. This can be done through critical Afrocentric approaches that can be described as "a consciousness, quality of thought, mode of analysis, and actionable perspective where Africans seek, from agency, to assert subject place within the context of African history" (Asante, 2007:16-17). This, therefore, means that solutions to African problems should be solved within the cultural context and background in which these challenges occur. Van den Heuvel (2008) argued that Afrocentricity should not be regarded as a take-over of Eurocentric leadership philosophies but rather as an exploration of an alternative which incorporates African context and cultural values.

Jackson (2004) argued that African leaders are highly skilled in the different facets of leadership and deal effectively with the multiple cultural diversities within the continent. This is because they embrace humanistic leadership practices with an emphasis on sharing, the sanctity of commitment, regard for compromise and consensus, and good relations with others. Bolden and Kirk (2009:73) further regard leadership practices in Africa as multi-layered and complex, influenced by historical events and cultural values.

Metz (2018:43) contended that "a firm led by Afro-communal values would exhibit solidarity with consumers, meaning that it would do what is expected to enable them to live objectively better lives, particularly socio-moral ones". This focus on the needs of the people will enable reflection amongst leaders within an organisation on whether the organisation is contributing towards the good of society.

2.4.2 African cultures as an inhibitor of effective leadership

Conversely, however, there is a different school of thought that has argued that the challenges within the African continent are largely due to leadership weakness and the ineffectiveness of African leaders (Wanasika *et al.*, 2011). It has been argued that African cultural values contribute to ineffective leadership, thereby, resulting in economic growth and entrepreneurship constraints (Kuada, 2010:14). Furthermore, regardless of the amount of research on the positive effects of African collective value systems, leaders within African public administration tend to be egoistic in their approach - therefore prioritising individual needs over societal needs leading to poor governance and higher levels of corruption (Yeboah-Assiamah, Asamoah, Bawole & Musah-Surugu, 2016). This view is supported by Lerutla and Steyn (2021), who argued that African leadership is dominated by individuals in positions of authority requiring further development because several leaders are corrupt. Asamoah and Yeboah-Assiamah (2019:317), however, contend that:

"...the preponderance of corruption and poor leadership in Africa is anti-cultural, anti-human, anti-ethical and anti-African; hence, those individuals who indulge or encourage leadership paralysis are not true Africans by deeds but merely profess to be. Linking the African philosophy to public leadership, the study maintains that the hallmark of public leadership and governance is to develop the skills of all and care for society".

2.5 LEADERSHIP, CULTURE AND DEFINING LEADERSHIP

As previously indicated in this chapter, leadership has been studied for many decades with different definitions and theories of leadership. The challenge in trying to define leadership is that everyone has different views based on acculturation, experiences and learning of what constitutes leadership. Therefore, some regard leadership as a set of traits and others as a process of social influence.

An earlier definition of leadership is by Stogdill (1950), who defined leadership as “an influencing process aimed at goal achievement”. This definition of leadership sees leadership as a process with the main aim of influencing a specific group of people to achieve a stated objective. Stogdill’s (1950) definition of leadership has been supported by many other scholars, who argued the following:

- Kouzes and Posner (1995) argued that “leadership is the art of mobilising others to want to struggle for the shared aspirations”;
- Kuye and Mafunisa (2003:431) defined leadership as an action that can cause others “to act or respond in a shared direction; the art of influencing people by persuasion or example to follow a line of action; the principle dynamic force that motivates and coordinates the organisation in the accomplishment of its objectives”;
- Joubert (2014:47) defined leadership as the “responsibility to influence others in terms of their actions, thoughts and feelings”;
- Applebaum, Degbe, MacDonald and Nguyen-Quang (2015:74) defined leadership as “a social influence process”; and
- Yukl and Gardner (2020:26) defined leadership as “the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives”.

The GLOBE study evolved the understanding of leadership and argued that it is important to acknowledge the contexts within which leadership is practised, as the characteristics of outstanding leaders would differ between nations, states and/or regions. The GLOBE study defines leadership as “the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organisations of which they are members” (House *et al.*, 2013:17). This definition of leadership highlights the importance of

enabling organisational effectiveness beyond delivering objectives; however, the enablement of others to contribute to organisational effectiveness may relate to broader corporate responsibility.

Although the GLOBE definition of leadership does not specifically reference the influence of culture, the GLOBE study highlights the influence that different cultures may have on what is regarded as effective leadership. Dorfman and House (2004) argued that national cultures will have an influence on leadership and the expected leader behaviours, thereby creating different views on desired leadership qualities which are not universal (Dorfman, Javidan, Hanges, Dastmalchian & House, 2012). The GLOBE study argued that leadership is an interdependent organisational dimension that is influenced by culture. It is worth noting that the GLOBE definition of leadership highlights the influence an individual may have on others. Research has demonstrated that societal culture influences the perception and expectations of leaders, that is, the culturally endorsed leadership profile influences the expectations of what would be regarded as effective leadership within a given culture (Den Hartog & De Hoogh, 2024:543). Leaders tend to learn the expected cultural norms and values and align their leadership approach to socially desirable methods. Successful leadership is, therefore, seen as a social process of influencing others to contribute to shared goals (Steffens, Haslam, Reicher, Platow, Fransen, Yang, Ryan, Jetten, Peters & Boen, 2014:1002).

By building on GLOBE, three scholarly perspectives have emerged which explain the influence of culture on the effectiveness of leadership behaviours. The 'cultural congruence perspective' argues that a leader's behaviour would be regarded as effective if this behaviour is closely aligned with common cultural practices. This, therefore, means that leaders who align their behaviours to the acceptable societal cultural values and norms would be more effective than those leaders who go against these cultural values and norms (Den Hartog & De Hoogh, 2024:558-559). A study by Aktas, Gelfand and Hanges (2016:294) explored cultural tightness/looseness and perceptions of effective leadership and found that there is a positive correlation between cultural tightness and the endorsement of autonomous leadership. This means that tight societies would endorse leaders who are autocratic and autonomous and do not rely on others. The study further found that in loose cultures, it is expected of leaders to be more open to change, input from others, and

innovation; these cultures might therefore endorse more participative and charismatic leaders.

The 'cultural compensation perspective' argues that a leader's behaviour would be regarded as effective if the leader's behaviour is not aligned with the common cultural practices, thereby providing a different perspective from how things are usually done in society (Den Hartog & De Hoogh, 2024:558-559). These leaders can provide a fresh perspective or introduce innovation on how goals can be pursued by being different and may compensate for gaps or weaknesses in the dominant cultural values and norms of society (Rockstuhl, Wu, Dulebohn, Liao & Hoch, 2023). Some scholars (Ernst *et al.*, 2022, Watts *et al.*, 2020) support the argument that such compensation can occur where leaders' characteristics can substitute for the impact of culture on follower outcomes.

Finally, the 'universality perspective' argues that effective leaders' behaviours are those that are accepted universally. As an example, it is expected that leaders should represent qualities such as integrity, fairness, and honesty (House *et al.*, 2004). As argued by Lemoine, Hartnell and Leroy (2019), the universality perspective is often regarded as having morally focused leadership styles such as ethical, servant, and authentic leadership.

A review of the literature on leadership definitions highlights three primary components, namely i) the leader; ii) the follower(s) and iii) the process of influence. From this perspective, the definition of leadership proposed by GLOBE will be adopted for this study as the review of literature on cross-cultural studies did not highlight any definition of leadership that incorporates culture in its definition.

2.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, a comprehensive overview of the evolution of cultural considerations within leadership studies was provided, with a particular emphasis on the emergence of cross-cultural studies during the 1980s and 1990s. Research regarding leadership and culture was analysed, with a focus on how it has developed and shaped various scholarly perspectives. Furthermore, the intersection of African culture and leadership was examined; this offered a definition of leadership that is pertinent to both leadership and cultural studies. This

literature review on culture and leadership underscored the complexity of leadership as a phenomenon. It highlighted that scholars hold differing views regarding the influence of culture on leadership practices in Africa. Some scholars suggested that the distinctive characteristics of African leadership styles serve as unique identifiers, while others contended that these characteristics may act as obstacles to effective leadership. This chapter, however, highlighted the critical importance of understanding leadership within its cultural context.

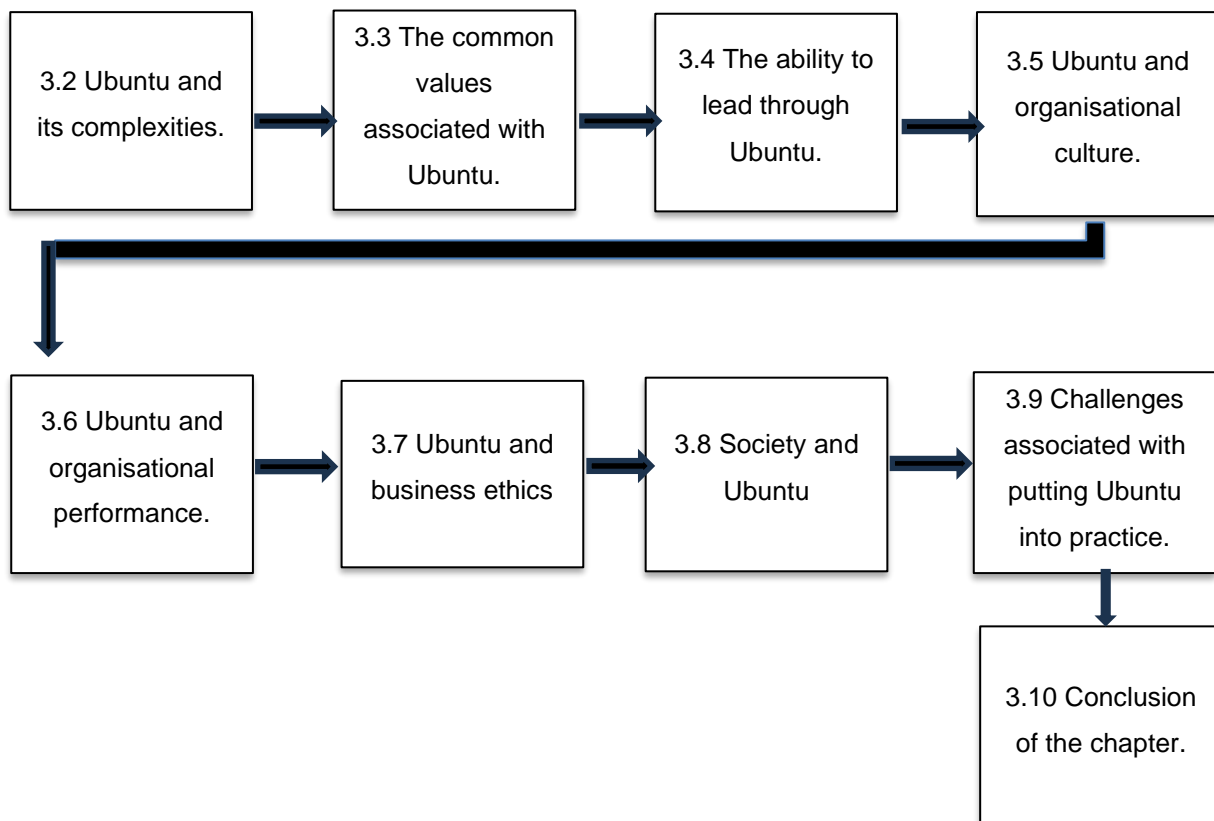
CHAPTER 3: LEADERSHIP AND UBUNTU

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the researcher explored how culture has been viewed in traditional leadership studies. This was then followed by an exploration of how culture is explicitly linked to leadership. Finally, the interaction of leadership and African cultures was explored.

In this chapter, the researcher focuses further, by looking at Ubuntu as an African cultural resource. The researcher provides an overview of leadership through Ubuntu and its evolution. The chapter further explores the common values associated with Ubuntu and whether these values can be incorporated into today's leadership practices. It is important to note that Ubuntu has also been criticised for being vague and not easily implementable. The challenges associated with putting Ubuntu into practice are further explored in this chapter. Figure 3 below provides an outline of Chapter 3.

Figure 3: Outline of Chapter 3



3.2 UBUNTU AND ITS COMPLEXITIES

Ubuntu is born from the Nguni people's lexicon of "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu" which translates to "a person is a person through other persons" (Mbigi, 2007). The origins of this philosophical concept are traced to the Southern African Bantu people (Bolden & Kirk, 2009). The main philosophical ideologies of Ubuntu are based on principles of the interconnectedness of human existence, of living in harmony with other members of society, mutual respect, and care for the community (Oyowe & Etieyibo, 2018). Ngcoya (2015) described Ubuntu as "living is ultimately the discovery and realisation of *-ntu* (person) and this is only accomplished through other *-bantu* (persons)".

The earliest recorded text referencing Ubuntu is from 1846, with Ubuntu described as human nature, humanity, and humanness (Gade, 2011). These earlier descriptions of Ubuntu had a positive connotation and it is, therefore, considered a positive quality. Scholarly work on Ubuntu continued to evolve and can be illustrated in five stages, as discussed below:

- Stage 1 (1846 – 1962): As illustrated by Gade (2011), this stage mainly described Ubuntu as human nature, humanity, and humanness;
- Stage 2 (1962 – 1975): During this period, scholarly work began to connect Ubuntu to a philosophical principle that encouraged the communal good of humanity and being "umuntu" (meaning a person);
- Stage 3 (1975 – 1990s): A broader definition of Ubuntu began to emerge during the 1900s, with authors defining Ubuntu as African humanism, a philosophy, an ethic, and a worldview. It was argued that Ubuntu is a philosophy that could assist with the reconciliation of different communities (Motsei, 2007:10), as it was an ethic that developed in the context of serving the needs of others (Du Toit, 2004:33). The ethical content of Ubuntu is frequently articulated by providing a list of values or virtues which are consistent with, and required by, Ubuntu and is based on an African worldview of interdependence (Shore, 2016:135);
- Stage 4 (1990s – 2000): The often-used definition of "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu" also emerged during the period 1993 to 1995. The proverb is now widely used by authors when describing Ubuntu. Many authors have described Ubuntu as a philosophy of peace and it is perhaps best known as a guiding concept of the African Renaissance during the post-colonial and post-apartheid era in South Africa. This definition of Ubuntu was

endorsed by leaders such as former presidents Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki, as well as Archbishop Desmond Tutu during South Africa's earlier post-apartheid era. These leaders guided the concept of the African Renaissance and urged the importance of re-engaging with African values during South Africa's reform processes, post-apartheid. Ubuntu has been an important concept in the reform of education and public services in post-apartheid South Africa and offered a framework for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which bore witness to the injustices of the apartheid era from the perspective of both perpetrators and victims. Archbishop Desmond Tutu considered Ubuntu as a gift that Africa can share with the world and argued for its application beyond Africa. Gade (2011) illustrated that scholarly work that identified Ubuntu as a worldview argued for Ubuntu to be a lived experience which could eradicate social challenges - such as unequal distribution of wealth, racism, religious conflicts, and corruption; and

- Stage 5 (2000 – 2011): Research conducted during this period emphasised that Ubuntu, as a philosophical concept, embodies the belief in a universal bond of sharing and giving that connects all of humanity. There were five interrelated principles associated with Ubuntu that were identified (Gade, 2011). These include the i) sharing of challenges and responsibilities; ii) the importance of relationships; iii) patriotism; iv) participation by others in the decision-making processes, and v) reconciliation as a form of conflict management. Metz (2007) also identified theoretical interpretations of Ubuntu. These include i) respecting a person's dignity; ii) promoting the well-being of others; iii) fostering self-realisation through positive engagements with others; iv) group solidarity, and v) living in harmony with others. Mbigi (2007) also argued that Ubuntu deliberately emphasises the importance of people and their dignity through the collective brotherhood of humankind. There is, therefore, an emphasis on cohesion and interdependence - as these are important characteristics of African communities (Mbigi, 2007).

It is worth noting that similar philosophical concepts such as Ubuntu exist across Africa and in other societies. Eastern Africa has philosophical concepts such as "Watu" and "umoja"; whilst philosophical concepts such as "mani", "Ogbara", "ise" and "Ika" exist in Western Africa (Dalitso, 2010); "Ngumtu", "Kubuntu", "Edubuntu" in Central Africa, and the Gada system in Ethiopia (which will be discussed in detail below). These concepts are centred around humanness and collectivism (Vilakati, 2012).

The Gada system has been used by the Oromo people in Ethiopia to govern their nation for many years (Aliye, 2020). The system is built on a class system (luba) that follows an eight-year cycle in which participants assume military, economic, political, and ritual responsibilities. According to Aliye (2020), Gada's leadership philosophy is based on several key principles, namely:

- Humanness: Oromo citizens are expected to maintain good interpersonal relationships with others and with God, living in harmony with fellow members while demonstrating qualities such as respect, dignity, and generosity;
- Freedom: This philosophy recognises the importance of both individual and collective freedom, with leadership acknowledging and honouring the significance of its followers;
- Respect for human rights: This leadership style is democratic and upholds the individual and collective rights of citizens;
- Morality: Each member is expected to act per an accepted moral code;
- Peace: Leadership practices promote harmony and aim to maintain relationships through conciliation, mediation, and transformational approaches to conflict and challenges;
- Political power: Oromo citizens are viewed not as subjects but as the source of political power;
- Accountability: Leaders must navigate certain stages before coming to power, allowing for scrutiny of their character to ensure they do not abuse their authority once elected. If a leader fails to act appropriately, they will be replaced and held accountable for their actions;
- Rule of law: Every member must respect the rule of law;
- Segregation of power: There is a clear separation of powers at all levels of government;
- Succession process: The process for electing leaders is well-defined; and
- Consensus-based decision-making: Decisions are made through consensus at all levels, rather than by simple majority rule.

A review of the literature reveals similarities between the Ubuntu philosophy and the Gada system. Both leadership philosophies emphasise community, harmony, care for others, service, respect for each individual's dignity, collaboration, and participation in decision-making processes. For example, More (2005:156-157) provides the following definition of Ubuntu:

“In one sense, Ubuntu is a philosophical concept forming the basis of relationships, especially ethical behaviour. In another sense, it is a traditional politico-ideological concept referring to sociopolitical action. As a moral or ethical concept, it is a point of view according to which moral practices are founded exclusively on consideration and enhancement of human wellbeing; a preoccupation with the ‘human’. It enjoins that what is morally good is that which brings dignity, respect, contentment, and prosperity to others, self, and the community at large. Ubuntu is a demand for respect for persons no matter what their circumstances may be... In its politico-ideological sense, it is a principle for all forms of social or political relationships. It enjoins peace and social harmony by encouraging the practice of sharing in all forms of communal existence”.

This definition encapsulates what Ubuntu calls for, which is acting in a way that enables, enhances or restores one’s relational standing within the community. The concept of Ubuntu co-exists in numerous usages yet it does not have one, clear definition. However, there is a proliferation of values associated with Ubuntu. The distinction between Ubuntu as a uniquely African philosophy and its potential as a universal concept remains ambiguous. Furthermore, there is an elevated level of uncertainty from the scholarly work on Ubuntu on whether the authors considered all individuals within the society to possess the quality of Ubuntu or to what extent individuals might possess this quality. This makes it difficult to argue Ubuntu as a unilateral representative of African moral resources. It is, however, noted that Ubuntu is one of the many African cultural resources that influence how people interact and relate with one another due to the values associated with it.

3.3 THE COMMON VALUES ASSOCIATED WITH UBUNTU

As illustrated in the previous section, there is no consistent definition of Ubuntu - including the values associated with Ubuntu. Ubuntu’s multiple definitions and values create a challenge in deriving its most common values, as different scholars emphasise different values. Mbigi (2007) associated Ubuntu with the values of group solidarity, harmony, interdependence, respect and dignity, and teamwork. However, Woermann and Engelbrecht (2019) associated Ubuntu with the values of care, compassion, and responsiveness.

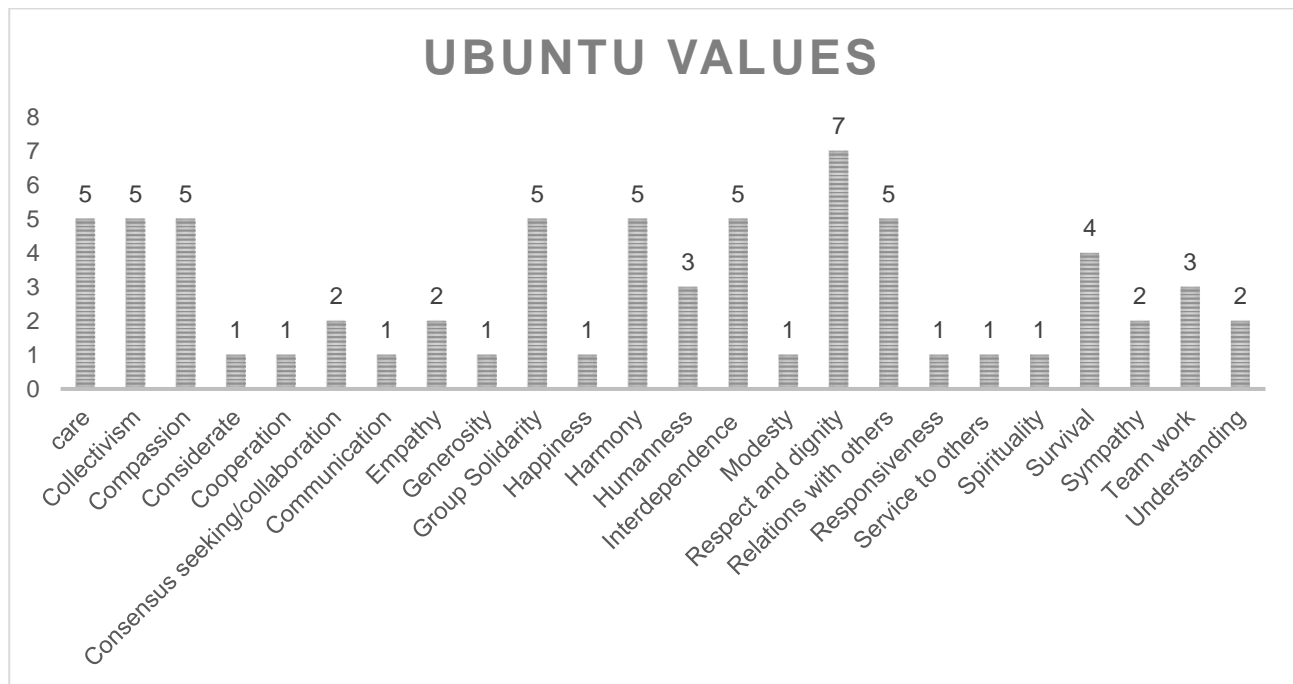
A systematic literature review identified studies that offer insights into the values associated with Ubuntu. These articles are outlined in Table 7 below, which further elaborates on the values associated with Ubuntu as discussed in these articles.

Table 7: Ubuntu values

Reference	Ubuntu Values
Prinsloo (2000)	Care; consideration; cooperation; communication; dignity; empathy; harmony; respect; relation with others; sympathy, and understanding.
Mangaliso (2001)	Care; collectivism; compassion; group solidarity; harmony; humanness; interdependence; relationship with others; respect and dignity; service to others, and teamwork.
Mbigi (2007)	Group solidarity; harmony; interdependence; respect and dignity, and teamwork.
Metz (2007)	Care; collective unity; consensus-seeking; dignity; respect; relationship with others, and solidarity.
Poovan, Du Toit & Engelbrecht (2006)	Collectivism; compassion; caring; interdependence; understanding each other, and survival.
Lutz (2009)	Collectivism; community; empathy; harmony; humanity; interpersonal relationships; respect, and sympathy.
Ncube (2010)	Collaboration; collectivism consensus; equality; humanness; interdependence; relationships with others; solidarity; survival, and teamwork.
Asamoah & Yeboah-Assiamah (2019)	Compassion; generosity; happiness; helpfulness; humbleness; living in harmony; modesty; respect and dignity; spirituality, and survival.
Woermann & Engelbrecht (2019)	Care; compassion, and responsiveness.
Molose <i>et al.</i> (2018)	Compassion; group solidarity; respect and dignity, and survival.

From the analysis conducted above, it is evident that there is no singular definition of the values associated with Ubuntu. A further analysis was conducted to identify common overlapping values to consider for this study. Figure 4 indicates these overlapping values, namely i) care; ii) collectivism; iii) compassion; iv) group solidarity; v) harmony; vi) interdependence vii) respect and dignity, and viii) relations with others. These are discussed in further detail in the sub-sections hereafter.

Figure 4: Ubuntu values



3.3.1 Care

Ubuntu is founded on a communal spirit of caring for the well-being of society, as individuals take pride in the welfare of others rather than solely focusing on themselves (Sulamoyo, 2010; Venter, 2004). Care is reflected in the way parents and children interact, how partners behave towards each other, how the elderly and disabled are looked after, and how the underprivileged are provided with assistance where necessary (Asamoah & Yeboah-Assiamah, 2019:314). In these circumstances, the Ubuntu principle dictates that care regards dealing with the challenges and circumstances of others in a loving and sympathetic spirit.

Mangaliso (2001) stated that a shared vision can be achieved by understanding and caring for each other in the community. This view is supported by Chetty and Price (2024:1), who argued that leaders who care about the well-being of their followers would encourage a sense of belonging within organisations. Leaders and followers are, therefore, encouraged to maintain relationships characterised by caring and compassion (Woermann & Engelbrecht, 2019:31).

3.3.2 Collectivism

Metz (2018:40) emphasised the collectivist view associated with Ubuntu by stating that one will consider:

“...oneself part of the whole, being close, sharing a way of life, belonging and experiencing oneself as bound up with others, on the one hand, and then achieving the good of all, being sympathetic, acting for the common good, serving the community and being committed to the good of one’s society, on the other”.

Thus, collective rewards will also be prioritised over individual rewards. Ubuntu is, therefore, different from the individualistic culture where there is a greater focus on individual self-interest. Ubuntu also emphasises the importance of collective responsibility. As an example, a child within the community is not only the responsibility of their parents, however, the responsibility of each elder within the community, meaning that the child can be disciplined by any adult within the community. Therefore, children must respect all the adults within the community (Malunga, 2006). Whilst collective responsibility is encouraged, this does not mean that certain members of the community can be ‘parasites’. Every member of the community is expected to contribute to the progression and well-being of the community according to their skills, knowledge, and experience.

With regard to organisational performance, collective responsibility means that it is important for leaders and followers to follow through with their responsibilities. Should they blame each other for any organisational challenges, they will cause distractions leading to these challenges remaining unaddressed (Malunga, 2006). Additionally, it is important to note that collective responsibility applies to the distribution of efforts and benefits. Some authors (Bhengu, 2006:179-180&192; Metz, 2018; Ncube, 2010:79) have argued for equal distribution of financial rewards, such as bonuses and profit shares, within organisations instead of financial rewards being allocated based on the outputs of an individual. Efforts would then need to be equally distributed within organisations, as any perceived preferential treatments could lead to a negative impact on the team’s spirit and ultimately the organisation’s performance. Poovan *et al.* (2006) have argued that Ubuntu enables

members within an organisation to see themselves as belonging to an organisational community, thereby resulting in them being willing to assist each other and the organisation.

3.3.3 Compassion

Asamoah and Yeboah-Assiamah (2019:314) defined compassion as “the value of understanding and sharing each other’s problems, as well as the desire to provide assistance to others”. Ubuntu encourages members of the community to have compassion for one another and practice humanism while forming friendships and relationships. Compassion in the Ubuntu sense requires individuals to share not only happy moments with other members of society but also moments of deep sorrow and to assist fellow human beings when required (Broodryk, 2010:81). According to Muchiri (2011:443), the value of compassion encourages members of society to be generous and make sacrifices to assist those in need. Leaders are, therefore, expected to show compassion and consider the social needs of their followers. Compassion can be likened to love, as it encompasses a profound sense of care and mutual understanding between individuals (Poovan *et al.*, 2006). Leaders in organisations that adopt Ubuntu must be sensitive to their employees' challenges and share in their suffering (Brubaker, 2013:107).

3.3.4 Group solidarity

Muller *et al.* (2019:27) defined group solidarity as individuals finding their identity in other members of the community and the organisation. Zulu words that can also be used to express group solidarity include “simunye” (we are one) and “shosoloza” (working as one) (Broodryk, 2006:27). The value of group solidarity, therefore, encourages members of society or an organisation to support each other although there might be differences. This sense of solidarity enhances the resilience of the community and the organisation.

Ncube (2010) argued that embracing the value of group solidarity within organisations and society would promote the spirit of togetherness, where individuals are focused on the achievement of completing shared goals for the improvement of society (or an organisation). Chetty and Price (2024) argued that promoting the value of group solidarity within society and organisations would cultivate a culture of loyalty, trust, and a shared sense of purpose.

Group solidarity could also encourage members of society to depend on each other for support during challenging times, thereby promoting emotional well-being and the collective strength of the society and organisation (Mangaliso, Mangaliso, Ndanga & Jean-Denis, 2022). Furthermore, group solidarity emphasises that the success of members within the society is intertwined with the success of the whole society.

3.3.5 Harmony

Tutu (1999:35) argued that social harmony is one of the cornerstones of a well-functioning society. It is, therefore, encouraged in African societies that one should live in harmony with other members. Due to the collectivist nature of Ubuntu, members of society must live in harmony to survive (Mangaliso, 2001). This view is supported by Lutz (2009), who argued that Ubuntu reduces discords in society and produces harmony.

According to Metz (2018), harmonious relations can be maintained through shared identity and the maintenance of relationships that are supportive and foster goodwill. An acceptance of Ubuntu within an organisation will, therefore, require leaders to preserve harmony by considering the views of divergent groups and reconciling various perspectives brought forth by these groups (Futhwa, 2012). Harmonious relations with an organisation can, therefore, be realised when the leadership of an organisation and its employees share common goals. What makes Ubuntu different in terms of business approach is that, instead of assuming that good financial performance of an organisation will lead to an enhancement to the wellbeing of all, Ubuntu emphasises that harmonious relationships must also be considered as a measure to determine the success of an organisation.

3.3.6 Interdependence

Lutz (2009:313) argued that human beings are naturally communal, living in a state of interdependence. This view is supported by Van Niekerk (2013:5), who argued that “human beings are radically interdependent, and that this interdependence entails a morally normative pressure towards generosity, hospitality, friendliness, compassion, forgiveness, reconciliation, consensus, and positive group identification”. Mangaliso (2001) asserted that

members of society are connected by recognising the commonalities amongst society as opposed to focusing on the differences.

It is generally a good leadership practice to maintain good relationships with others. Ncube (2010) argued that accepting the interdependence among members of society and organisations would result in leaders having a desire to empower others, by believing in them and allowing them to act on initiatives they have identified. In building relationships and recognising the interdependence of these relationships, one builds trust, thereby fostering collaboration and reciprocity.

3.3.7 Respect and dignity

Asamoah and Yeboah-Assiamah (2019:314) defined respect as giving “due regard for the feelings and rights of others” and dignity as “the state or quality of being worthy of respect”. According to Mangaliso *et al.* (2022:1035), every member of society deserves to be treated with respect and to be regarded as a dignified individual. Respect can further be explained through the Zulu word “isithunzi”, which means a shadow. Mangaliso *et al.* (2022:1035) argued that “the notion of ‘isithunzi’ denotes a quiet dignity that comes from each person’s demeanour. Your ‘isithunzi’ is something only others perceive”. This, therefore, influences how members of society perceive each other - hence one might hear members of society saying, so-and-so “unesithunzi”, meaning that a certain individual is perceived to have dignity. This dignity can, however, erode if that individual negates their responsibilities towards family, friends or society at large.

Browning (2006) recognised that South African employees attach importance to building relationships, and treating each other with mutual respect during personal interactions. Respect is also shown to those in leadership positions and elders in society. Olivier and Rothmann (2007:50) found that employees value being treated with dignity and respect, and having their contribution to an organisation acknowledged. This would result in greater commitment to organisational goals and an increased sense of common organisational identity (Mangaliso *et al.*, 2022:1035).

3.3.8 Relations with others

Ubuntu emphasises that human beings are intertwined in a world of ethical relations within a specific community from birth, meaning that from the inception of our existence, we are obligated to others (Cornell & Van Marle, 2015:2). Ubuntu, therefore, places greater emphasis on relationships over things thereby encouraging harmonious relationships amongst members of society. In African communities, communitarianism means that individuals are understood in how they relate and interact with others. A person who does not maintain good relationships with others is considered inhuman. The driving norms in these relationships include the suppression of self-interests and communal competition. This greater emphasis on relationships is a contradiction to an individualistic culture, which places greater value on task completion over relationships.

3.4 THE ABILITY TO LEAD THROUGH UBUNTU

There are several examples of how the values associated with Ubuntu have been integrated into leadership and business practices within South African corporations and its government. Ubuntu values, such as dignity, equality, interdependence, and social cohesion, played a fundamental role in the reconciliation process following South Africa's transition from apartheid (Cornell, 2009:49-52). These values also formed the foundation of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Furthermore, Ubuntu has been incorporated into public governance frameworks through the Batho Pele philosophy, which emphasises the importance of humanity in the delivery of public services (Radebe & Phooko, 2017:241). Furthermore, according to Coetzee and Veldsman (2013), the South African financial sector has adopted organisational values similar to Ubuntu such as teamwork, integrity, customer and shareholder partnership, respect, innovation, and performance excellence.

The collectivist nature of Ubuntu encourages leaders within the organisation to include the participation of followers in addressing challenges faced by the organisation. This is because followers can provide a different perspective to the challenges faced and commit to finding a solution, thereby enhancing the followers' sense of belonging within an organisation. Malunga (2006) argued that individual leaders should not reach a state where they are too powerful and therefore make unilateral decisions without proper consultation. The concept

of Ubuntu in Africa embodies a profound commitment to communalism. Within this framework, the land is entrusted to the chief for the collective benefit of the community (Nzimakwe, 2014:9). All members actively engage in decision-making and dispute resolution through formal gatherings, including clan or tribal “indabas”, “legotlas”, “padare” or “insakas” (Wanless, 2007:118). These practices are integral to fostering good governance and ensuring that the community’s voices are heard and valued.

Within organisations, it is the norm that strategic decisions be made by the senior leadership team or the Executive Committee (EXCO). In turn, followers are expected to execute the strategies selected with minimal consultation or input (Woermann & Engelbrecht, 2019:38). Khoza (2006), however, argued that followers are important stakeholders within an organisation and can proactively influence the strategic direction of an organisation. Ubuntu, therefore, encourages followers to also participate in decisions impacting the strategic direction of an organisation through a democratic, collaborative, and participative process - which will reasonably incorporate all views aired through the concept of “sufficient consensus” (Khoza, 2006). Followers’ views can be incorporated using group forums and discussions or even town hall sessions, where followers are allowed to question leaders within an organisation through decentralised governance and decision-making structures. The inclusion of followers in the strategic decision-making processes of an organisation speaks to the communal nature of Ubuntu and may promote a shared identity within the organisation. Woermann and Engelbrecht (2019:37) further argued that divisions between leaders and followers will be reduced when the strategy is collectively agreed upon.

The proposed approach of including followers in the strategic decision-making process of an organisation does come with its challenges, as the engagement processes might be time-consuming, leading to a drawn-out and frustrating process that might not even reach sufficient consensus (Woermann & Engelbrecht, 2019:37). Executives within the organisation might, therefore, argue that such time-drawn-out processes are not efficient and the probability of reaching sufficient consensus is low. Ubuntu would come into play, as Regine (2009:17) described the intersection between Ubuntu and leadership as follows:

“The great leaders of the twenty-first century will have Ubuntu. Leaders with Ubuntu recognise their interconnectedness and how their humanity is inextricably bound to others, if others are diminished so are they, if others fail, so do they. They take pleasure from other people’s success

knowing that their success is everyone's success. When Ubuntu guides leaders, they realise that we are more alike than we are different. The spirit of Ubuntu leads to cooperative and collaborative work environments because people are encouraged to participate, share, to support each other and a collective effort, to be a team player. Even if Ubuntu-inspired leaders hold high positions in their organisations and wield tremendous power, as they inevitably do, they still create relationships based on mutuality: mutual interest, mutual need, and mutual respect. Today, at all levels, business, politics, and religion, leaders need to be healers. Leaders who have Ubuntu are natural healers, for they can see and hold the collective vulnerability, encourage true collaboration, and one by one, heal the many".

Metz (2018) contended that Ubuntu can be implemented within organisations by following a 'relationholder' approach to managing the interests of the different parties. This means that the organisations would have moral obligations to aid those it has long-standing relationships with. Woermann and Engelbrecht (2019:27) argued that the Ubuntu principles can contribute to finding an alternative to the stakeholder theory through the Ubuntu relationholder theory. The stakeholder theory focuses on parties who might be impacted by the operations of an organisation and therefore have a legitimate claim towards the organisation but not necessarily the interests of stakeholders who are poor and needy and may not find salience due to the minimal value these stakeholders can offer to an organisation. Thus, according to Woermann and Engelbrecht (2019:31):

"The primary difference between Ubuntu and libertarian stakeholder theory is that, in Ubuntu, moral consideration is not earned based on stakes. Instead, parties related to the firm have moral status solely from the fact that they stand in a relationship to the firm".

This means that organisations would not only aid those in need as per their corporate social responsibility (CSR) mandate. However, include those the organisation has shared a way of life with, such as the community the organisation operates in, as well as suppliers and employees may be aided beyond contractual terms.

Although values associated with Ubuntu can be applied in leadership practices, values such as interdependence and group solidarity must guard against groupthink and still allow for individual initiatives (Newenham-Kahindi, 2009:104). Furthermore, organisations should pay special attention to ensure that patriarchal tendencies are not encouraged, as they lead to discrimination based on sex and age (Newenham-Kahindi, 2009:104). According to Vilakati

and Schurink (2021), the application of Ubuntu values in business practices would lead to organisations being able to flourish and change the economic and political trajectory of African societies. This view is supported by Molose *et al.* (2018:193), who indicated incorporating values such as respect, compassion, dignity, and group solidarity in leadership practices would have a positive impact on employee commitment and team performance.

3.5 UBUNTU AND ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Scholars have derived several definitions to describe organisational culture. For example, Schein (2004) defined it as:

“A pattern of basic assumptions that a particular group has learned as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that have worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore to be taught to new members as a correct way to perceive, think and feel about problems. Organisational cultures reside rather in (visible and conscious) practices: the way people perceive what goes on in their organisational environment”.

It is therefore important for organisations to ensure that their strategies, values and performance management processes enable the organisational culture desired (Thompson Jr., Strickland III & Gamble, 2005:374). Furthermore, according to Peters and Waterman (1982), successful organisations are characterised by 'strong cultures' that foster the commitment of followers to a well-defined set of shared values. This requires leaders to be instrumental in not only generating financial returns but also in creating meaningful experiences for their followers (Peters & Waterman 1982:29). In this framework, it is the role of leaders to inspire followers to adopt corporate values and the shared organisational culture, thereby encouraging a level of commitment to their work.

Scholars such as Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (1999:150) have argued that Ubuntu can have a positive impact on organisational culture. As per Donald *et al.* (1999:150):

“Ubuntu may be very powerful because emphasis is placed on the good of the community as a whole, and on the social responsibility of its members towards one another”, if applied within a business context Ubuntu can help organisations foster an environment of togetherness and cooperation amongst the organisations members towards the mutual success of the organisation and the individual, despite cultural differences. If properly incorporated and successfully implemented within the business environment, the Ubuntu philosophy can certainly add

significant value, particularly to creating a workforce that is respectful of one another's differences, yet understanding the need to work together to bring about common success for the organisation and one another".

Dombai and Verwey (1999) have, however, highlighted challenges associated with Ubuntu and its impact on organisational culture in South African businesses. According to these authors, it might be difficult for organisations that embrace Eurocentric views to translate Ubuntu in a meaningful way into organisational practices, as members of these organisations might have difficulties with understanding and implementing the principles or values associated with Ubuntu. This does not make it impossible to pursue Ubuntu principles into organisational practices; however, it would require more financial resources, supported by an enhanced change management process, and the process could be time-consuming.

3.6 UBUNTU AND ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Empirical evidence has demonstrated the link between employee engagement and organisational performance. A study by Anitha (2014:309) found that positive employee engagement can have a positive impact on organisational performance and can therefore be a powerful mechanism to assist organisations in achieving a competitive advantage over others. It is important to note that leaders would play a crucial role in fostering these positive employee engagements. It has been argued that Western leadership approaches might not be appropriate to foster positive employee engagement in a country such as South Africa, where collectivist communitarian cultures are embraced (Guma, 2019:1; Lutz, 2009:317; Nkomo, 2011). It is suggested that an alternative leadership paradigm might be needed to enhance employee engagement to advance South Africa's global competitiveness (Bezuidenhout & Schultz, 2013:279).

A study by Muller *et al.* (2019:20) found that fostering Ubuntu values, such as group solidarity, can increase employee engagement. This is because leaders can connect with their employees, allowing them to be involved in their work and promoting increased team spirit resulting in employees having pride in their work, experiencing a sense of meaning and being inspired to continuously improve the operations within the organisation. It was, therefore, concluded by Muller *et al.* (2019:20) that the value of group solidarity has a

positive influence on organisational performance. Msila (2014) further stated that Ubuntu can enhance team participation through the sharing of ideas and skills. Muller *et al.* (2019:38), however, found that Ubuntu's compassion dimension harmed the financial and internal processes, as well as learning and innovation performance, of an organisation.

The adoption of the Ubuntu can have a positive impact on an organisation's operational processes by incorporating the Ubuntu principles alongside the Lean framework, as culture can play an important role in the implementation of the Lean framework (Mangaroo-Pillay & Coetzee, 2022). The focus of the Lean framework is on eliminating wastage and increasing efficiencies within an organisation. A culture-specific Lean implementation framework for South Africa incorporating the Ubuntu philosophy was developed by Mangaroo-Pillay and Coetzee (2022). They argued that the Lean-Ubuntu implementation framework can aid organisations in South Africa to better understand the Lean principles and therefore contribute to a more successful implementation of Lean.

3.7 UBUNTU AND BUSINESS ETHICS

Literature has also explored the link between Ubuntu and business ethics, with the first school of thought arguing that economic systems should be aligned with the value system of the societies within which they operate (Shutte, 2008; West, 2014). This, therefore, means that the economic systems of sub-Saharan Africa should be aligned with Ubuntu values (Ntibagirirwa, 2009:297). Another school of thought has stated that Ubuntu can have a significant contribution to the advancement of business ethics, globally (Lutz, 2009; Shutte, 2008). These arguments have some challenges which need to be addressed, as they both assume that the values associated with Ubuntu are maintained across sub-Saharan Africa. However, there is little evidence supporting these claims. Although these claims have been challenged, West (2014) has argued that Ubuntu may contribute to organisations' ethical frameworks within South Africa, considering the country's apartheid history and current challenges (such as economic inequalities). Furthermore, the persistent allegations of corruption and poor governance highlight the value leadership can play in addressing these issues. It is now more important than ever for organisations to practice ethical values to nurture an ethical culture (Grobler, 2017:154).

Gumede (2015:106-107) argued that principles of sound corporate governance, effective management, responsibility, and the interdependence between an organisation and society should be emphasised within organisations. Similarities can be found between Ubuntu and the King IV code, as they both advocate for the interdependence of an organisation and society (Bhana & Suknunan, 2022:90). It should also be noted that Ubuntu does not advocate for self-indulgence, theft, inequality, dishonesty or any form of disrespect towards others. A recent study by Bhana and Suknunan (2022:92-93) highlighted that although many organisations have adopted the King IV code, further work is needed in terms of incorporating ethical values, which are linked to Ubuntu, in the leadership practices of leaders in South Africa.

Murithi (2009:231) emphasised the importance of adopting "Ubuntu forms of governance" that foster inclusive participation from all citizens in public matters related to their communities and governments. Such governance structures are essential for safeguarding human rights and promoting transparent, accountable leadership.

3.8 SOCIETY AND UBUNTU

There are several schools of thought concerning the compatibility of Ubuntu within economic and political systems. The incompatibility school of thought argues that the individualist, neoliberal nature of economic and political systems is not aligned with Ubuntu. This, therefore questions whether significant gains can be made by Ubuntu in terms of addressing social ills, such as unequal distribution of wealth, and redressing the marginalised and impoverished members of society (Mwipikeni, 2018:322).

There is greater emphasis placed by Ubuntu on the achievement of communal goals and taking care of the community as opposed to the achievement of individual goals and needs. However, the structures (political, juridical, and neoliberal economic systems) allow for and encourage the unequal distribution of opportunities and economic resources leading to the marginalisation of the poor (Matolino & Kwindigwi, 2013; McDonald, 2010; Praeg, 2017). This means that the current political and economic systems of the world encourage a neoliberal society. There are different definitions of neoliberalism, however, all these definitions have four things in common, namely (Davies, 2014:310):

- Neoliberalism is an ideology that is aimed at producing a new political and social model;
- The neoliberal policy also targets public institutions through privatisation;
- To do this, the state is seen as an active force and uses the market to govern and ensure that citizens manage themselves; and
- Competition and inequality are viewed positively as citizens are forced to become entrepreneurs.

The post-structuralism analyses of neoliberalism are that of an attempt to rehaul social and personal life, where competitiveness is encouraged and seen as an advantage (Davies, 2014:314). This is in total contrast to the Ubuntu values such as collectivism, harmony and interdependence. Matolino and Kwindingwi (2013) further questioned whether the Ubuntu values such as caring for each other can be accommodated in a neoliberal economic system. This is a system that values privatisation and promotes countries' and organisations' individualist goals without proper consideration of the economic interests of the marginalised members of society. Conversely, the means of production crucial for survival during pre-industrial and pre-urban societies were made available to everyone (Radebe & Phooko, 2017:247-249).

It is also worth noting that neoliberalism does not encourage the distribution of income in assistance of the poor (Brown, 2006:704). In instances where workers are not satisfied with their compensation, they may participate in industrial action in the form of strikes, which may lead to minor increases in salaries and wages. This is also not in alignment with Ubuntu's values that focus on the common good, sharing and the "care of man for man" (Matolino & Kwindingwi, 2013:204).

There are, however, opposing schools of thought that strongly advocate for Ubuntu as a normative ethical concept that is still relevant, especially in the South African context (Mwipikeni, 2018:326). According to Metz (2007), one of the fundamental values of Ubuntu is living in harmony with others through virtues such as compassion, forgiveness, generosity, and hospitality. Metz (2007) further emphasised the concept of shared identity, where individuals consider themselves to be part of a group. Mwipikeni (2018:332) argued that Metz's concept of shared identity can be applied to achieve a desirable "global social order", where all nations encompass the universal community of the human species. Here, human

beings can establish relationships with shared goals such as eradicating poverty, promoting good health, realising economic prosperity, and protecting the rights of the marginalised. Through this global social order, all human beings would be afforded equal worth. Mwipikeni (2018:327) further argued that the “contradiction between Ubuntu and behaviours that are inconsistent with Ubuntu does not indicate that Ubuntu is bankrupt in terms of its justification as a normative ethical principle.”

Metz (2014) further recommended that Ubuntu can be practically expressed in a South African economic and political environment. An example would be through cooperative farming, where it is common to assist each other with harvesting fields, thereby enjoying the benefits of shared labour. Another example includes the development of family compounds, where assistance can be provided to those with children without an adequate support system. This proposed communal living arrangement could relieve pressure on those parents who are often required to work. The pro-Ubuntu school of thought, therefore, advocates for the equal distribution of economic benefits and burdens to all to achieve an enhanced quality of life for all humans without putting individual economic interests and competitiveness at the forefront.

3.9 CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH PUTTING UBUNTU INTO PRACTICE

As with any other theoretical concept, Ubuntu has received its fair share of criticisms. Prinsloo (2000) argues that Ubuntu is not a new, different or unique concept, since ideas surrounding “sharing”, “brotherhood”, “dignity” and “trust” can be found in Western and other forms of thinking. As an example, Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) argued that the core principle of servant leadership is to be of service to others and put the needs of others first before personal gains. This aligns with Ubuntu principles set out by Mbigi (2007), namely being of service to others, group solidarity and respecting the dignity of others. Sigger, Polak and Pennink (2010:9) supported the view that Ubuntu is not unique, as Ubuntu embodies attributes that may be general human values ubiquitous in other cultures.

Ubuntu has further been criticised for being vague, having the potential to lead to groupthink because of its collectivist orientation, and its relevance for public morality in contemporary South Africa (Metz, 2011). Challenges such as high levels of corruption, ineffective or poor

corporate governance, high levels of inequality, corporate failure, and corporate scandals in Africa have raised questions on whether Ubuntu is just a theoretical concept that does not necessarily translate to the lived experiences of most within communities. Furthermore, it is not clear how the application of Ubuntu can change leadership practices in a fundamental and morally desirable way to significantly impact the global reality of inequality and poverty (Woermann & Engelbrecht, 2019:31).

Furthermore, Matolino and Kwindingwi (2013) argued that Ubuntu has reached its end and there is no possibility of future development, as the sociocultural conditions that necessitated Ubuntu have evolved in South Africa. Eyong (2015:69), on the other hand, states that Ubuntu may only apply to the indigenous African context and may not necessarily be applied across the world due to societal and political changes.

Metz (2014), however, argued that the justifications on which Matolino and Kwindingwi (2013) rested their conclusion were unfounded. Specifically, the author shared that the fact that some political elites in South Africa who embrace Ubuntu do so in ways that serve nefarious functions does not mean the end of Ubuntu. However, this does mean that the scholarly enquiry into the application of Ubuntu in politics is relatively recent. Asamoah and Yeboah-Assiamah (2019:317) further contend that:

“The preponderance of corruption and poor leadership in Africa is anti-cultural, anti-human, anti-ethical and anti-African; hence, those individuals who indulge or encourage leadership paralysis are not true Africans by deeds but merely profess to be. Linking the African Ubuntu philosophy to public leadership, the study maintains that the hallmark of public leadership and governance is to develop the skills of all and care for society”.

Additionally, scholars have criticised Ubuntu for lacking empirical support and providing solutions to leadership challenges faced within society and organisations. Some scholars have even argued that Ubuntu has not materialised in South Africa, which is regarded as its birthplace (Malakyan, 2023).

Scholars such as Ngunjiri (2016), Netshitangani (2019) and Carter, Sisco and Fowler (2023) have highlighted the alleged inherent patriarchal nature of Ubuntu. A study by Manyonganise (2015:6) provided a balanced view of Ubuntu concerning the lived

experience of females. They argued that those cultural practices, customs, and traditions that are oppressive to females should be reevaluated to ensure that Ubuntu is liberating to females and should not dehumanise them. However, Luvalo (2019:1) argued that Ubuntu can be used as a mechanism to address patriarchy in sub-Saharan Africa and reduce the surge of gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF).

There are limited studies available on the differences experienced by females and males regarding how Ubuntu values are practised. However, a literature review conducted by Duvenage (2020) highlighted some gender stereotypes concerning the perception that females tend to embody Ubuntu values in their leadership approach. Ndlovu (2013) argued that females can lead through Ubuntu values and use these values as a mechanism for addressing social injustice issues, such as access to education, health care and financial systems. Studies by Ngunjiri (2016) and Netshitangani (2019) also explored female leadership under the Ubuntu worldview. A recent study on female leadership by Carter *et al.* (2023) explored the lived experiences of Black female coaches who had corporate and professional leadership experience and identified that “themes of collectively, influence, and convergence that were deeply ingrained in the coaches’ leadership coaching practices and connected with the three principles of Ubuntu—spirituality, consensus, and dialogue.” Carter *et al.* (2023) found that there is a benefit for Black female coaches in using Ubuntu in their coaching practices:

“Ubuntu improves the client, who needs experiences in psychologically safe, trustworthy, and generative environments. Next, because Ubuntu is iterative, coaches in turn are enriched, like sharpening iron. After using their coaching skills to help clients, coaches grow skills as leaders and coaches in their own right, iron having sharpened iron. The ability to do deep capacity-building work with clients in the moment is a vital part of using an Ubuntu coaching philosophy because it allows people to develop their own inner wisdom and passion while building up others”.

Moyo (2016) explored a different dimension with regard to females and leading through Ubuntu. She reflected on her journey as a black academic woman decolonizing herself through Ubuntu due to the incongruence, she experienced between the Ubuntu values she grew up with and the Western schooling system she went through. This caused a hunger within her to return to the cultural practices indigenous to her. Moyo (2016) found that she had to reconcile the tension she experienced between the Western cultural practices she

was familiar with due to being exposed to the Western schooling system for most of her academic life and the value associated with Ubuntu.

Some studies have also indicated challenges associated with implementing Ubuntu, including the limited literature available on Ubuntu as compared to Western leadership theories that are well documented and integrated into educational and business schools. This has led to large corporate businesses still being dominated by Western philosophies (Lutz, 2009). Furthermore, there is a lack of awareness by society on the foundational concept of Ubuntu, meaning that some people know little (if anything) about Ubuntu. April and Peters (2011:20-21) found that there is also a level of distrust between leaders and followers within organisations surrounding the adoption of the values associated with Ubuntu. This could result in employees not being open to sharing their views or ideas, thus creating challenges with embracing changes such as the adoption of Ubuntu. Furthermore, performance management systems were seen to be more aligned with Western leadership approaches, as they appear to value and reward individual achievements as opposed to collective achievements. Lastly, the relevance of African values has been questioned in the changing business environment.

3.10 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the researcher explored Ubuntu as an African cultural resource and provided an overview of leadership through Ubuntu and its evolution. The chapter further explored the common values associated with Ubuntu and whether these values can be incorporated into today's leadership practices. It is important to note that Ubuntu has also been criticised for being vague and not easily implementable. As indicated in this chapter, Ubuntu places greater emphasis on collectivism (Mbigi, 2007). Molose *et al.* (2018:193) mentioned that:

“Ubuntu collective values (compassion, survival, group solidarity, respect, and dignity), which relate affirmatively with a sense of workplace collectivism, was identified as a unique element of cultural management philosophy for directing personal interactions, workplace commitment, and performance management improvements”.

This opinion was corroborated by Muller *et al.* (2019:20), who argued that the Ubuntu values such as being of service to others had a significant and positive influence on employee

engagement and organisational performance. Ubuntu is, however, a complex phenomenon which needs to be further explored concerning its implementation.

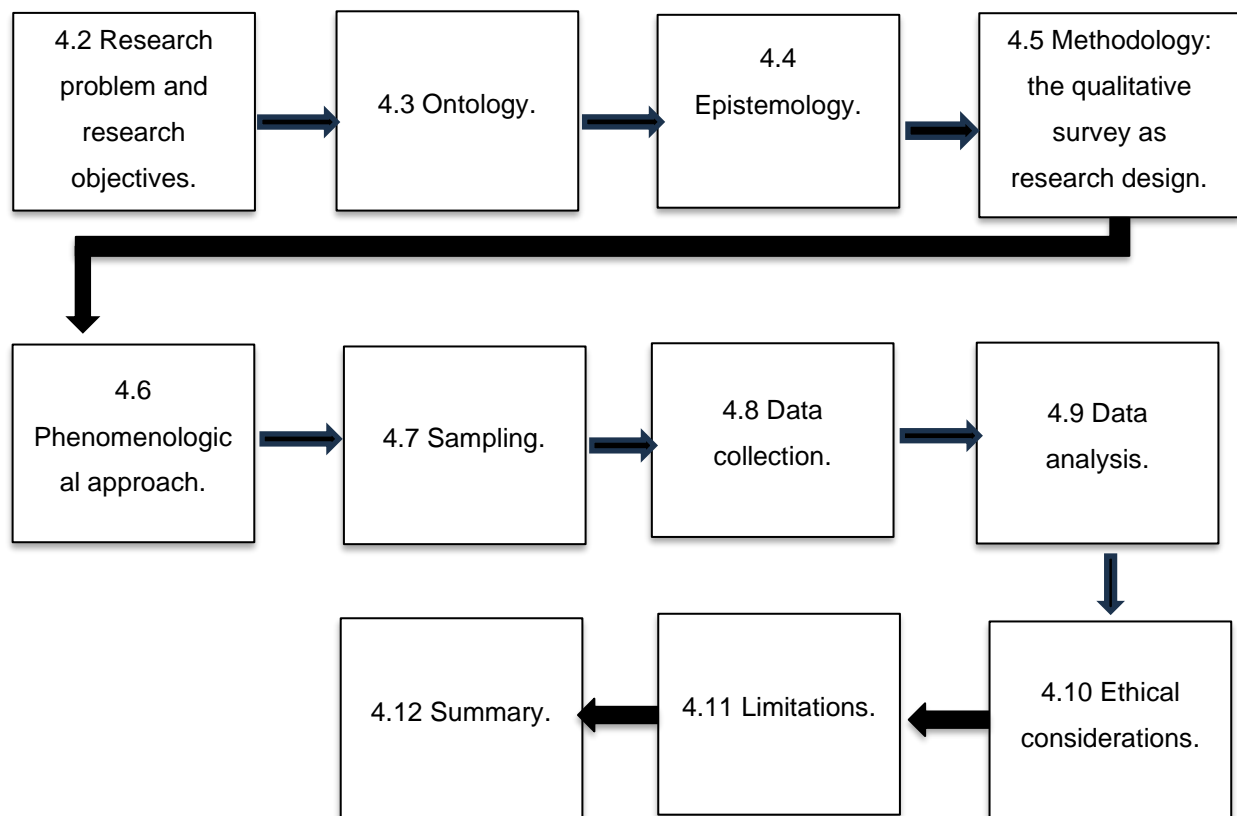
CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 2, the researcher explored the interaction between leadership and African cultures. Chapter 3 provided an overview of leadership through Ubuntu and Ubuntu's evolution. The multiple uses of Ubuntu and the complexity associated with Ubuntu were discussed, and the chapter further explored the common values related to Ubuntu. It also explored how leaders could incorporate Ubuntu into leadership and business practices.

This chapter will discuss the research methods and design followed during the research process. The chapter follows a nine-step process as outlined in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Outline of Chapter 4



This study sought to contribute towards understanding the extent to which Ubuntu, as a cultural resource, is integrated into the leadership approach of business leaders in South Africa. It attempted to answer the following RQ and SRQs:

- RQ1: To what extent do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage integrate Ubuntu into their leadership approach?;
- SRQ1: How do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage define Ubuntu?;
- SRQ2: How do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage view the influence of Ubuntu in their team/organisational performance?; and
- SRQ3: How do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage put Ubuntu into practice within their organisations?

4.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The plethora of research on leadership highlighted the importance of considering the uniqueness and cultural context within which leaders operate (Perry *et al.*, 2010). Globalisation has resulted in leaders across organisations having to lead teams with different and often contrasting cultures (Mbigi, 2007; Theimann & April, 2007). South Africa's organisational landscape, which was influenced by apartheid, could present leaders within South Africa with additional challenges. According to Shrivastava, Selvarajah, Meyer and Dorasamy (2014:48):

“Traditionally, South African business leaders were required to lead Eurocentric, autocratic and hierarchical conglomerates that were based on Western value systems; but in the post-apartheid era, they find themselves leading a multicultural workforce that is more collectivist and less competitive”.

It is, therefore, important for South African business leaders to consider African modes of leadership as an alternative for organisations operating within the African continent. African modes of leadership challenge Western approaches to leadership, which are characterised by the cultural context of heroism, linearity, individualism, and objectivism (Eyong, 2017).

As stated in the literature review of this study, African leadership is an area of research interest that emerged between 1950 to 1959, with a focus on political leadership (Fourie *et al.*, 2017). Thereafter, the 2000s had major developments in African leadership research, with themes such as leadership and African values and systems; and leadership, ethnicity, and traditional leadership being of major interest. Although

there has been growing interest in African leadership, few studies have focused on how leadership is practised in Africa, since leadership practices are geographically specific (Lerutla & Steyn, 2022).

Edozie (2017) argued that it is important for leaders to understand Africa's cultural heritage, challenges, and future priorities to translate African values such as humanness and interdependence into leadership and business practices. Ubuntu, as a cultural resource, has been a topic of discussion for several years with some of the research focusing on how leaders can lead through cultural values such as emphasis on collectivism, participative decision-making, compassion, and treating everyone with respect and dignity. Woermann and Engelbrecht (2019) highlighted that Ubuntu can have a positive impact on the leadership and business practices of an organisation by allowing for employee participation in the strategic decision-making processes. Muller *et al.* (2019) argued that Ubuntu values, such as being of service to others, had a positive influence on employee engagement and organisational performance. Furthermore, leaders can embrace African shared human values associated with Ubuntu. These leaders, however, must be cognisant of the unique cultural phenomenon that might be evident in South African organisations, such as organisations that may still predominantly follow Western individualistic value systems (Eyong, 2017).

While there has been research conducted concerning the positive effects of Ubuntu on organisational performance and cross-cultural leadership, further research is required on how business leaders can lead through the use of African values (Vilakati & Schurink, 2021). Stated differently, further research is required on the extent to which leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage can integrate Ubuntu into their leadership approach.

4.3 ONTOLOGY

Ontology refers to the belief a researcher has about the nature of reality and worldview. Hesse-Biber (2016) categorised ontology into positivism, interpretivism, and critical realism when conducting qualitative research. The positivist construct argues that social reality can be observed through measurable and neutral observations of

patterns, actions, activities or reactions (Hesse-Biber, 2016). This view is supported by Maxwell (2012), who argued that social reality can exist independently of human theories, interpretations, and conceptions. The interpretivism construct acknowledges the importance of social contexts with the formation of a worldview and therefore argues that reality is influenced by historical circumstances and socio-cultural influences (Charmaz, 2014). The critical realist construct acknowledges an independent reality, but it does not assert that any one person can have absolute knowledge of that reality; as such, knowledge is shaped by the individual's perceptions (Peters, Pressey, Vanharanta & Johnston, 2013). This emphasis is supported by Bhaskar's (2008:28-29) views of sociology, namely that:

“Sociology is not concerned with large-scale, mass or group behaviour (conceived as the behaviour of large numbers, masses or groups of individuals). Rather, it is concerned, at least paradigmatically, with the persistent relations between individuals (and groups), and with the relations between these relations (and between such relations and nature) and the products of such relations”.

From an ontological perspective, the researcher's position is one of critical realism. Creswell (2012) has argued that the critical realism ontological perspective is commensurate with qualitative research, where the researcher acknowledges the multiple realities of the participants.

Critical realism distinguishes between the tools of knowledge and the results of scientific investigation. The tools of knowledge, known as intransitive objects, encompass the phenomena that science seeks to study (Bhaskar, 2008). Proponents of critical realism argue that these intransitive objects have related causal influences. To analyse these influences effectively, Bhaskar (2008) identified three specific dimensions, namely structure, culture, and agency. Structure refers to the systems of human relationships that arise from defined roles within society. Culture includes the belief systems and ideologies that shape the perspectives of social agents. Agency denotes individuals' ability to make informed choices (Archer, Bhaskar, Collier, Lawson & Norrie, 2013). This study explored the extent to which leaders can integrate Ubuntu into their leadership approach and was grounded on participants' perspectives, which were obtained based on their views regarding the successes or challenges they have experienced.

4.4 EPISTEMOLOGY

Epistemology is a philosophical approach focusing on the grounds of knowledge (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015), and importantly how knowledge is acquired (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2013). The objective of every research project is to enhance the existing body of knowledge on the phenomenon being researched. Thus, for this study, the researcher highlighted the literature on leadership that resonated with them. Furthermore, Nkomo (2011) argued that:

“African leadership scholars could enhance the development of African leadership theories based on their own socio-cultural experiences. There is a belief that should indigenous African leadership theories be claimed and institutionalised in Africa; this will have a positive effect on resolving the significant challenges facing the continent”.

A review of the literature on African leadership highlighted that more articles were published from 2000 to 2009; however, a large number of the literature continues to originate from outside Africa (Fourie *et al.*, 2017). This is problematic, as the literature might be written based on Western interpretations of the continent (Nkomo, 2011). Western theories on leadership have previously omitted the views of Africans or other non-Western leadership theories or perspectives (Nkomo, 2011). When this type of knowledge is used to research African leadership, it can be expected that some distance and misunderstanding relating to African leadership concepts could exist (Nkomo, 2011). In this study, the researcher found themselves aligned with the views expressed by these schools in conceptualising the study. The researcher further acknowledges that Ubuntu is part of their cultural heritage, which has influenced their leadership approach positively.

There are various epistemological perspectives when conducting qualitative research, however, these can also be categorised into positivist, interpretive, and critical (Hesse-Biber, 2016). The positivist epistemological perspective places restrictions between the research phenomena, the researcher, and the participants (Hesse-Biber, 2016). The constructivist epistemological perspective argues that “knowledge is produced by exploring and understanding the social world of the people being studied, focusing on their meanings and interpretations” (Ritchie *et al.*, 2013:12). The researcher is

therefore not a neutral instrument, however, their interpretation of reality is influenced by personal viewpoints, biases, and assumptions (Maxwell, 2012). Knowledge is therefore co-created by the researcher and the research participants within a specific context (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). This view is supported by Schwandt (2014), who argued that knowledge is not discovered but rather invented through concepts and language that assist with describing and making sense of social constructs.

As in the case of ontology, critical epistemology lies between the objectivist and constructivist epistemological constructs (Gabriel, 2015). A critical epistemology establishes a connection between human subjectivity, agency, and creativity, and the broader aims of human advancement, freedom, equality, and justice. This analytical framework is particularly valuable for researchers' advancing knowledge of individuals and groups who may encounter oppression from ideological, economic, and political forces within society (Bauman, 2013). The researcher's position for this study is, therefore, found in a critical epistemological position.

4.5 METHODOLOGY: THE QUALITATIVE SURVEY AS RESEARCH DESIGN

Chapter 2 of the thesis highlighted the evolution of leadership and cultural studies, whereafter Chapter 3 highlighted the literature available on Ubuntu and leadership. However, it is evident that there are limited qualitative studies available on the ability to lead through Ubuntu, with researchers specifically recommending that further qualitative studies be conducted exploring this issue (Vilakati *et al.*, 2018; West, 2014). Based on the research gap identified, the researcher chose to pursue a qualitative research design for this study, as qualitative research allows for the interpretation of meanings individuals make of their life experiences in natural settings, assuming that social interactions are part of an integrated set of relationships that are best understood by inductive procedures (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

According to Jansen (2010), it is important for researchers conducting a qualitative study to first specify the object or topic being researched, followed by the empirical domain in the study, and finally the unit of observation. This study aimed to explore the influence of culture on leadership, with a specific focus on Ubuntu as a cultural resource and its impact on leadership; the units observed are the leaders for whom

Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage. For this study, it was important for the participants to acknowledge that Ubuntu is part of their cultural heritage to avoid the risk of assumptions by the researcher resulting in the accidental inclusion of leaders who do not acknowledge Ubuntu as part of their cultural heritage. The study's objectives, therefore, included enhancing understanding of how leaders define Ubuntu, considering the cultural dynamics in South Africa, and how this has impacted their leadership approach.

The study explored the beliefs, behaviours, and lived experiences of leaders, to understand how Ubuntu can be integrated into leaders' leadership approaches. According to Cresswell (2012), there are five approaches to conducting a qualitative study. Table 8 below provides a view of these five approaches.

Table 8: Five approaches to conducting a qualitative study (Cresswell , 2012)

	Narrative research	Phenomenology	Grounded Theory	Ethnography	Case Study
Focus	Focus is on the life of an individual.	Understanding the fundamentals of an experience.	The development of a theory grounded in data collected.	Interpretation and description of the culture-sharing group.	An in-depth analysis of a specific case or multiple cases.
Type of problem most suitable for the research design	Telling an individual's story concerning their experiences.	Exploring the essence of a live phenomenon.	Grounding a theory.	Interpretation and description of patterns of culture within a group.	Exploring in-depth analysis of a specific case or multiple cases.
Unit of analysis	One or more individuals.	Multiple individuals with shared experiences.	A process, interaction or action involving multiple individuals.	A group sharing a similar culture.	A company, event, activity or program.

The researcher therefore deemed the phenomenological design to be the most suitable in achieving the objectives of this study. As indicated earlier, the purpose of the study was to gain a deeper understanding of how Ubuntu is integrated into leaders' leadership approaches, thus understanding Ubuntu and its influence on leadership.

4.6 PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

According to Creswell (2007:62):

“A phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon. Phenomenologists focus on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon ([for example] grief is universally experienced)”.

Specifically speaking, hermeneutic phenomenology is focused on uncovering and interpreting the lived experiences of participants (Ramsook, 2018). Hermeneutic phenomenology therefore focuses on finding meaning in the lived human experiences through the analysis of information to find these meanings and allow interpretation by looking for themes (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021). This research approach does not only assist in identifying the common themes from the data obtained but also the differences that may arise, as these need to be highlighted (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021). A hermeneutic phenomenological design was best suited for addressing this type of RQ, as it made provision for accounting for the lived experiences of the various leaders, which were critical for this study.

4.7 SAMPLING

Ramsook (2018) define sampling as the technique used to select a smaller group or sample from a larger population. Sampling must occur, as it is impossible to study an entire population. The sampling process followed for this study is described below.

4.7.1 Context and unit of analysis

The context of this research was how business leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage integrate the values of Ubuntu into their leadership approach. Table 10 below will expand on the unit of analysis and the unit of observation concerning the RQ. As per Monette, Sullivan and DeJong (2013:89), “the units of analysis refer to the entities ([for example] the tangible “things”) that you will collect data about and ultimately reach conclusions about”. The unit of analysis for this study was, therefore, the extent to which leaders apply Ubuntu, as a cultural construct, in their leadership approach. The working definition of leadership adopted in this study was “the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organisations of which they are members” (House *et al.*, 2013:17).

The units of observation include the individuals or organisations who will be interviewed to acquire the data required for the units of analysis (Monette *et al.*, 2013:89). The unit of observation was, therefore, leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage.

Table 9: Unit of analysis and unit of observation

Research question	Unit of analysis	Unit of observation
To what extent do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage integrate the African values of Ubuntu in their leadership approach?	The extent to which leaders apply Ubuntu, as a cultural resource, in their leadership approach.	Leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage.

4.7.2 Sampling methods

To achieve the objectives of this study, it was important for the researcher to obtain rich data from different participants across the different business sectors within South Africa. A purposive sampling technique was, therefore, selected by the researcher when selecting the participants. This sampling technique was appropriate for this

study, as according to Ramsook (2018), researchers conducting phenomenological studies should utilise purposive sampling techniques. The objective of purposive sampling is to locate participants who are most knowledgeable about or experienced with the topic under investigation (Patton, 2014:265). The researcher intended to expand on the current understanding of Ubuntu, as a cultural resource, and its influence on their own leadership approach through the different perspectives obtained from the participants.

The participants were selected based on the participants confirming that they self-described Ubuntu and its values as part of their cultural heritage. The researcher used the LinkedIn platform to identify potential participants. The researcher looked for posts and articles the potential participants might have written or reposted on this platform. The researcher also searched for potential participants in different leadership positions and different industries within the South African business environment.

The participants were initially contacted by email and were requested to confirm whether Ubuntu formed part of their cultural heritage and whether they would be willing to participate in this study. Interviews were, therefore, only set with the participants who responded to the email request. The sample included participants with diverse backgrounds who are leaders within the South African business environment. This includes participants from commercial banks, advisory and audit firms, private equity investment companies, and entrepreneurs. The participants consisted of 17 males and 3 females. Table 10 below provides a profile of participants.

Table 10: Unit of analysis and unit of observation

Participant name	Participant Position	Gender	Participant industry
Participant 1	Head, Business Integration	Male	Banking
Participant 2	Chief Operations Officer (COO)	Male	Banking
Participant 3	Head of Financial Crime	Male	Banking
Participant 4	Partner	Male	Advisory and audit firms
Participant 5	Executive Head of Compliance	Female	Banking

Participant name	Participant Position	Gender	Participant industry
Participant 6	Senior Machine Learning Specialist	Male	Communication
Participant 7	COO	Male	Banking
Participant 8	Founder	Female	Entrepreneur
Participant 9	Vice President (VP) - Digital Marketing and Media	Male	Banking
Participant 10	General Manager	Male	Retail
Participant 11	Head - Global Markets Business Technology	Male	Banking
Participant 12	Founder	Male	Entrepreneur
Participant 13	Chief Compliance Officer	Male	Banking
Participant 14	Executive Coach	Male	Entrepreneur
Participant 15	Founder	Female	Entrepreneur
Participant 16	CEO	Male	Private equity investment companies
Participant 17	Chairperson Of Multiple Companies	Male	Private equity investment companies
Participant 18	CEO	Male	Advisory and audit firms
Participant 19	Executive Business Head	Female	Banking
Participant 20	Founder	Female	Entrepreneur

The advantages of following a purposive sampling strategy include the efficient use of resources, existing in-depth knowledge of the participants, and overall relevance to the research objectives (Polit & Beck, 2012:519). A disadvantage includes a high probability of bias (Polit & Beck, 2012:519). The risk of researcher bias in this study was regarded as low; even though the researcher approached the participants, the participants were willing to share their insights and experiences with regard to the extent to which Ubuntu influenced their leadership practices.

4.7.3 Sample size

It was important for the researcher to find the correct sample size to support this study. Francis, Johnston, Robertson, Glidewell, Entwistle, Eccles and Grimshaw (2010:1230) argued that:

“...the use of samples that are larger than needed is an ethical issue (because they waste research funds and participants' time), and the use of samples that are smaller than needed is both an ethical and scientific issue (because it may not be informative to use samples so small that the results reflect idiosyncratic data and are thus not transferable, and may therefore be a waste of research funds and participants' time)”.

According to Creswell (2007:61), researchers conducting a phenomenological study should interview five to 25 individuals who have experienced the phenomenon being researched. It was important for the research to consider data saturation when justifying the sample size used for the study. Francis *et al.* (2010:1230) described data saturation as the result of no new findings, concepts or themes being identified with the addition of further participants. The aim of the researcher was therefore to reach the required sample size of 25 participants. This was a difficult task as positive responses were not necessarily received from potential participants. The researcher continued to use the LinkedIn platform to recruit more participants, however, only 20 participants were interviewed. The researcher sent out requests to participate in the study to 47 potential candidates. Follow-up requests were also sent out to the potential candidates to ensure that the required sample size was reached. It should also be noted that although seven potential participants initially agreed to be interviewed, they either did not provide an interview date or did not show up to the interview. Post-concluding the 20 interviews and the initial analysis of the interview transcripts, the researcher identified common themes between interviews conducted earlier and those conducted during the later part of the data-gathering process. The later participants added to the richness of data, however, did not necessarily identify new themes or findings. The researcher concluded that they had reached a point of data saturation.

4.8 DATA COLLECTION

The data collection process was executed in two distinct phases. The initial phase comprised a pre-test interview, while the subsequent phase involved conducting one-on-one interviews with 20 participants.

4.8.1 Pre-test interview

Ramsook (2018) recommended that a pre-test of the interviews should be conducted before the researcher commences with the data collection process. Therefore, a pilot interview was conducted using a surrogate participant. Furthermore, according to Ramsook (2018), “a surrogate participant is someone who is not directly from your study’s pool of potential participants but who is very similar (in terms of knowledge, experience, and/or job position) to these participants”. A surrogate participant from the financial sector with a similar background was used to conduct the pilot interview.

The pilot interview was recorded, which allowed the researcher to reflect on how the interview was conducted and enhance appropriate sections of the discussion guide. The pilot interview lasted for 42 minutes and 48 seconds. The researcher was able to ask all the questions documented in the interview guide, however, the researcher noted that the questions did not necessarily follow the sequence as documented in the interview guide. This was because how the surrogate participant responded to certain questions resulted in the researcher asking certain questions earlier than the researcher had planned.

Post-completion of the pilot interview, the researcher was comfortable with the format and structure of the discussion guide. The researcher did not update the discussion guide. The researcher concluded that although the discussion guide was comprehensive, it would be difficult to follow the sequence as documented in the discussion guide, as the interviewee responses did influence the structure of the discussion. The researcher's conclusion is supported by Merriam and Tisdell (2015) who reminded researchers that, "throughout the research process, there are no fixed procedures or protocols that can be followed step by step". Furthermore, Rubin and

Rubin (2012) argued that the interview guide should be used as a mechanism to trigger the discussion during the interview and maintain focus, however, it should not constrain the participants and the uniqueness of their responses. The main learning the researcher took from the pilot interview was that the researcher needs to be fully acquainted with all the questions documented in the interview guide to allow for more authentic conversations with participants.

4.8.2 One-on-one interviews

Data were collected through one-on-one interviews conducted with the participants to discover and document the extent to which the participants integrate Ubuntu into their leadership approach. This was done in the form of semi-structured in-depth interviews using open-ended questions. These questions were linked to the RQ. The use of open-ended questions was appropriate because the objective of a phenomenological study is to encourage the participants to “best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspective of the researcher or past research findings and allows the participant to create the options for responding” (Creswell, 2012:218).

As part of the interview scheduling process, the researcher emailed the participants the introductory and consent letters and reiterated the voluntary nature of the participation at the start of all interviews. The participants were also requested to provide a suitable date and time for the interviews. The interviews were conducted online through the Microsoft Teams platform. The participants were also provided with the interview guide before the scheduled interview date. At the start of all interviews, the participants were requested to provide their consent to recording the interviews, to which all participants agreed. The interviews were conducted during October and November 2024. Although 60 minutes were scheduled for the interviews, the actual duration of the interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 90 minutes. The researcher did take notes of the important points during the interviews, however, most of the attention was on the responses provided by the participant to ensure that the researcher was fully engaged in the discussion.

The Microsoft Teams platform was used for recording and transcribing the discussions. The recordings and the transcripts from the Microsoft Teams platform were uploaded to the cloud and stored on the researcher's desktop for backup purposes. It is worth noting that the transcripts from Microsoft Teams were not 100% accurate, this required the researcher to re-listen to the interviews and update these transcripts to ensure accuracy.

The advantage relating to the data obtained from interviews is that the interviews can provide rich data from participants, as the participants can provide detailed responses to the questions asked (Creswell, 2012:218). The data received from the interviews could be better controlled by the interviewer because the interviews might be structured in a particular format or specific questions might be asked to elicit the data (Creswell, 2012:218). This data, therefore, provided depth specifically concerning the participants' lived experiences.

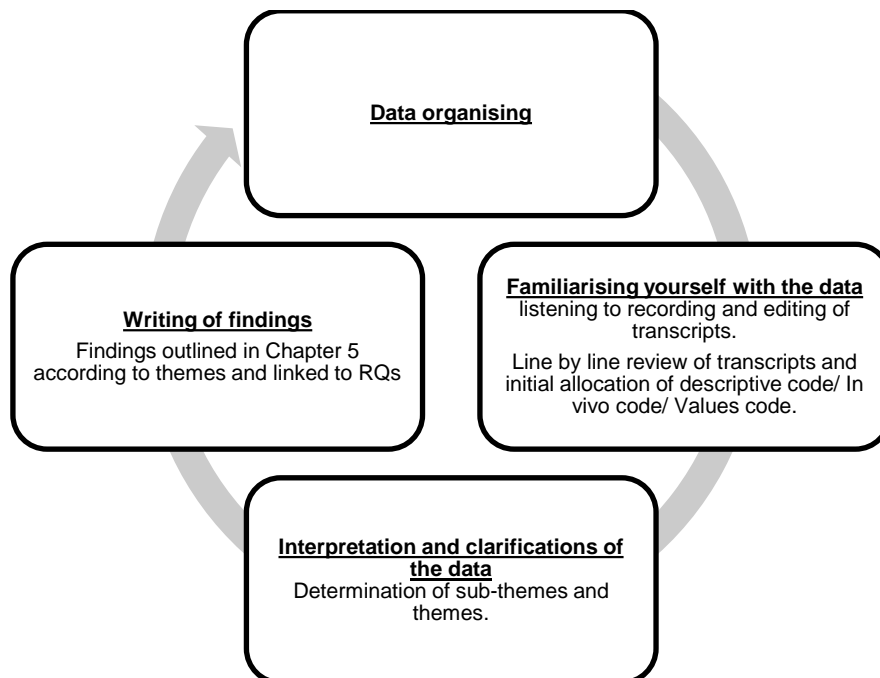
A disadvantage that can be associated with data obtained from the interviews is that the data might also be deceptive, as it might reflect the reviews the interviewee thinks that the researcher would like to hear (Creswell, 2012:218). The interviewer will not be able to control the level of engagement the interviewee could display during the interview discussion, as the interviewee can provide ambiguous, vague or contradicting information, which could impact the quality of the data (Creswell, 2012:218). To avoid these challenges, the researcher asked further probing questions when the answers provided by the participants were unclear, asked the participants to further elaborate on their answers, and listened attentively to the responses provided by the participants, which is aligned with Alshenqeeti's (2014:41-44) recommendation.

It was also important for the researcher not to hold certain romantic views about Ubuntu and its impact on leadership, as this allowed participants to fully express their views on the questions asked. In support, Laughlin (1995) argued that researchers should not take a romanticist position when conducting interviews but should be balanced in their thinking and approach to conducting the interview. It was, therefore, important for the researcher to fully address issues such as challenges the participants experienced with the integration of Ubuntu in their leadership approach to avoid focusing only on the positive impacts.

4.9 DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis process can be time-consuming and difficult (Ziebland & Mays, 2000:116). For one, a challenge exists in the enormous amount of data the researcher would have to go through to answer the RQs (Saldaña, 2013). For these reasons, the researcher followed the data analysis process recommended by Rowley (2012:267), as outlined in Figure 6 below. This included the researcher i) organising the data; ii) familiarising themselves with the data; iii) interpreting and clarifying the data, and iv) writing the findings. The process followed by the researcher was not once-off but iterative before finalisation; with a better description of themes and sub-themes being done post-feedback from the study supervisor.

Figure 6: Data analysis process as recommended by Rowley (2012)



The researcher followed a thematic analysis to analyse and interpret the data. This process includes the allocation of a code to raw qualitative data with a focus on generating similar themes (Boyatzis, 1998).

4.9.1 Data organising

As indicated in the data collection section, the researcher made use of the Microsoft Team meeting recording and transcription functionality, which required the researcher to review the transcripts for accuracy. Once the researcher was satisfied with the quality of the transcripts, the participants were provided with the transcriptions of the interview to confirm the accuracy of the discussion held. The outcomes of the interviews resulted in 414 pages of transcribed Microsoft Word documents, with each transcribed interview saved separately.

The researcher also ensured that any identifiable information relating to the participants was removed from the transcripts. This includes the participants' names, the organisations they worked for, and any other information that could compromise the identity of the participants. This process was followed to ensure compliance with the consent letter shared, which guaranteed the confidentiality of all participants.

The researcher used Microsoft Excel to assist with the analysis of the data collected during the interview process and to identify emerging codes and common themes. Although the researcher initially considered using the Atlas.ti tool, they were more familiar with data analysis functionalities offered by Microsoft Excel; hence, they chose to use this tool. As stated by Saldana (2013:45), Microsoft Excel provides:

“...excellent organisation with individual cells holding thousands of entries and the accompanying codes. Each row represents an individual participant's survey data, and each column can hold the responses to a specific survey question.... Excel also enables calculating of survey ratings into means and to conduct t-tests for subgroup comparison”.

4.9.2 Familiarising yourself with the data

It was important for the researcher to be well acquainted with the data collected. This was done through reading the transcriptions and listening to the interview recordings. It should be noted that the purpose of this initial process was not to derive codes, sub-themes or themes but also to remind the researcher of the discussions held with the participants. According to Braun and Clarke (2006:87), researchers need to immerse and familiarise themselves with the data by listening to the audio recorded. The

process of listening to the audio recording was followed by a line-by-line review of the transcribed Microsoft documents to allocate a descriptive code in in-vivo code or values code. Saldana (2013:362 - 369) defined a descriptive code as "labels to data to summarise in a word or short phrase, most often as a noun, the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data"; an in-vivo code as "words or short phrases from the participant's language in the data record as code", and values code as "the application of codes to qualitative data that reflect a participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs, representing his or her perspectives or worldview". This initial process allowed the researcher to further immerse themselves in the data that formed the foundation of the analysis that followed.

4.9.3 Interpretation and clarifications of the data

This process was followed by copying data into Microsoft Excel, including the extract the code was linked to, the pseudonym for each participant linked to the code, and a code serial number. The objective of the data analysis process was to identify overarching themes that showed a pattern and commonality across the participants' responses; this process was guided by the RQs (Braun & Clarke, 2006:89). According to DeSantis and Ugarriza (2000:362), themes "bring meaning and identity to a recurrent experience and its variant manifestations". As such, a theme captures and unifies the nature or basis of the experience into a meaningful whole. The researcher, therefore, categorised the themes and sub-themes based on the common description identified from the descriptive/in-vivo/values codes.

The interpretation of the data, therefore, resulted in five themes and a further 44 sub-themes being identified. Initial descriptions were provided for these themes and sub-themes. Braun and Clarke (2006:92) argued that the process of naming themes and sub-themes is iterative, as the research will need to be clear on the story the theme tells and how the themes fit into the overall story about the data. It was, therefore, important for the researcher to ensure that each name for the theme and sub-themes provided an accurate description. The researcher went through an iterative process to gain the most accurate descriptions of the themes and sub-themes.

4.9.4 Writing the findings

These final themes and sub-themes are discussed in detail in Chapter 5 of this study. The themes and sub-themes needed to answer the questions to the research gap identified. The researcher, therefore, linked each theme to the specific RQ/SRQ that it answers.

4.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The approval to conduct this study was obtained from the University of Pretoria's (UP) Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) Ethics Committee on the 21st of August 2024. This approval was obtained before the commencement of the study. Further ethical concerns and how they were addressed are described below.

Trustworthiness in research studies relates to the measures taken by the researcher in the research procedure to ensure the authentic and accurate representation of the participants' perspectives (Lietz & Zayas, 2010). A framework that is inclusive of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability was utilised by the researcher to ensure the trustworthiness of the proposed study (Polit & Beck, 2012:524-528).

4.10.1 Credibility

Credibility entails how accurate the researcher's findings are surrounding the objectives of the study (Lietz & Zayas, 2010). The researcher adopted several strategies to enhance the credibility of the study. Firstly, triangulations were conducted by validating findings against different sources (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). This approach assisted in providing legitimacy to the outcomes of the proposed study. As per Creswell (2012:259), triangulation is:

“...the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals ([for example] a principal and a student), types of data ([for example] observational field notes and interviews) or methods of data collection ([for example] documents and interviews) in descriptions and themes in qualitative research”.

Secondly, participants were requested to provide honest feedback, probing questions were asked to ensure information was captured accurately and the participants were provided with the transcript of the interview to provide them with an opportunity to validate the information recorded (Polit & Beck, 2012:524-528). Participants' exact words were used in the findings and discussions chapters, allowing for their voices to be heard (Noble & Smith, 2015). Lastly, regular engagement sessions were held with the study supervisor to seek their expertise relating to potential study flaws.

It is also important to reflect on the researcher's experiences, knowledge, and background, as this could influence the direction of the study (Morrow, 2005:252). The researcher is a 38-year-old Black male with a professional background in the financial industry, specifically banking. The researcher is a Christian and noted the influence of Christianity on their worldview. The researcher comes from a middle-class family and attended multiracial schools during their formative years. It was during these years that the researcher began to engage with people from different cultural backgrounds and belief systems.

The researcher completed an MPhil in Responsible Leadership through UP. It was during this process that they realised the importance of effective leadership in addressing societal challenges. Furthermore, the researcher noted that the MPhil programme mainly focused on Western leadership theories, with less than 10% of the MPhil programme discussing African leadership approaches. It was for these reasons that the researcher decided to pursue a study focusing on African leadership. The researcher was brought up in a Black family where Ubuntu values were practised. The participants also noted these values being practised, to some extent, in the Christian community; however, the researcher struggled with how Christian leaders can take advantage of the congregations they lead. The researcher always struggles with maintaining objectivity when it comes to leaders who do not care about the well-being of their followers.

It was, therefore, important for the researcher to continuously reflect throughout the research process, including the data collection process. The researcher reflected after each interview conducted, using the notes from the interviews, on how their personal biases could influence their understanding of the responses provided. As

recommended by Kitto, Chesters and Grbich (2008), the researcher also followed a reflexivity approach when analysing the data collected.

4.10.2 Dependability

Dependability relates to the possibility of arriving at similar findings should the research study be conducted using similar participants, methods, and conditions (Polit & Beck, 2012:585). Dependability enables independent readers or reviewers of the study to comprehend and follow processes and procedures to evaluate the study and its findings (Lietz & Zayas, 2010). The researcher of this study provided a detailed explanation of the research methods and approaches utilised to demonstrate dependability. The researcher documented all the important moments and decisions.

4.10.2 Confirmability

The researcher must ensure that the findings of the study accurately reflect the authentic experiences and perspectives of the participants, rather than being influenced by the researcher's views (Polit & Beck, 2012:524-528). The researcher conducted a critical review of emerging codes and themes with the study supervisor to ensure that the codes and themes were a logical representation of the data obtained. This approach assisted in providing legitimacy to the outcomes of the study (Creswell, 2012:261).

4.10.4 Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the findings of the proposed research study can be applied to different groups, contexts or settings (Polit & Beck, 2012:524-528). The researcher has provided a detailed account of the participants and context inclusive of feelings, thoughts, emotions, observations, and behaviours to enable readers to relate to the study. The study methodology section also outlined the sampling strategy and the proposed participants, enabling readers to engage with the study and make decisions on the possibility of the findings being applied to a different context, group or setting.

4.11 LIMITATIONS

The major limitation of this study lies in the fact that the study only focused on the participants who self-identified as having Ubuntu as part of their cultural heritage. The researcher was comfortable with this limitation, as the main RQ focused on Ubuntu, thus it would not have made sense for the researcher to recruit participants who do not know or understand what Ubuntu is. The study further only focused on leaders within South Africa, which is deemed to be one of the birthplaces of Ubuntu. The perspective of what constitutes effective leadership that embraces Ubuntu was mainly provided by those in leadership positions, without sufficient voice being provided by those in a followership role. The researcher recognised and accepted this limitation, as these leaders were required to adopt the role of followers in certain instances. Their perspectives as followers are discussed in the findings section.

4.12 SUMMARY

The researcher described the research methods and design followed during the research process. This began with the formulation of the research problem and objectives. The ontology and epistemology were explained. The justification for conducting a qualitative research design was discussed thereafter, focusing on the methodology followed for sampling, data collection, and data analysis. Table 11 provides a summary of the methodology followed in the study.

Table 11: Research Methodology

Research Framing	
Research problem and research objectives	Exploring the extent to which leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage can integrate Ubuntu into their leadership approach.
RQ and SRQs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>RQ1: To what extent do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage integrate Ubuntu into their leadership approach?;</i> • SRQ1: How do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage define Ubuntu?;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRQ2: How do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage view the influence of Ubuntu in their team/organisational performance?; and • SRQ3: How do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage put Ubuntu into practice within their organisations?
Methodological Framing	
Methodology design	Qualitative survey.
Methodology approach	Hermeneutic phenomenology.
Unit of analysis	The extent to which leaders apply Ubuntu, as a cultural resource, in their leadership approach.
Unit of observation	Leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage.
Sampling method	Purposive sampling.
Sample size	20 participants.
Data collection	
Data collection method	One-on-one semi-structured interviews
Data analysis	
Data analysis tool	Microsoft Excel
Data analysis method	Data analysis process as recommended by Rowley (2012), which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data organising; • Familiarising yourself with the data; • Interpretation and clarifications of the data; and • Writing of findings.
Ethical considerations	
Ethical considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustworthiness: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Credibility ○ Dependability ○ Confirmability ○ Transferability

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH FINDINGS

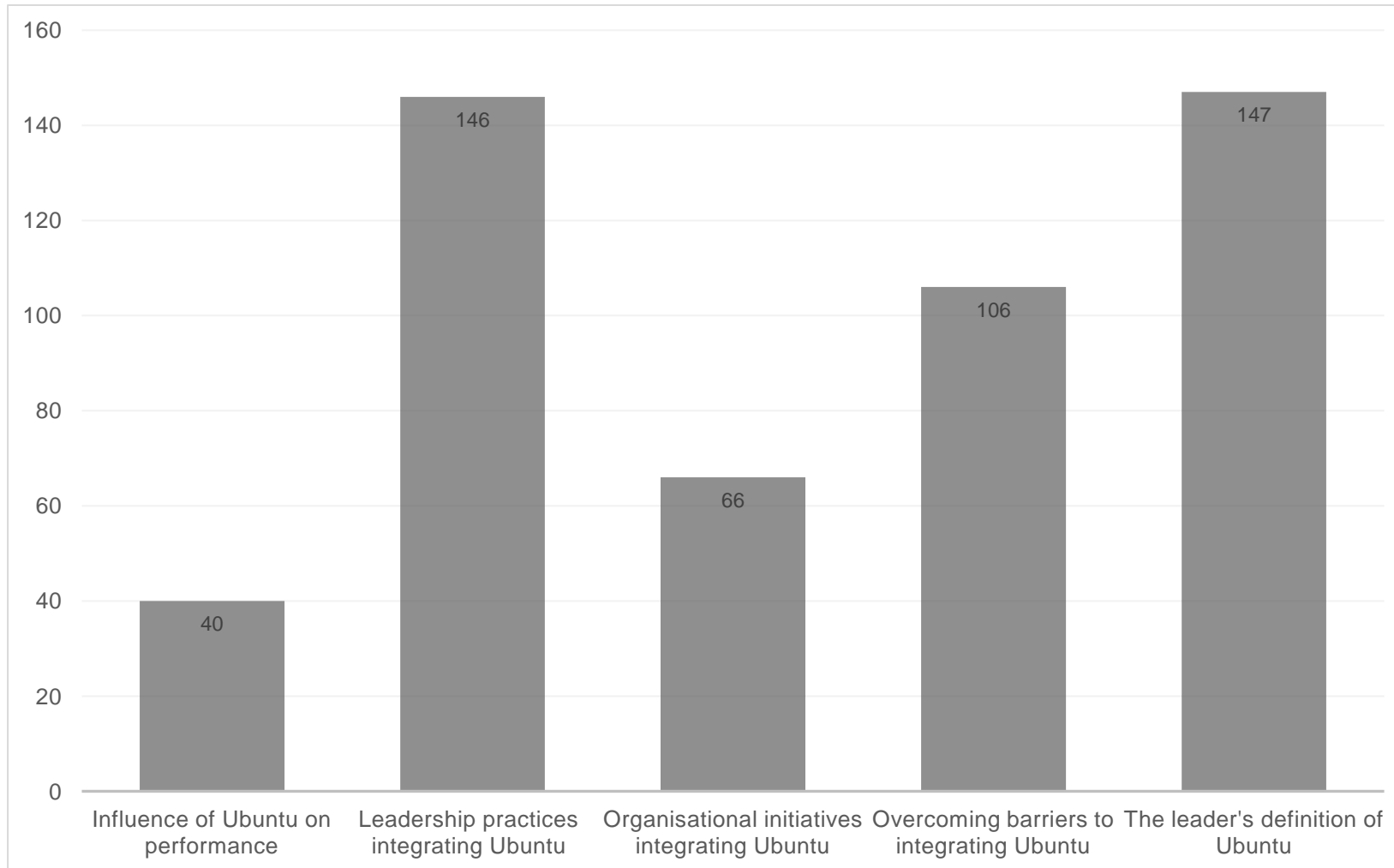
5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study aimed to answer the RQ: *To what extent do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage integrate Ubuntu in their leadership approach?* This main RQ is investigated through three SRQs:

- SRQ1: How do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage define Ubuntu?;
- SRQ2: How do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage view the influence of Ubuntu in their team/organisational performance?; and
- SRQ3: How do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage put Ubuntu into practice within their organisations?

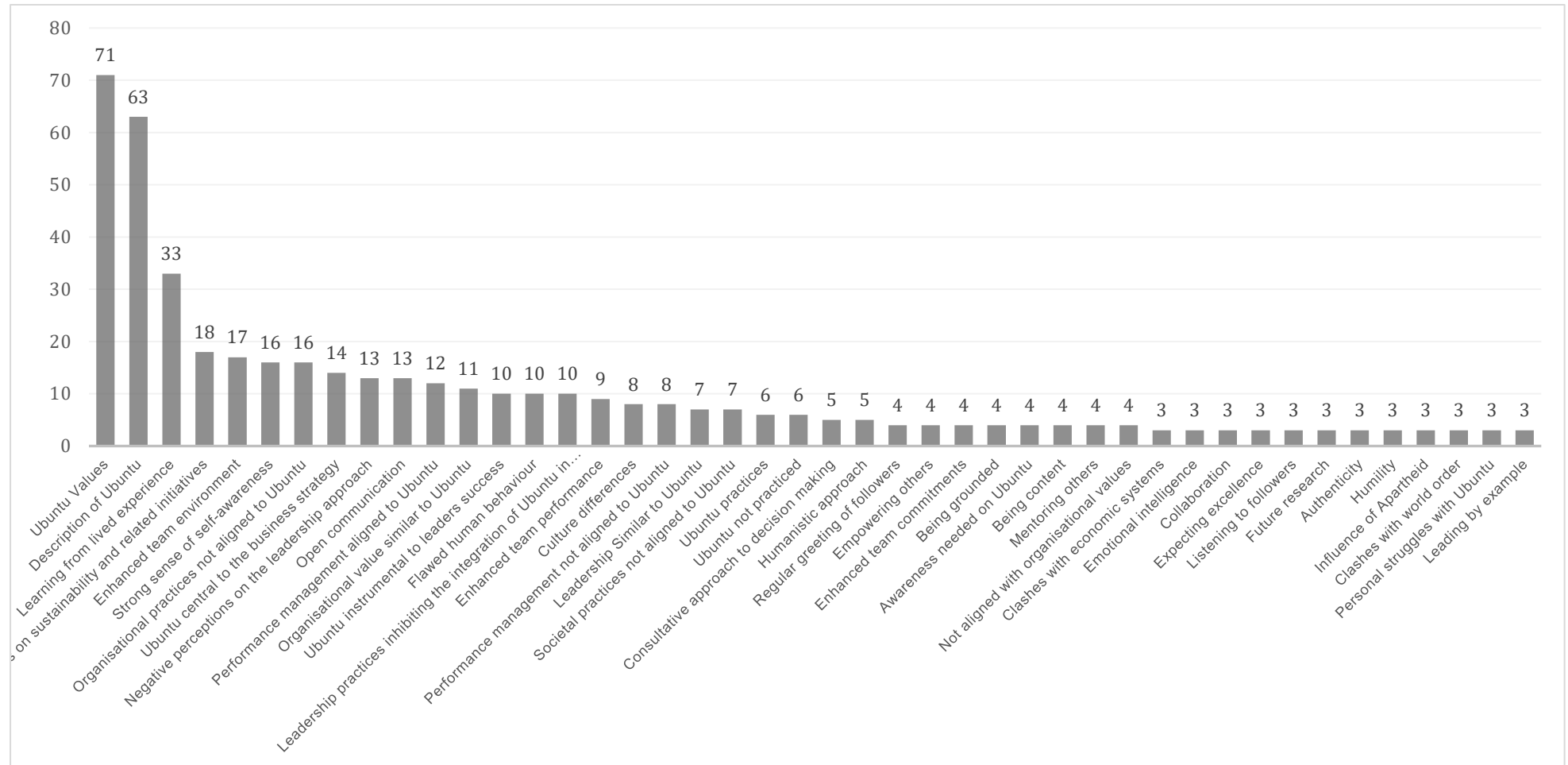
The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings relating to the codes and themes that emerged from the data analysis process followed by the researcher. This process occurred post-data collection from the participants. The analysis of the data resulted in 507 codes being derived, which were further categorised into main themes and sub-themes. Codes with similar phrases were grouped to generate sub-themes, bearing in mind the study's RQ and SRQs. This resulted in 44 sub-themes and five main themes being created. It is important to note that these five main themes and 44 sub-themes emerged from the analysis of the data collected during the interview process. Figure 7 below provides a view of the themes that emerged.

Figure 7: Main themes



These themes were further categorised into 44 sub-themes, as highlighted in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Sub-themes



The findings will be discussed according to the themes in this chapter. The views of the participants are included by quoting them verbatim. The participants' words are indented and printed in italics to distinguish their comments from quotes from the literature. It should be noted that in some instances, the participant's words are worked directly into the paragraphs where applicable.

5.2 DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS

As indicated in the methodology chapter, 20 participants were interviewed for this study. The participants included individuals from different industries and with varying leadership experience. The sample of participants included entrepreneurs, C-suite executives, senior executives, and senior managers from various organisations. The commonalities between all these participants were their acknowledgement of Ubuntu as part of their cultural heritage, and their leadership positions. Table 12 below provides an overview of the participants.

Table 12: Overview of the participants.

Position of the participant	Number of participants in this position
Founder/Entrepreneur	4
COO	2
CEO	2
Head Business Integration	1
Chief Compliance Officer	1
Partner	1
Executive Business Head	1
Global Markets Business Technology Head	1
Executive Coach	1
Head Financial Crime Compliance	1
Executive Head Compliance	1
Senior Machine Learning Engineer	1
VP: Digital Marketing and Media	1
Chairperson of Multiple companies	1
General Manager	1
Grand Total	N = 20

5.3 THEME 1: THE LEADER'S DEFINITION OF UBUNTU

Theme 1, namely 'The leader's definition of Ubuntu', arose naturally during discussions, as participants were invited to articulate their understanding of Ubuntu. This was done to understand how the participants' views or definitions of Ubuntu influenced their chosen leadership approach. As indicated in Chapter 3, there is no universal definition of Ubuntu. As part of the data collection process, participants (n = 19) either provided an expression or definition they have adopted, the values they associated with Ubuntu or they simply described the practices they associated with Ubuntu.

The participants acknowledged the principles of the interconnectedness of human existence and associated this with Ubuntu. The participants provided the following descriptive words to express their understanding of Ubuntu:

Participant 6: *"Person is a person because a person is a person."*

Participants 4, 15 and 17: *"Umtu nguntu ka bantu", meaning a person is a person through others.*

Participants 1, 7, 12 and 16: *"Ubuntu is I am because we are."*

Participant 14: *"I describe Ubuntu is that I am because others allow me to be. Not only that, because that's the one side of coming towards me. The second part of it is that I am because I want to belong to that group."*

Furthermore, the participants indicated that "the Africanness is what gives it its distinct word, phraseology and definition" (Participant 15). As such Ubuntu "is a distinctly African expression of what it means to be human" (Participant 1). Participant 7 provided a unique perspective of how they define Ubuntu; for them, Ubuntu must be regarded more as a practice than a theory of philosophy. According to Participant 7, "practice is actually what changes". Their views were that the practice approach would translate into lived experiences of communities and organisations. They, therefore, defined Ubuntu as "more of a practice than a theory. It's something that should be in you or ingrained in you". Furthermore, the association with the ancient African way of life was highlighted (Participants 8, 12 and 15)

Although the expression was deemed African, the participants (n = 12) acknowledged that Ubuntu embodies attributes that may be general human values ubiquitous in other cultures. Thus, they regard Ubuntu as universal:

Participant 2: *"I think more universal. I can tell you that for sure. I think it's unique for some on the basis that it touches all human elements of things. So it's all about how human beings interact as individuals. This is not confined to call it continental in terms of where you are from the region come from, etcetera."*

Participant 3: *"I think you've got a lot of cultures across the world that do adopt an approach of humanity, an approach of humility, an approach of looking out for each other, looking out for other people, an approach of being people centric, people focused and those cultures might not call it Ubuntu."*

Participant 4: *"I don't think it's confined to Africans. I think Ubuntu actually transcends race, in that it's really about how we behave to our fellow human beings. It's at the core of being human, because I think inherently, we all want to do good."*

Participant 15: *"I suppose it is universal in the sense that all human life is important, and each society might have a different way of expressing it. I have no doubt that that principle exists across society, to different extents."*

The participants further described the values they associated with Ubuntu. The most common values highlighted by the participants were accountability, empathy, respect, communality, connectedness, and the betterment of society and humanity. For these participants, Ubuntu is about being connected and communal, about humanity and how one exhibits that humanity - within communities, the organisations they work at, and around their team environments. Some of the participants provided their views on the values they associated with Ubuntu:

Participant 1: *"The core values around Ubuntu partnership, collaboration, humanity, community, compassion, and creating all of these kind of solidarity and you know belonging."*

Participant 2: *"So how you treat how you treat the junior of the juniors in team, and versus how you treat the senior of the seniors should be the same because you are not respecting the office that individual occupies, but you are respecting a person as a human being from that point of view."*

Participant 3: *"Approaching life and approaching leadership, approaching everything that you do with that humanity and the sense that you're dealing with people and therefore, you know, we*

need to treat people as human beings and understanding that there is emotions, their feelings, but that human being are all equal and must all be treated equally from that perspective.”

Participant 5: *“I think that human beingness is what then talks to service as you do what you do, you're serving others. You are not self-centred. You are not looking to be greater than the collective, you're looking to be good in the context that a greater good is achieved within the community.”*

Participant 19: *“I look at it from the point of view of empathy and the way you want to be to be treated, you need to treat other people the same way. And how you put yourself in someone else's shoes on the basis of the issue that's sitting on the table.”*

Participant 20: *“So for me, when you talk about how to instil Ubuntu within a team, it's making people understand that everybody is equal. Treating people with dignity and respect, regardless of who that person is.”*

Participant 2: *“From a leadership point of view, it has added value from that point of view that I can lead the teams, and the teams can basically collaborate and join me in driving whatever vision that I'm driving as well. So, with those attributes of Ubuntu whereby I show respect, and this is not based on the organisational hierarchy.”*

Leadership approached with Ubuntu values, therefore, fosters a deep awareness of interpersonal relationships and interactions. It is important to treat people as human beings, treat them with respect, and understand their emotions. In essence, leaders should practise empathy:

Participant 4: *“You are empathetic to other human beings, because even though you might not be going through hardship, but you are able to put yourself in their shoes and relate to whatever they are going through. At the same time, you are able to understand their perspective.”*

Participant 7: *“I'll say it showing compassion towards others. In a sense that you empathise with them through their hardships through the challenges, and that you are sort of compassionate in that sense.”*

Some participants (n = 4) reported that Ubuntu regards the betterment of society at large and is not only focused on organisational success. These participants highlighted that organisations could succeed better and more if society at large also benefits. A strong correlation between the success of organisations and society must, therefore, be created:

Participant 16: *“I think that shared value and shared prosperity teaches us that a corporate can succeed better and more if more people benefit from what it does and society benefits. So, you*

cannot have a corporate that says I will succeed regardless of what society does. The success of that society helps the corporate to succeed. The success of that corporate helps society to succeed."

Participant 1: *"It means that you are alive, to the sensibilities of what does it mean to be a human being in the best possible way in that society."*

It was important for the participants (n = 6) to highlight the link between Ubuntu and the value of accountability due to the misconception that Ubuntu does not hold people to account for their actions. Some participants stated:

Participant 3: *"It does not mean that being humanistic and showing up on that you will let people off. That you will let people who don't deliver go scot-free. That you will not hold people accountable."*

Participant 11: *"And for me it is people misunderstand what Ubuntu is and on the onset I said Ubuntu is about holding each other accountable."*

Participant 16: *"Ubuntu does not allow for sloppiness, does not allow for laziness, does not allow for corruption it does not allow any of these negatives."*

Participants (n = 4) further expressed leadership practices in African communities which can be associated with Ubuntu. These include leadership practices such as chief or king's counsel, dikgosi, dikgosana dikgoro, and herdsman. These leadership practices did influence how participants engage with those they lead. These participants reported that they were more consultative in their approach, and they respected the views of those they led. Participant 17 described observing the kgoro during their formative years and how this shaped their view of leadership:

Participant 17: *"So, I got to be very curious, particularly when I was at high school and during my first year of university education. So, I requested this Chief to sit in one during his session in Council. And what typically happens in the African Kgoro or Bonga or whatever you want to call it, there are councillors and the chief sits in a circle with them, there's no head of a table. Which in itself is symptomatic of equitability. You're not equal because I mean some wiser than others. But in terms of the respect that is accorded to us councillors, you are equal."*

Dikgoro or the chief's counsel can be described as a council where issues are discussed and debated relentlessly until there is a shared understanding and consensus is reached to ensure justice and societal sustainability (April & Shockley 2007).

Participants (n = 5) further noted similarities between Ubuntu and leadership approaches such as servant leadership, responsible leadership, and human-centric leadership. The similarity of putting people first was reported between Ubuntu and servant leadership; furthermore, Ubuntu was regarded as a mechanism of operationalising responsible leadership:

Participant 3: *"I always put people first. I always put the development of people first, which is really attributes of leadership of servant leadership, you know, so I can closely link servant leadership to Ubuntu because the attributes are almost similar."*

Participant 8: *"When we are connected to responsible leadership because of its almost action-oriented aspects it also gives Ubuntu sort of operationalisation as well beyond the kumbaya that is usually associated with. But it puts in motion and in action when it is in responsible leadership as well. So that starts making it more operational."*

These views highlighted the importance of leaders being of service to others, adopting a humanistic approach to leadership, and ensuring that leaders within organisations do not only focus on profit but on the interest of wider stakeholders. This includes ensuring that organisations are good corporate citizens through the adoption and implementation of sustainability practices. Furthermore, the participants' understanding of Ubuntu did not only focus on the known phrase "I am because you are" but included values that they associate with Ubuntu and the translation of these values into leadership practices. Table 13 below provides a summary of the descriptions, values, practices, and leadership approaches the participants associated with Ubuntu.

Table 13: Theme 1: The leader's definition of Ubuntu

Theme 1: The leader's definition of Ubuntu.		
No	Sub-theme	Description
1	Description of Ubuntu	African expression: "Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu", a person is a person through others.
		Ancient African way of life
		Universality

Theme 1: The leader's definition of Ubuntu.		
2	Ubuntu values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability • Empathy • Respect • Communal • Connectedness • Betterment of society • Humanity • Care
3	Ubuntu practices	Chief or king's counsel Dikgosi Dikgosan Dikgoro Herder
4	Leadership approaches similar to Ubuntu	Human-centric leadership Responsible leadership Servant leadership

Participants regarded the term Ubuntu as an African expression of humanness. The participants also acknowledged the universal nature of Ubuntu, even if the practices or values are called something different in other cultures or jurisdictions. Ubuntu influenced how the participants interacted and related with others, due to the values the participants associated with it. The significance of ancient African practices such as Dikgoro should not be understated, as these practices continue to influence the participants' leadership practices and how they choose to engage with stakeholders.

5.4 THEME 2: LEADERSHIP PRACTICES INTEGRATING UBUNTU

Theme 2, namely 'Leadership practices integrating Ubuntu' was thoroughly discussed by the participants. The participants considered leadership to be synonymous with the practices a leader exhibits or how the leader behaves. Participants (n = 19) described several practices they have adopted to integrate Ubuntu, such as a strong sense of self-awareness, learning from lived experiences, open communication, authenticity, and the humanistic approach. They also mentioned regular greeting of followers, mentoring others, expecting excellence, listening to followers, emotional intelligence, humility, a consultative approach to decision-making, empowering others, embracing diversity, leading by example, being

grounded and finally, being content. It should be noted that not all practices relating to good leadership are discussed. The researcher only focused on practices reported by two or more participants.

The participants (n = 12) regarded self-awareness as a good leadership practice. According to the participants, self-awareness is formed over a lifetime, with this process being influenced by their cultural contexts and an increasing awareness of oneself. Participant 1 indicated that it is exciting to witness leaders being conscious and deeply aware of themselves. The participants highlighted that being self-aware impacted how the participants interact with different stakeholders, as the participants are aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and can acknowledge their mistakes. Additionally, they mentioned that leaders should have the ability not to lose themselves within the organisations they work for because of the expectations expressed by others:

Participant 18: *“I strongly believe that as a leader learning never stops. I try and tell people that I make mistakes every day as a leader and that is very important for my leadership style because if I do not make mistakes how will I ever learn.”*

Participant 16: *“You must, as the leader, be able to manage this as a leader and more importantly know thyself. Know your limitations and know your strengths. So, those are some of my lessons that I have been learning over time.”*

Participant 3: *“But this is where you need to have leaders that are very self-aware but also leaders that can almost toe the line between excess behaviour and excessive leadership traits that might be bothering on being toxic and leadership traits that are still humanistic but will not allow for complacency to creep in.”*

Participant 15: *“First of all, you must be self-aware. You must know what it is you are trying to achieve.”*

Furthermore, it was evident that learning from the participants' (n = 15) lived experiences shaped their understanding of what constitutes good leadership. The participants indicated that Ubuntu was either a lived experience in their personal lives, in the communities they lived/grew up in or in the organisations they worked at. It was, therefore, important for the participants to learn from these lived experiences. Participants who had comments under this theme highlighted the influence their upbringing had on their leadership approach. These participants highlighted how parents, teachers, and community leaders exhibited

values such as humility, respect, and servanthood during their formative years and how these values have now been incorporated into their leadership approach. Some of the participants who commented on this theme highlighted the following:

Participant 18: *"This leadership style probably comes from an upbringing that was heavily influenced by a mother who was a teacher, a grandmother who was very entrepreneurial if you consider the context of how our parents and grandparents had to grow up, make a living, survive, get by, during those old days. An upbringing that very much prioritised hard work, humility, respect, and resilience."*

Participant 16: *"And my values are grounded in Ubuntu and how I was brought up..... You become normal because we grew up with the sense that leaders were not a special breed, leaders were servants of people and not there to be served. So, for me, those things come naturally because I am following how I was brought up."*

Participant 11: *"And this another myth that maybe just on the onset to dispel, people believe leadership is only what is written in the books. That is false, that's a myth. We've seen as you grow and you find that there is a father figure, a mother figure or an elder in the house that is leadership, they might not document it, but that is leadership. And that is where most people, let us say when your first eighteen years, that is where it gets embedded in terms of how people lead, and you are a good follower at that point. So, you get to understand how to follow, and you get to appreciate being led and you give all the trust and dependability on whoever is leading you. So, I think those are the values that were instilled without being named."*

The participants highlighted that Ubuntu was a lived experience within communities and this contributed to the leadership approach they adopted, as their communities exhibited a great sense of taking care of each other. The quotations below show some of the views expressed by the participants:

Participant 8: *"I have just seen my grandmother just like a month ago, because she lives alone at the moment, got sick and decided to go sit outside because she needed to go call for help. And the whole community within a few minutes came in and got her phone, they called my mother, they were able to pick her up, and clean her house."*

Participant 4: *"There are many stories that we've seen where even people who live in dire poverty, and they will share the resources in a way that it's equitable. Deep in the rural areas, there are many stories of people's lived experiences where basically people take care of each other."*

The participants further acknowledged that they have experienced Ubuntu through the lived experiences in organisations they work or have worked in, as colleagues have exhibited humanity in their engagements:

Participant 10: *"In this corporate environment, you meet people that are not even black but that would be very empathetic. People that would care about your development."*

Participant 3: *"Ubuntu can be lived. I mean I've experienced it personally, and I think that a lot of people that I either interact with on a daily basis from a corporate setting perspective and for many other settings have displayed this whole concept of Ubuntu. You know you meet people who genuinely care about people and even in corporate, even if you are faced with a mirror of issues around corporate, you know, around leadership specifically around how leaders might treat people."*

Participants (n = 6) highlighted the importance of open communication. These participants even highlighted examples of how open communication was embraced within teams. Participants 1, 5, and 10 provided views on how open communication was encouraged within teams they led or organisations they worked in. Participant 1 explained how a leader within their organisation embraced the concept of an "Umphakati" meeting. These meetings were a mixture of very formal communication and storytelling. The format of these meetings is further explained as per the quotation provided below:

Participant 1: *"So, it's really like community gatherings. And then there is Ndabas which they create within their framework..... Sometimes the leader can come and be interviewed about when you started your life as a leader, did you know how to save money? I couldn't save money. And somehow people begin to access cultural nuances of how the top executives have moved and navigated from being a makoti in a cultural context or being a son-in-law somewhere. How do you navigate the fact that when there's a family gathering, you have to take leave for a day to do those family responsibilities."*

Participant 5 adopted a similar concept within their team, however, called this "chicken Tuesday". They explained that this encouraged open communication as "that's where team announcements are done, from a social perspective or where somebody has resigned or when there are immediate updates from an immediate business perspective or from a group perspective or whatever, that is where we get together".

Participant 10 further explained how their organisation encouraged teams to have "Vuselela meetings". The purpose of these meetings was to engage with the team to get an understanding of any issues they might be experiencing. The participant explained the importance of those meetings as follows:

Participant 10: *"When you engage with people, it is then that you can pick up that X has an issue or Y has an issue that cannot be addressed in this forum. And that's when as a manager you apply those values in terms of getting to understand how your team operates."*

Open communication was not only encouraged through these platforms; Participant 18 also explained how they have an open-door policy and how their team has constant access to them as a leader. This is despite the fact that they are a CEO. Furthermore, Participants 5 and 9 argued that open communication can also be encouraged by seeking feedback, which would allow followers to provide their perspectives on issues.

The importance of being authentic as a leader was emphasised by Participants 8, 16, 18, and 19. The quotation below supports these views:

Participant 8: *"Including Ubuntu in your leadership is not necessarily this different thing but actually it is including yourself within the leadership practice. Your authentic self, because if we go back to that we have stopped our authentic self within the business practice."*

Participant 18 further noted that authenticity allows for better connections, which was similarly articulated by another participant:

Participant 16: *"You will know who you are. And people will love you and will even call you by your clan's name. It does not take away your title, it does not even take away when you have your PhD. When somebody gives you your clan names, you will feel so good because of your authentic self."*

Active listening was another leadership practice associated with open communication, as emphasised by Participants 9, 17 and 18. The quotations below highlight the views of these participants:

Participant 9: *"It's all about me listening. To understand what you say and confirming that I understood what you said."*

Participant 17: *“In certain respects, followers are leaders, and leaders followers, so I’m prepared to listen.”*

Participant 18: *“First and foremost, to listen but to listen intently, to listen with care. And the point is not to have an answer immediately, but the point is to be able to go away apply your mind.”*

Consulting with those you lead was another leadership practice highlighted (Participants 8, 15, 17 and 18) as leaders do not need to have all the answers. This results in the leader being more inclusive in deriving solutions:

Participant 8: *“When I showed up in the spaces that is I would definitely want to be more inclusive, put people in that. It has always been my approach to leading, consultative understanding. “*

Participant 18: *“I will not and I do not have all the answers. For that reason, I chose a very strong team to actually support me and be my EXCO. The team, who I believe are much smarter and more intelligent than me in their individual rights.”*

A good leader was also described as someone who prioritises the well-being of their team (Participant 18), and who is humanistic in their leadership approach (Participants 3, 13, 16 and 19). Participant 13 indicated that the humanistic approach allowed them to relate to those they lead more as humans rather than subordinates. Participant 16 further elaborated that even in difficult processes, such as retrenchments, it is always important to engage with the affected staff member with the highest level of humanity. The quotes below show how embracing the humanistic approach has cemented relationships with followers, even after difficult processes such as retrenchment:

Participant 16: *“I still have relationships with people I asked to leave, because the manner in which I asked them to leave was through humanity. I have done retrenchments in a manner that even today those people talk about the retrenchment process so that it did not dehumanise.”*

Participant 19: *“And I can give you another example to say that some of my colleagues that were placed on formal performance process, but we were not even aware. It’s how he treated those individuals like a human being.”*

As stated by Participant 20 "Being able to be relatable also has to do with being emotionally intelligent". This argument of leaders being emotionally intelligent to be better and engaged leaders was also supported by Participants 10 and 19, with one of them stating:

Participant 19: *“Emotional intelligence is very important because you cannot have empathy if you don't have emotional intelligence.”*

Participants 12 and 19 further noted that displaying humility did not only assist them during difficult times in their careers but also assisted with allowing their team to take the lead when it was necessary. Participant 12 is a qualified surgeon, who later worked in the insurance industry, then moved to the banking industry and later started their own business. They explained how humility assisted them to transition when leading these diverse teams:

Participant 12: *“So, when I got to ZZZ Holdings, my team was made-up of actuaries. I'm sure you can imagine how the actuaries were when I got there and they were like, oh, this is our new boss. And so, I think that also being in a place where you're not aligned with your team from a qualification perspective, allowed me to apply the humility that is required in order for me to get the job and being able to be like, ok I'll take your lead on how things need to go.”*

Participants (n = 4) also indicated that a good leader is someone who acknowledges and greets their team. The act of greeting relays an important message of seeing the team as equals and acknowledging their importance. The importance of greeting is substantiated by the below quotes:

Participant 5: *“Greeting somebody says you're seeing them and you're acknowledging them. That is why in my language it says Dumela. It says I'm hearing you; I'm seeing you, agree that I am seeing you and that you are also seeing me.”*

Participant 19: *“I cannot walk into a room and not greet and acknowledge the people in the room. That is the first thing. It does not cost you anything to say hello.”*

Mentoring others and producing other leaders were important leadership practices highlighted by Participant 16. They indicated that it is important to produce other leaders and that they want to see people who have worked alongside them grow, succeed, and prosper. Participants 5, 9 and 13 also raised the importance of mentoring, with Participant 13 highlighting how mentoring others has resulted mentees progressing, as stated below:

Participant 13: *“When I left, the organisation didn't have to go out and find someone, they found someone right who was working for me, and that person is a mentee of mine to this day. I've produced heads of compliance, seven of them as I speak now.”*

Furthermore, the participants (n =4) stated that leaders should also empower those that they lead, thereby allowing them to execute and display their abilities:

Participant 5: *“So, what I've tried to achieve in the team, first and foremost is to empower every single individual in the team.”*

Participant 12: *“I try and lead to allow people to want to do things and I'm very open when people don't want to do things to find other areas where they can expand. So, what you tend to find in my teams, I always have had people who were either actuaries that wanted to get into product development or in a different space.”*

The participants further reported that it is important for leaders to set high performance standards not only for themselves but for their teams as well. This view was supported by Participants 12, 16 and 18:

Participant 12: *“I do expect excellence because I try and execute everything excellently.”*

Participant 16: *“I set the highest standard for myself, both in performance and in leadership.”*

Participant 18: *“We need to be associated with the highest standards of quality and ethical conduct.”*

The ability to embrace diversity was highlighted as a valuable leadership practice by Participants 16 and 19. Diversity allows for leaders to gain different perspectives as leaders might fall into the trap of recruiting those who think like them, sound like them or even work like them (Participant 16).

Although several good leadership practices have been highlighted by the different participants, the importance of being an "exemplary leader" or "leading the way to want to be led" was emphasised by Participant 15, 17 and 20.

Participants (n = 4) further highlighted the importance of being grounded. The following quotations showcase how Ubuntu has grounded these leaders, even though they hold senior leadership positions within their respective organisations:

Participant 4: *“The interesting thing Ofentse is as I've grown been this way. It's grounded me, and I found a lot of strength in it. Because I can sense that people are conscious of who I am..... So I think being grounded in Ubuntu helps me not to waiver, because you can wake me up at*

4:00 AM and ask me a question about this particular decision. I will approach it exactly the same way.”

Participant 10: “So, it takes a special breed of people that are grounded to stick to those values.”

Additionally, according to the participants (n = 4), a leader must be content with themselves and their chosen leadership approach:

Participant 13: “The one of the things you've got to deal with is managing expectations and being content with your chosen style of leadership.”

Participant 16: “I remain who I am, right. I have also met people who took advantage because they thought I was soft.”

Participant 11: “I have to live as one person. I'm one person at work and home, so therefore Ubuntu gives me that foundation to be able to be one person. I don't have to act as something else.”

It can be concluded that Ubuntu can have a positive impact on leadership practices. Table 14 below provides a summary of the leadership practices associated with Ubuntu.

Table 14: Theme 2: Leadership practices integrating Ubuntu

Theme 2: Leadership practices integrating Ubuntu		
No	Theme	Sub-theme
1	Leadership practices integrating Ubuntu	Strong sense of self-awareness
		Learning from lived experiences
		Open communication
		Authenticity
		Humanistic approach
		Regular greeting of followers
		Mentoring others
		Expecting excellence
		Listening to followers
		Emotional Intelligence
		Humility
		Consultative approach to decision-making
		Empowering others
Embracing diversity		

Theme 2: Leadership practices integrating Ubuntu		
		Leading by example
		Being grounded
		Being content

The analysis reflects that leaders do embrace the human values associated with Ubuntu into their leadership approaches, resulting in leaders embracing practices such as a strong sense of self-awareness, learning from lived experiences, open communication, authenticity, humanistic approach, and regular greeting of followers amongst many more as seen in the table above. Leadership was, therefore, viewed by participants as a socially constructed process that was influenced by the participants' upbringing and lived experiences. Furthermore, the participants attributed their success in the corporate world to the Ubuntu values being central to their approach to leadership.

5.5 THEME 3: ORGANISATIONAL INITIATIVES INTEGRATING UBUNTU

The integration of Ubuntu was not only limited to the participants' leadership approach. Theme 3, namely 'Organisational initiatives integrating Ubuntu' emerged when participants were asked to describe how they put Ubuntu into practice within their organisations. The incorporation of Ubuntu into organisations was achieved through Ubuntu being central to organisational strategies and values, as well as within performance management systems and an organisation's focus on sustainability and related initiatives.

The significance of incorporating Ubuntu in organisations' business strategy was highlighted by Participants 8, 18 and 20. Participants 8 and 20, both entrepreneurs, explained how Ubuntu was the reason for the establishment of their respective businesses and how Ubuntu is core to the strategy of their business practices. Participant 8 is a trained psychologist, who worked in consulting firms and previously held the position of COO. They established a wellness business, particularly focused on leaders. Participant 8 describes the following when it comes to the establishment of their wellness business:

Participant 8: *"it was important that the blueprint that guide and inform any of my interventions is underpinned by Ubuntu as a value system first."*

Participant 8 further described how they developed a model or framework on personal wellness that looks at 12 phases that a leader can go through when looking at becoming whole - wholesome is the goal of becoming well, not becoming perfect. Their framework incorporates parts of the individual, to ensure they make choices in line with what they want. Ubuntu is noted as the first phase of the framework developed by this participant, who explained this phase as follows:

Participant 8: *“So when you look at the oasis of Ubuntu for example in a wellness intervention that I will do or a coaching journey, let us put it that way or a therapy journey of a client, we have developed an assessment that can actually measure you on all of these twelve steps and when it shows for an example that a person might be high on their own inner vision which a big number ten or nine, no number eight on the model but low on Ubuntu it means that his north star and vision is not connected on the groundness of humanity and values and that sort of thing. And that is how not giving people awareness of like purpose and vision that is connected or a mission that is connected to a social or humanity impact in what you are doing.”*

Participant 20, whose business is focused on training facilitation, explained how Ubuntu was instrumental to the establishment of their organisation. Their organisation provides financial literacy to disadvantaged communities, which is a gap they identified while working in the banking industry. They highlighted the following about Ubuntu and their business practice:

Participant 20: *“So, I would definitely say it's centred around Ubuntu because that is when I saw that I was heartbroken. And unfortunately, with the way things are in terms of the socio-economic divide here in South Africa, you only have certain access to information based on the size of your pocket.”*

It was also encouraging to note that Ubuntu was instrumental in the business strategies of large corporations within South Africa. Participant 18, who is the CEO of a major consultancy organisation, explained how their business strategy has been enhanced to incorporate Ubuntu. This business strategy was called “Ubuntu Bethu”. Participant 18 explained the importance of their organisation regarding greater societal impacts:

Participant 18: *“We say that we have an obligation to contribute towards the growth and development of Africa. That is not the Africa the continental level, when you take it global across the across the network, our purpose or purpose statement as a network is that we build trust in society, and we solve important problems. And that word ‘society’ is pivot for us. And how we*

identify as Company P on this continent, we say that one of the five pillars of that strategy, the five plus one 'Ubuntu bethu' is actually there in terms of having a greater societal impact."

Participant 18 further highlighted that Company P sees itself as being an extension of the African continent and a microcosm of what and who Africa is. Thus, the Ubuntu Bethu strategy seeks to take a very international brand with a very generic strategy, and localise and tailor the global strategy to make it relevant for Africa. This is done by using Ubuntu at the heart of how Company P executes its global strategy, as Ubuntu must be used to ensure Company P's greater societal impact on the continent.

Another positive business impact articulated by Participant 1 is how the understanding of Ubuntu has begun to evolve the operations within their organisation, resulting in a better understanding of local markets. The quotation below provides the views shared:

Participant 1: *"But I think there's two lessons that I have picked up in my organisation. One of them is because it functions across several African countries, there is a growing respect for local communities because you can't dictate to 20 countries sitting in one country. So, the learning is that, when you get into a country, take your board and go and sit with the board of that country and listen to what's going on. That for me it is so Ubuntu."*

Participants have articulated being able to integrate Ubuntu into their business strategies or making efforts to understand local markets, However, in addition, Participant 6 explained how an artificial intelligence (AI) algorithm model they developed was based on Ubuntu values, stating:

"We developed a new algorithm completely. So that's the first AI algorithm to be developed in Africa to be conceptualised and developed in Africa. And as a first AI algorithm to be powered to be powered by Ubuntu to end, that was the first with the first also to model Ubuntu philosophically".

Participant 6 described this AI model as an Ubuntu incentive scheme focusing on rewards within organisations.

The participants (n = 7) further highlighted the importance of their values being aligned with the values of the organisations they work for. Participant 2 believed that most organisations' values are anchored on Ubuntu. This is supported by the following quotation:

Participant 2: *"And if you look at the values of different organisation, if you really double click on those, you realise they're all anchored around Ubuntu. So, it could be a value of integrity, it could be a value of respect, it could be a value of treating each other with dignity, whatever that those are. But if you look closely, you will realise that they are all anchored around Ubuntu."*

The sentiment that most organisations' values are aligned with Ubuntu was also supported by Participants 3 and 4, who indicated that the organisations which they worked for adopted "empathy" (Participant 3) and "taking care of each other" (Participant 4) as part of their values. Participant 18, who is the CEO of a major consulting firm, also confirmed the importance of personal and organisational values alignment:

Participant 18: *"We know how important it is for our people, for them, to work for an organisation whose values complement or align with theirs."*

The participants further indicated that the alignment of values assisted with putting Ubuntu into practice within their respective organisations. Participant 2 considered themselves blessed, as "the values that I subscribe to and the values that I believe are so aligned to the values of the organisation that I work for".

Performance management systems that are aligned with Ubuntu values assist leaders with integrating Ubuntu into their organisations. Although some participants raised performance management challenges, many of the participants (n = 9) confirmed that their organisations' performance management processes and systems embrace Ubuntu values. The participants indicated that the performance management processes allow for i) honest feedback to be provided to followers (Participants 8, 16 and 20); ii) understanding the challenges the follower might be experiencing (Participant 11); iii) consideration of how the followers delivered their tasks (Participants 2, 8, 13, 14 and 16) and iv) promotions and rewards being conducted fairly (Participants 2, 5, 14 and 16). Participant 16, who is a CEO, provided an end-to-end view of how the performance management processes within the organisation that they lead are aligned with Ubuntu:

Participant 16: *“The first thing about a proper performance management process is that people need to know the goals upfront. Not to give people the goals is unacceptable. People need to know the rules of the game. Second, they need to be given tools to succeed, and they need regular feedback about how they are doing, if they are doing well, great, if they are not doing well support. And that regular feedback goes to half a year where you now sit to say how this has happened, whether he has done well or not done well. Now, in that environment the staff member might see their performance as being higher than it is. The duty as the manager is to have that dialogue so that you say ‘no, no, no it is not true, actually this is the...’ then you go all the way to the end and at the end you give a sense of how the organisation has performed, how the team has performed, how the individual has performed as open, as kind, as frank, as possible. After you have done that, which is the part most people battle with, you now have to come to the rem process. The rem must follow the performance, the rem should not follow favouritism or victimisation.”*

Participants (n = 8) indicated that organisations are focusing beyond profit maximisation. Issues such as business sustainability through corporate social investment (CSI), diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), and environmental, social and governance (ESG) are at the forefront of organisations. The participants indicated that these business practices could be associated with Ubuntu and demonstrate how leaders can integrate Ubuntu into their respective organisations:

Participant 1: *“When you make profits, how much do you reinvest to strengthen your ESG, your CSI and your investment in this core financial aspect.”*

Participant 8: *“I started doing even a lot of transformation and diversity inclusion work, and that was even a right path environment to start toying around with these ideas; that actually goes down to the basics of us being collective and human. So, in those scenarios it was easy to apply Ubuntu.”*

Participant 14: *“But if you look deep as to the profit motive of business, it is part of it to actually apply Ubuntu principles. If you're able to advocate for Insofar as ESG is concerned, which is another concern that is inside leadership today, you can actually justify the adoption of Ubuntu principles.”*

According to Participant 8, the implementation of these business practices could assist organisations to survive in the future and also have a great impact on society. Participant 5 supported the view of organisational survival:

Participant 5: "I think even in the conceptualisation of it that for a company to grow, because greater good is for this structure in which we operate needs to grow for generations, cannot be that you and I come in and we want to dismantle this thing. "

Ubuntu has not only been integrated into leadership practices but has been incorporated into key organisational processes. Table 15 below provides a view of the business practices adopted by the participants to integrate Ubuntu into their organisations.

Table 15: Theme 3: Organisational initiatives integrating Ubuntu

Theme 3: Organisational initiatives integrating Ubuntu		
No	Sub-theme	Description
1	Ubuntu central to the business strategy	Business strategy
		Understanding of local markets
		New business initiatives
2	Organisational value similar to Ubuntu	Organisational values alignment
3	Performance management aligned to Ubuntu	Performance management practices aligned to Ubuntu
4	Focus on sustainability and related initiatives	ESG
		DEI

The views expressed by the participants demonstrate that Ubuntu can be integrated within organisations. This can be done by centralising Ubuntu in the business operation strategy and through appropriate values alignment, as supported by appropriate performance management systems and processes. This would result in organisations not only focusing on profits but also on sustainable societal impact.

5.6 THEME 4: OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO INTEGRATING UBUNTU

Although the participants were able to integrate Ubuntu into their leadership approach and business practices, they still experienced some challenges which they needed to overcome. Theme 4, namely 'Overcoming barriers to integrating Ubuntu' emerged when participants were asked to describe the challenges they experienced when integrating Ubuntu into their leadership approach or their organisations. Specific codes that emerged in response to the

questions relating to the challenges included leadership challenges such as flawed human behaviour, negative perceptions with regards to leadership through Ubuntu values, and non-alignment of values with the organisational values. Additionally, personal struggles experienced by participants concerning integrating Ubuntu into their leadership approach and leadership practices inhibiting the integration of Ubuntu also emerged.

The importance of personal and organisational values alignment emerged during the discussions, and the participants (n = 4) expressed challenges where their values were not aligned with the organisational values. This caused tensions concerning certain organisational decisions or their approach to leadership. “If you can't connect to the values of the organisation one way or another, you'll find a struggle to live within that organisation because you'll always be on the opposite ends of what you're supposed to do” (Participant 2). These tensions tend to also cause personal struggles, as articulated below:

Participant 6: *So, I subscribe to the African values, and then unfortunately again at the same time you are then forced as time goes to carve away, almost box your African values into a smaller component.*

Furthermore, participants (n = 4) expressed challenges with regard to the compatibility of Ubuntu within economic and other world systems. The participants highlighted that the economic system of Africa, with its history of being exploited, is more capitalist in nature and may not align with Ubuntu. The participants expressed concerns about the ability of Ubuntu to address issues of unequal distribution of wealth and other social ills such as pay gaps, corruption, and selfishness. Participant 4 expressed concerns that the economic system is moving away from what had always been in ancient African communities, where nobody should hoard the wealth or the assets of the community or the area in which they live for themselves. These sentiments were echoed by Participant 15, who stated:

Participant 15: *“If we had more Ubuntu, you wouldn't have, for example, the disparity between the best-paid person and the least paid person because if you are the CEO of Company X, for example, and you are earning 1000 times the person that you say hello to on the shop floor every morning.”*

Participant 15, however, acknowledged “Ubuntu was not always a perfect process, that there will always be societal divisions, and inequality will always exist. So, the positive and

the negative I think existed side by side”. Participant 14, however, argued against the notion that Ubuntu is not compatible with the capitalist economic system, stating that Ubuntu can still be incorporated in economies that embrace capitalism. They believed that people who would argue against the difficulty of applying Ubuntu hide behind international shareholders. Participant 14 further argued that there is a global phenomenon of inclusive capitalism or what they referred to as “capitalism with their hearts”. They used DEI as an example of capitalism with a heart, where organisations are encouraged to share equity, and also provide people with a sense of belonging. According to Participant 14, the concept of DEI works alongside the principle of Ubuntu. It is important to note, as stated by Participant 1, that no economic system is better than the other. Every system of economics is a mixed and integrated system, and organisations struggle to balance all these things together. Participant 16 further argued that “Ubuntu does not solve all of a corporation’s problems but it does make a difference. After all, when it comes to equity, you have more equity through Ubuntu because you recognise more people than less”.

The issue of cultural difference was highlighted as one of the challenges to the integration of Ubuntu within the participants' leadership approach. There could be a misunderstanding within a team with regards to what constitutes Ubuntu, there could be tensions with Western views, which might be individualist in approach or there could be insufficient recognition of other cultures outside of Ubuntu:

Participant 11: *“Depending on where you come from in South Africa, Ubuntu can be construed into tribalism. There might be a view that you want to do things for your people.”*

Participant 7: *“When you're fostering this whole Ubuntu culture and all of that, you also in a way fail to recognise people's individual differences.”*

The influence of apartheid was highlighted as a factor that negatively impacted the integration of Ubuntu within organisations. This was reported by three participants who mentioned that racism is still prevalent in some organisations. Participant 20 expressed that it is disappointing that South African organisations still experience racism. Furthermore, Participant 14 worked at a government agency that adopted the “Batho Pele” strategy that is based on Ubuntu. They expressed the following views when the government agency implemented this strategy during the post-apartheid era:

Participant 14: *“But you will hear that those people who were in various levels of leadership at the ABC agency, they complained about the absence of Ubuntu because many people had remnants of apartheid and remnants of prejudice as part of their practice.”*

Participants (n =8) further highlighted challenges such as greed, power, corruption and being self-absorbed as inhibitors to the adoption of Ubuntu values within organisations or communities. Participant 17, however, argued that the fact that flawed human behaviour exists, does not make the philosophy incorrect or ineffective. This sentiment was echoed by other participants, with some of them stating the following:

Participant 2: *“But where you see inequalities, where you see scandals, you see corruption and all of that, it doesn't necessarily mean that Ubuntu is just theoretical. It just means that human beings, at times behave that way, whether deliberately or not. But it does not or it shouldn't mute nor put shadow over Ubuntu.”*

Participant 19: *“For me, you can say all those people that are involved with all these kinds of corruption, that those guys are practicing Ubuntu. If it was Ubuntu, the first is to say this is not for me, this is for the people. I'm here to serve and will practice stewardship mentality.”*

It was interesting to note that participants noted negative perceptions from peers or other leaders with regards to their chosen leadership approach which incorporated Ubuntu values. Even participants who held the positions of CEO or chairperson of the board (Participants 16 and 17). These negative perceptions mainly relate to the participants being seen as weak leaders, their leadership approach not being effective or the participants being seen as naïve. A view of these negative perceptions is provided below:

Participant 3: *“I'm also quite aware that there's a school of thought that thinks that this approach is not very effective and probably very weak and does not have a lot of results to show.”*

Participant 5: *“There might also be a narrative that you've seen as a weak leader.”*

Participant 16: *“I mean, firstly when people first meet you, they have heard about you. So, the sense might be “this guy may be too soft for me.”*

Participant 13: *“Other thing you know you're too weak. Or you know, you haven't really conformed to the universal social ways of leading.”*

Participants 4 and 8 highlighted some of the business tensions they have experienced. These include being seen as ‘slowing down’ the process when consulting with others

(Participant 8) or not being business-centric (Participant 4). Furthermore, some of the participants (n = 6) indicated that according to their views, their organisational performance management processes and systems have challenges with the integration of Ubuntu values. These include challenges such as key performance indicators (KPIs) not sufficiently focusing on people dynamics, leaders not being able to influence the performance management process adequately, performance management being focused on bonus schemes, and not having an appropriate link between targets and humanity:

Participant 1: *“The place where sometimes it's hard to touch Ubuntu in organisations, it is the link between performance targets, the culture and how people behave.”*

Participant 7: *“If you look at the weightings on the people dynamics on those scorecards, those ratings are not at the level that you would expect in a Ubuntu culture to be. I can tell you most of our scorecards are probably heavily weighted on project outcomes and matrix, probably 80% and then you would be lucky to get even more than 10% on the people dynamics on some of those scorecards.”*

Participant 12: *“And then I think also the other difficulty of Ubuntu is, especially in corporate, managing situations where there needs to be an intervention for a staff member, but not being able to decide on how that intervention goes because of human capital.”*

Participants 10, 15 and 19 indicated that they believe that Ubuntu values are not sufficiently practised within organisations. Participant 19 even left their previous employment due to “issues of integrity and Ubuntu not being incorporated into what you're talking about from the leadership styles”.

Participants 3, 5, 8 and 11 recommended that greater awareness of Ubuntu is needed to address the challenges discussed above. This could be done through storytelling, where stories are told on how results have been achieved through this approach or through packaging our understanding of how humans should live and exporting that as a product or as a brand. It is, therefore, important to continuously put Ubuntu at the forefront, and foremost in people's minds, as Ubuntu can change a country or environment's direction, as per Participant 3.

The participants (n = 10) provided a view of leadership practices that they regarded as inhibitors to integrating Ubuntu. Fear was the most common (n = 3) practice that was mentioned:

Participant 1: *“Where the leader seems distant, and bossy, and there are low levels of transparency in communication; It plants fear and other kind of stuff.”*

Participant 3: *“You might find leaders who stand authority. Who tackle human beings. People will deliver, but people will deliver out of fear and people will want at the opportunity that they get to get out of that environment.”*

Participant 14 further mentioned that those in leadership positions for self-gratification will not focus on service delivery, resulting in greater income gaps:

Participant 14: *“The majority of the people who assume leadership position, they do it for self-gratification. That's why there is poor service delivery and that's why they are high levels of income gaps, not only between the lowest and the highest earner, but within the bracket themselves.”*

According to Participant 20, some leaders come into leadership positions with good intentions. However, because of the influence of their surroundings, they are not able to fully fulfil the initial intentions they had when they were appointed to those positions.

Furthermore, the participants provided other factors inhibiting the integration of Ubuntu, including being threatened by those you lead, being rude and not open to feedback, not sharing information and not being vulnerable:

Participant 13: *“And if you are there for other reasons, then if someone is shining and is doing better than you are doing, you start seeing that as a threat.”*

Participant 6: *“Their leadership was that keep information to your chest. Don't show your vulnerabilities.”*

Participant 10: *“People are so defensive in stores because as a Seniors when get into stores. Firstly, we've been rude. Secondly, we don't even greet. We are not even receptive to the feedback from the stores. Because we are seniors, we think we know it all. And when you do that, the staff will leave you.”*

The challenges highlighted by the participants indicate that not all individuals or organisations within society embrace the values of Ubuntu. Thus, participants were required

to navigate through these challenges when integrating Ubuntu into leadership or organisational practices. Table 16 below provides a summary of the sub-themes linked to the challenges faced by leaders concerning the integration of Ubuntu.

Table 16: Theme 4: Overcoming barriers to integrating Ubuntu

Theme 4: Overcoming barriers to integrating Ubuntu.		
No	Theme	Sub-theme
1	Overcoming barriers to integrating Ubuntu	Organisational practices not aligned to Ubuntu
		Negative perceptions of the leadership approach
		Flawed human behaviour
		Performance management not aligned with Ubuntu
		Culture differences
		Societal practices not aligned with Ubuntu
		Ubuntu not practised
		Awareness needed on Ubuntu
		Ubuntu not aligned with organisational values
		Influence of apartheid
		Personal struggles with Ubuntu
		Clashes with world order
		Clashes with economic systems
		Leadership practices inhibiting Ubuntu

The participants reported that they were able to overcome these challenges through leadership practices such as open communication, and being content; and Ubuntu values such as being caring and empathetic. Participant 18 reported the importance of communication during the implementation of the “Ubuntu Bethu” strategy:

Participant 18: *“Whenever you introduce something new that always challenges people. An average human being does not always embrace change. So, we had to take due care and the necessary time to communicate, to educate and most importantly to explain why this was the right strategy for us. Secondly, to share as often as possible a real-life example of the strategy at work. That is the really important way of winning hearts and minds and showcasing the potential and the capabilities of the strategy. So, it is a process of constant engagement Ofentse, that is imperative and that builds on itself that never ever stops.”*

Participant 16: “So, I dealt with those things by not being hard to make the people who think I am soft feel comfortable. I remain who I am, right.”

Participant 20: “So were there challenges absolutely yes, just as leader, the one of the things you've got to deal with is managing expectations and being content with your chosen style of leadership.”

Participant 6: “For me, no. Like the one thing that people will say right is mainly viewing it as being naïve. So the challenge is more on you as a leader, as an Ubuntu-based leader to say how do I manage the perception around me? Because then when I'm doing things from this way, people think that I am naïve. I suppose, because remember now again, you know Ubuntu has a lot of caring in it. You are being very empathetic. And the world is only starting to become open to empathetic leadership now.”

Participant 3: “I think Ubuntu has got, you know, the ability to change really the direction of any firm, any organisation, even the country as well. But I think what needs to happen is we probably need to continue inculcating the need for Ubuntu to be a value that is possibly pursued in corporate, maybe even in a country in South Africa.”

It should, however, be noted that the challenges explained above do not make Ubuntu an ineffective philosophy. Rather, they can be seen as areas that may need more adjustment or work when implementing Ubuntu principles into a leadership approach.

5.7 THEME 5: THE INFLUENCE OF UBUNTU ON PERFORMANCE

The participants indicated that the integration of Ubuntu into their leadership approach had a positive impact on the teams they led and the organisations for which they worked. Theme 5, namely ‘The influence of Ubuntu on performance’ emerged when participants were asked to describe how the leaders viewed the influence of Ubuntu in their team or organisational performance. Most of the participants (n = 15) argued that incorporating Ubuntu values created a more humane culture within their teams, resulting in an enhanced team environment, enhanced team performance, enhanced team commitments, and organisational success. Furthermore, nine participants believed that Ubuntu was instrumental to their success as leaders.

Participants (n = 7) indicated they noted an enhanced team environment, where the leaders show up with greater humanity, humility, and vulnerability, and acknowledge their teams in

a very humane way. Thus, the team matures better, trust grows, and better collaboration happens within the team. The team members can express themselves without fear (Participants 2 and 7); there is better collaboration within the teams (Participants 1 and 11); the team is motivated (Participant 13), and as stated by Participant 18, people are “able to bring the best and most authentic versions of themselves to the workplace”.

As indicated earlier, Participant 18 is the CEO of a consulting firm that adopted the "Ubuntu Bethu" strategy. They also argued that the adoption of the “Ubuntu Bethu” strategy resulted in positive team engagements, and this was measured through the employee engagement surveys the organisation conducts regularly:

Participant 18: *“I think the strategy has driven better employee engagement and we see this through improved performance on our annual employee as the global people surveys, if you call it. It is an employee survey. It is the best, most important, most consistent tool to be used across our network internationally to hear from our people about the experience we avail to them every day. So, it has increased, it has improved on people engagement index intend to stay with the firm, this has shown positive influence.”*

Not only did the participants note an enhanced team environment but the participants (n = 8) noted enhanced performance within their teams. Embracing Ubuntu values allowed for efficiencies to be introduced within their teams (Participant 2); increased productivity (Participant 6), and an overall increase in output and achievement of goals or objectives was experienced. The below quotations provide the views expressed by some of the participants who noted positive team performance:

Participant 7: *“So, I would say Ubuntu has influenced it in such in a way that from the times I've been working on projects, you actually achieve more working together on projects than by yourself.”*

Participant 11: *“In terms of output and performance, I find that they give a lot more of themselves.”*

Participant 14: *“Increased performance by a big measure, everyone wants to belong, everybody wants to be included.”*

Participant 19: *“I was transferred to Northern Cape to go and run the province and the province performed. I mean in 7-8 months the province was number one across the country.”*

Participants (n = 3) also noted enhanced team commitment, including higher retention within their teams:

Participant 2: *"They will give you the ABC and give you the D, E and the F, meaning that they have gone an extra mile."*

Participant 12: *"I tend to find my retention is always 100% in my space. I never lost talent, and when I do it is because they were going to bigger things."*

Participant 16 (CEO) and Participant 17 (Chairperson) indicated that embracing Ubuntu values was instrumental to the success of organisations they lead or have led:

Participant 16: *"I think when people look back at 3 and a half years of Company L, they can see how the organisation has evolved, how the organisation has succeeded but also it is because in Ubuntu, you don't lead alone, you are always with a team of your peers, of your subordinates but it is done together so that it is not about me, it is about us."*

Participant 17: *"So, in 4 ½ years, the debt-equity ratio had reduced to 1:1 from 3:1. And by the time I left in 2005, the equity ratio was 0.18:1. I'm not an accountant, I am not a qualified electrician who would understand what it means to produce electricity, but I worked through people. And apart from the debt-equity ratio having improved that way in five years. We had won the national award for good corporate governance. Overall, yeah, we'll beat mining concerns and beat bankers and all of corporations who were voted the best. And this is led by somebody who's driving force, who's vital force is actually Ubuntu. And then apart from being voted the best in corporate governance in 2002, we were voted the global power company of the year."*

The participants (n = 9) further reported that their chosen leadership approach, which integrated Ubuntu, enabled them to rise within corporate structures:

Participant 3: *"I don't think I would have risen up the ranks if my approach, which I've embraced for many many years, was not working."*

Participant 6: *"The first one is simply looking at the fact that if it had not been for the Ubuntu principles, I wouldn't have been where I am today."*

Participant 10: *"I always tell everyone that my success has been because of Ubuntu. It's not by accident because Ke rata batho (I love people). So that has saved me."*

Participant 11: *"I'm an executive looking after technology. I lead a big team; I think with three or four steps down. The turning point for me in my leadership and in my progression was when I started embracing Ubuntu and my upbringing."*

Embracing the values associated with Ubuntu was reported to have a positive impact on the team and organisational performance. Table 17 below provides a view of the sub-themes linked to the influence of Ubuntu on the performance theme.

Table 17: Theme 5: Influence of Ubuntu on performance

Theme 5: Influence of Ubuntu on performance		
No	Sub-theme	Description
1	Influence of Ubuntu on team and organisational performance	Enhanced team environment
		Enhanced team performance
		Enhanced team commitments
		Organisational success
		Ubuntu instrumental to the leader's success

5.8 CONCLUSION

The findings in this chapter highlighted that the participants defined Ubuntu as an African expression. However, the universal nature of Ubuntu was acknowledged, as participants noted that the practices or values might be called something different in other cultures or jurisdictions. The most common values the participants associated with Ubuntu were accountability, empathy, respect, communal, connectedness, and betterment of society and humanity. It was, therefore, evident that Ubuntu influences how the participants interact and relate with others due to the values they associate with Ubuntu.

The participants further indicated that Ubuntu has a positive impact on the leadership practices that they embrace in their leadership approach. The participants argued that a good leader will embrace leadership practices, such as a strong sense of self-awareness, open communication, authenticity, a humanistic approach, greeting, mentorship, expecting excellence, listening, emotional intelligence, humility, being consultative, encouraging empowerment, embracing diversity, leading by example, being grounded, and being content.

According to the participants, the integration of Ubuntu within organisations can be achieved. This can occur if Ubuntu is central to the business operation's strategy, through

appropriate values alignment, supported by appropriate performance management systems and processes, and organisations focus on greater sustainable societal impact over profits.

It is important to note that the participants experienced some challenges with integrating Ubuntu into their leadership approach and within their organisations. This included leadership challenges such as flawed human behaviour, negative perceptions with regards to leadership through Ubuntu values, non-alignment of values with the organisational values and personal struggles experienced by participants with integrating Ubuntu into their leadership approach. The participants, however, argued that these challenges did not make Ubuntu an ineffective philosophy.

Although there might be challenges with the integration of Ubuntu into leadership and organisational practices, the participants indicated that incorporating Ubuntu values created a more humane culture within an organisation. This resulted in an enhanced team environment, enhanced team performance, enhanced team commitments, and organisational and personal success. In conclusion, Table 18 provides an overview of the main themes and sub-themes and illustrates how the emergent themes and sub-themes link directly to the RQs.

Table 18: Themes and Sub-themes linked to RQs

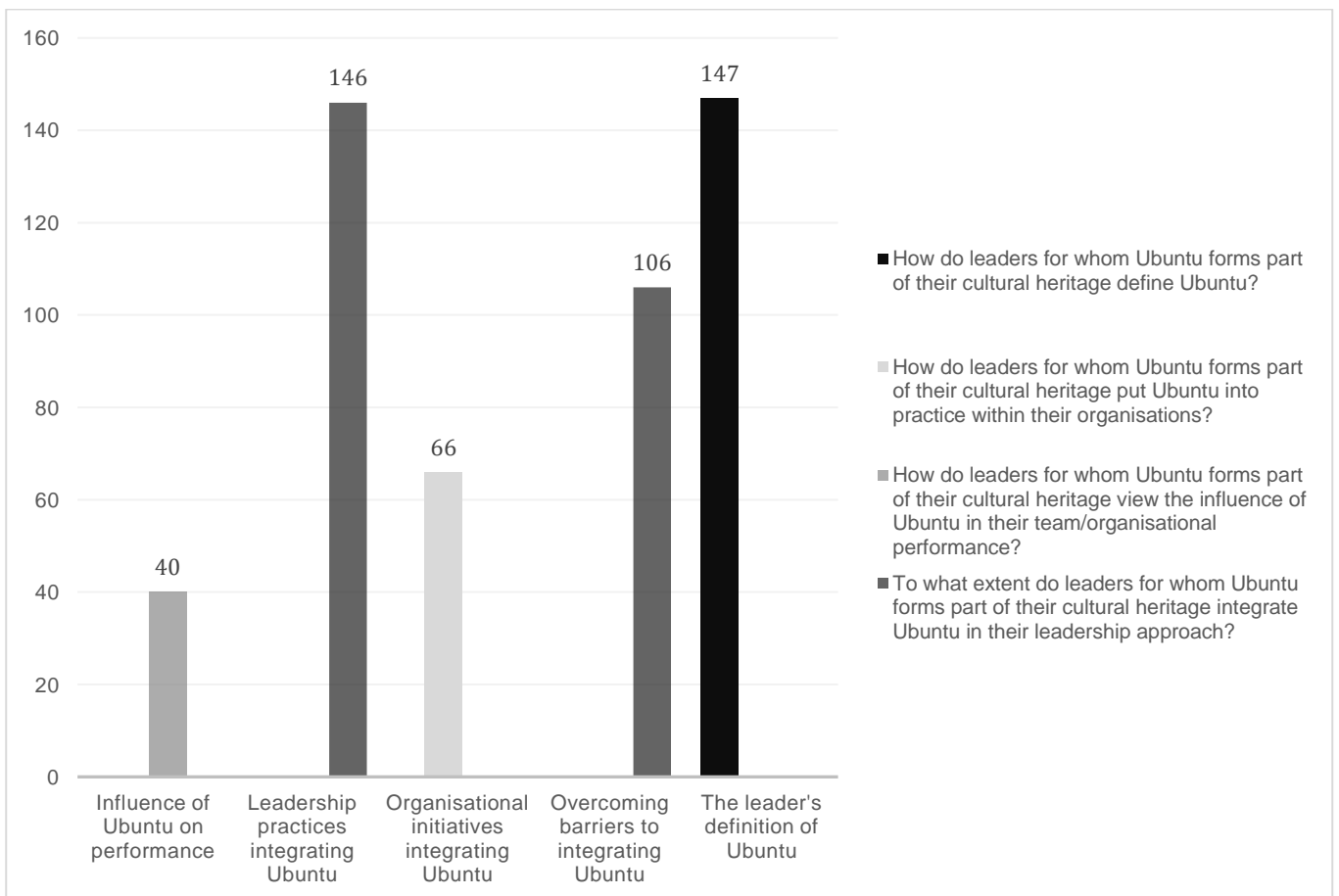
Theme	Sub-theme	Research Question
The leader's definition of Ubuntu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ubuntu values • Description of Ubuntu • Leadership similar to Ubuntu • Ubuntu practices 	SRQ: How do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage define Ubuntu?
Leadership practices integrating Ubuntu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong sense of self-awareness • Learning from the lived experiences associated with Ubuntu • Open communication • Authenticity • Humanistic approach • Regular greeting of followers • Mentoring others • Expecting excellence 	<i>RQ: To what extent do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage integrate Ubuntu in their leadership approach?</i>

Theme	Sub-theme	Research Question
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening to followers • Emotional Intelligence • Humility • Consultative approach to decision-making • Empowering others • Embracing diversity • Leading by example • Being grounded • Being content 	
<p>Overcoming barriers to integrating Ubuntu</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational practices not aligned with Ubuntu • Negative perceptions of the leadership approach • Flawed human behaviour • Performance management not aligned to Ubuntu • Culture differences • Societal practices not aligned with Ubuntu • Ubuntu not practised • Awareness needed on Ubuntu • Ubuntu not aligned with organisational values • Influence of apartheid • Personal struggles with Ubuntu • Clashes with world order • Clashes with economic systems • Leadership practices inhibiting the integration of Ubuntu in organisations 	
<p>Organisational initiatives integrating Ubuntu</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on sustainability and related initiatives • Ubuntu central to the business strategy • Performance management aligned with Ubuntu • Organisational value similar to Ubuntu 	<p>SRQ: How do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage put Ubuntu into practice within their organisations?</p>

Theme	Sub-theme	Research Question
Influence of Ubuntu on team and organisational performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced team environment Enhanced team performance Enhanced team commitments Ubuntu instrumental to leaders' success 	SRQ: How do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage view the influence of Ubuntu in their team/organisational performance?

Figure 9 below provides a view of the main themes, and the number of codes linked to the RQ and SRQs.

Figure 9: Main themes, and the number of codes linked to RQs and SRQs



CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to deepen the understanding of the relationship between leadership and culture. Specifically, it aimed to explore *To what extent do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage integrate Ubuntu in their leadership approach?* The main RQ of this study is supported by three SRQs, namely:

- SRQ1: How do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage define Ubuntu?;
- SRQ2: How do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage view the influence of Ubuntu in their team/organisational performance?; and
- SRQ3: How do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage put Ubuntu into practice within their organisations?

Chapter 2 of this study explored the evolution of leadership theories. It had a specific emphasis on how culture has been viewed in leadership studies, particularly on the emergence of cross-cultural studies during the 1980s and 1990s. The researcher analysed how research on leadership and culture has developed and shaped various scholarly perspectives. Furthermore, the study explored the intersection of African culture and leadership and offered a definition of leadership that is pertinent to both leadership and cultural studies. Literature on leadership highlighted the importance of considering the uniqueness and cultural context within which leaders operate (Perry *et al.*, 2010).

An overview of leadership through Ubuntu and the evolution of Ubuntu was then explored in Chapter 3. This included common values associated with Ubuntu and whether these values can be incorporated into today's leadership practices.

Having established a conceptual review of leadership and cultural studies, including limitations, a gap in the existing body of knowledge was identified that related to Ubuntu and leadership (Vilakati & Schurink, 2021). According to Engler and Stausberg (2021:34), a thorough literature review is essential as it provides a solid foundation for any study. This approach facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being investigated and also addressed any associated limitations.

The methodological approach for this study was discussed in Chapter 4. A qualitative phenomenological research design was followed. Data were collected from 20 participants who confirmed that Ubuntu was part of their cultural heritage. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The analysis of the data resulted in 507 codes that were further categorised into five main themes and 44 sub-themes; these helped answer the RQ and SRQs. The researcher therefore linked each theme to the specific SRQ (or the RQ where applicable) that it answers. The methodological approach followed during the research process therefore gave credibility and confirmability to the study and its findings. Table 19 below provides a high-level summary of the findings of this study, including the themes that emerged.

Table 19: High-level summary of the findings

Theme: Leader's definition of Ubuntu	Number of participants linked to the theme: (19/20) = 95%
Description of Ubuntu	(19/20) = 95%
Ubuntu values	(19/20) = 95%
Ubuntu practices	(4/20) = 20%
Leadership approaches similar to Ubuntu	(5/20) = 25%
Theme: Leadership practices integrating Ubuntu	Number of participants linked to the theme: (19/20) = 95%
Strong sense of self-awareness	(12/20) = 60%
Learning from lived experiences	(15/20) = 75%
Open communication	(6/20) = 30%
Authenticity	(4/20) = 20%
Humanistic approach	(5/20) = 25%
Regular greeting of followers	(4/20) = 20%
Mentoring others	(4/20) = 20%
Expecting excellence	(3/20) = 15%
Listening to followers	(/20) = 20%
Emotional Intelligence	(3/20) = 15%
Humility	(2/20) = 10%
Consultative approach to decision-making	(4/20) = 20%
Empowering others	(4/20) = 20%
Embracing diversity	(2/20) = 10%
Leading by example	(3/20) = 15%
Being grounded	(4/20) = 20%
Being content	(4/20) = 20%

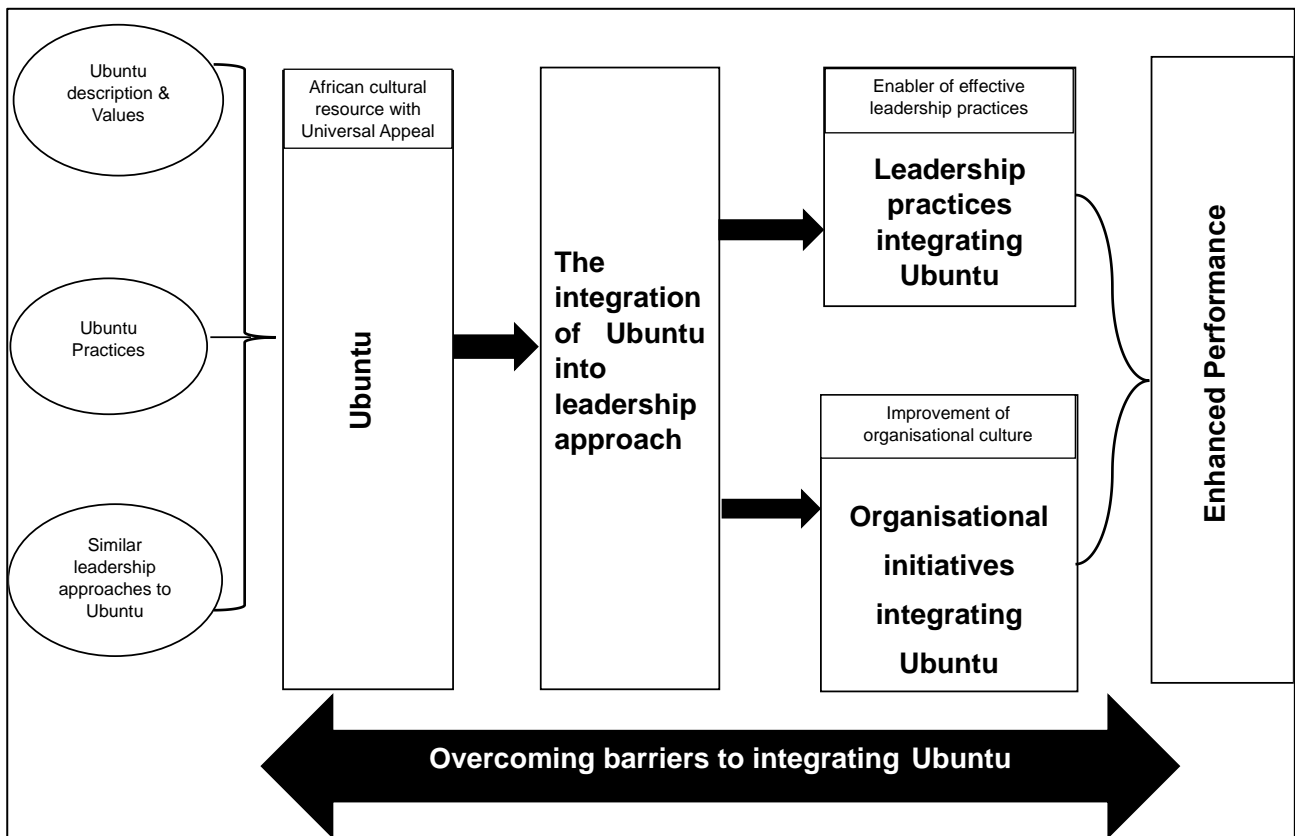
Theme: Organisational initiatives integrating Ubuntu	Number of participants linked to the theme: (16/20) = 80%
Ubuntu is central to the business strategy	(3/20) = 15%
Organisational value similar to Ubuntu	(7/20) = 35%
Performance management aligned with Ubuntu	(9/20) = 45%
Focus on sustainability and related initiatives	(8/20) = 40%
Theme: Overcoming barriers to integrating Ubuntu	Number of participants linked to the theme: (19/20) = 95%
Organisational practices not aligned to Ubuntu	(8/20) = 40%
Negative perceptions of the leadership approach	(8/20) = 40%
Flawed human behaviour	(8/20) = 40%
Performance management not aligned with Ubuntu	(6/20) = 30%
Culture differences	(3/20) = 15%
Societal practices not aligned with Ubuntu	(3/20) = 15%
Ubuntu not practised	(3/20) = 15%
Awareness needed on Ubuntu	(4/20) = 20%
Not aligned with organisational values	(4/20) = 20%
Influence of apartheid	(3/20) = 15%
Personal struggles with Ubuntu	(2/20) = 10%
Clashes with world order	(4/20) = 20%
Clashes with economic systems	(4/20) = 20%
Leadership practices inhibiting Ubuntu	(10/20) = 20 %
Theme: The influence of Ubuntu on performance	Number of participants linked to the theme: (15/20) = 75%
Enhanced team environment	(7/20) = 35%
Enhanced team performance	(8/20) = 40%
Enhanced team commitments	(3/20) = 15%
Organisational success	(2/20) = 10%
Ubuntu instrumental to the leader's success	(9/20) = 45%

6.2 CONCEPTUAL STRUCTURE

The purpose of Chapter 6 is to discuss and interpret the findings as highlighted in Chapter 5 and show how the RQ and SRQs were answered. The sections hereafter, therefore, articulate how the findings of this study contributed to the current understanding of the intersection between Ubuntu and leadership, enriching the existing body of knowledge in this area.

Figure 10 provides the thematic framework the researcher followed to discuss the integration of Ubuntu into a leadership approach. The figure, which illustrates the conceptual structure of the chapter, is discussed in detail below.

Figure 10: Framework for integrating Ubuntu into the leadership approach



Scholars have acknowledged the influence of culture in shaping leadership perception, understanding, and practice (Northhouse, 2004; House, 2004; Hunt and Yan, 2005; Gill, 2006). According to the findings of this study, **Ubuntu** can be defined as an African philosophy that is practised and embodies **values with universal appeal**. These include accountability, empathy, respect, communality, connectedness, and the overall betterment of society and humanity. The term "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu" translates to "a person is a person through other persons" and is the commonly used expression for Ubuntu.

As a leadership approach, Ubuntu is linked to **practices** such as chief or king's counsel, dikgoro, and herdsman. It bears **similarities to other leadership approaches**, including

servant-, responsible-, and human-centric leadership. These findings correct the views presented in the GLOBE study, which suggested that Sub-Saharan African countries, including South Africa, consider charismatic leadership essential for effective leadership (House *et al.*, 2013). However, this study indicated that leadership styles (specifically in South Africa) embrace Ubuntu and similar approaches that are vital for effective leadership, rather than relying solely on charismatic leadership.

Ubuntu as an **enabler of effective leadership** can be achieved through the implementation of several key **leadership practices**. These practices include fostering a strong sense of self-awareness, drawing insights from personal experiences, encouraging open communication, and demonstrating authenticity. Additionally, leaders should prioritise a humanistic approach by regularly acknowledging and greeting their team members, engaging in mentorship, setting high standards of excellence, and actively listening to their followers. Furthermore, exhibiting emotional intelligence, embracing humility, consulting with others during decision-making processes, empowering team members, and valuing diversity are vital components of leadership that embrace Ubuntu. Leading by example and embodying a grounded and content demeanour are also essential for nurturing a positive and productive environment. These findings indicate a strong correlation between Ubuntu and Hofstede's (2011) cultural dimension of collectivism. Ubuntu emphasises the importance of maintaining harmonious relationships and consulting with others. This collectivist approach, embraced by leaders who embody Ubuntu, can influence leadership behaviours and practices. This viewpoint is further supported by Molose *et al.* (2018:193), who asserted that "Ubuntu's collective values of compassion, survival, group solidarity, respect, and dignity are positively associated with a sense of workplace collectivism". Jung *et al.* (2009) also supported these views, arguing that collectivism has a positive impact on leaders' behaviours and leaders' effectiveness. The findings provided additional support for the GLOBE study, which highlights that countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, including South Africa, emphasise participative leadership. In contrast, there is a comparatively low regard for autonomous leadership, which tends to prioritise individualistic leadership attributes (House *et al.*, 2013).

Ubuntu can have an influence on **organisational culture** through **organisational initiatives** such as Ubuntu being central to organisations' strategies, values and focus on

sustainability and related initiatives. These findings present a nuanced contrast to Hofstede's (2011) assertion that African nations exhibit a short-term orientation. The findings indicated that organisations in South Africa that adopt the values of Ubuntu, demonstrate a commitment to long-term orientation. These organisations prioritise not only profitability but also the development of strategies that promote business continuity and sustainability.

This study has, therefore, concluded that leaders with a comprehensive understanding of Ubuntu, who implement good leadership practices supported by organisational initiatives focused on enhancing organisational culture, will **achieve enhanced performance** within their teams and organisations. This comprehensive understanding of Ubuntu can be an enabler to the leader's ability **to integrate Ubuntu into their leadership approach**. This is because, according to Poltera and Schreiner (2019:17):

Africans prefer leadership styles that are based on humanistic principles and desire more participative leadership that values individuality, authenticity, and serving the community in line with the Ubuntu leadership philosophy which promotes leading by example and doing the right thing.

To successfully integrate the principles of Ubuntu within an organisation, leaders must **address several barriers**. These include misaligned organisational practices, prevalent negative perceptions of a leadership approach that is embedded in Ubuntu, and the influence of flawed human behaviour. Additionally, cultural differences and societal practices that do not align with Ubuntu can present obstacles. Increasing awareness of Ubuntu's importance is essential, particularly in the context of the historical influences of apartheid and the potential conflicts that may arise with current economic systems. **Addressing these barriers** is crucial for fostering a more inclusive and effective leadership model. These findings will be substantiated in the sections that follow.

6.3 UBUNTU AS AFRICAN RESOURCE WITH UNIVERSAL APPEAL

The findings of this study highlighted that while the concept of Ubuntu is deeply rooted in African culture, its associated values are perceived to be universal. Existing literature on Ubuntu (Mangaroo-Pillay & Coetzee, 2022; Matupire, 2016; Mbigi, 2007; Msila, 2014;

Ncube, 2010; Newenham-Kahindi, 2009; Taylor, 2014) generally agreed that the term originates from Africa. As argued by More (2005:156–157):

“...in one sense, Ubuntu is a philosophical concept forming the basis of relationships, especially ethical behaviour. In another sense, it is a traditional politico-ideological concept referring to sociopolitical action. As a moral or ethical concept, it is a point of view according to which moral practices are founded exclusively on consideration and enhancement of human wellbeing; a preoccupation with the ‘human’. It enjoins that what is morally good is what brings dignity, respect, contentment, and prosperity to others, the self, and the community at large. Ubuntu is a demand for respect for persons no matter what their circumstances may be... In its politico-ideological sense, it is a principle for all forms of social or political relationships. It enjoins peace and social harmony by encouraging the practice of sharing in all forms of communal existence”.

Participants in this study (n = 12) agreed that the concept of Ubuntu embodies universal values. These values include accountability, empathy, respect, communality, and connectedness, with the overarching aim of promoting societal and humanitarian improvement. The values identified as associated with Ubuntu were consistent with prior scholarly research that explored the values linked to this concept (Asamoah & Yeboah-Assiamah, 2019; Lutz, 2009; Mangaliso, 2001; Mbigi, 2007; Metz, 2007; Molose *et al.*, 2018; Ncube, 2010; Poovan *et al.*, 2006; Prinsloo, 2000; Woermann & Engelbrecht, 2019). Values such as dignity, respect, harmony, cooperation, and empathy among members of society transcend cultural boundaries and are fundamental to the human experience, beyond the African continent (Nzimakwe, 2014:38). While these ideals may not consistently manifest in our interconnected world, it is essential to strive toward a community where mutual care and understanding prevail (Nzimakwe, 2014:38).

Leadership approached with Ubuntu values therefore fosters a deep awareness of interpersonal relationships and interactions. It is important to treat people as human beings and with respect; in essence, the leader would empathise with those they lead through their hardships. Khoza (2006) argued that humanity is a core principle of Ubuntu, and can be defined as "those features that are typically, fundamentally or essentially human, representing the core attributes of the concept of being human" (Haslam, Loughnan, Kashima & Bain, 2008:57). It is, therefore, important for leaders to approach leadership with humanity and to treat followers with the respect that they deserve. Oyowe and Etieyibo (2018) argued that Ubuntu ideologies are based on principles of the interconnectedness of

human existence, of living in harmony with other members of society, of mutual respect, and of care for the community. The findings, therefore, reinforced the understanding that Ubuntu is an African philosophy deeply rooted in values with universal appeal.

This study also enhanced the understanding of the values associated with Ubuntu, particularly as participants (n = 6) highlighted the value of accountability as a fundamental value. The findings indicated that the principles of Ubuntu advocate for both leaders and followers to uphold high ethical standards and to be accountable for their actions. Notably, the significance of accountability concerning Ubuntu values has not been extensively covered in existing literature. However, April (2006) supported the findings of this study, arguing that both employees and leaders become more effective when they are held accountable for their outcomes. A lack of accountability can lead to disengagement within a team. The value of accountability underscores the core elements of Ubuntu, which focus on the commitment to the well-being of individuals and communities through responsible actions. Therefore, the findings suggested that the values associated with Ubuntu will continue to evolve and adapt to societal changes, rather than remain static.

The findings regarding the universality of Ubuntu, however, contradicted the views of Eyong (2015:69). The author argued that Ubuntu may only be relevant in an indigenous African context and may not be applicable worldwide due to cultural differences. It was evident that the values associated with Ubuntu are not exclusive to Africa and can be integrated into leadership and cultural practices around the globe. The findings indicate that although Ubuntu is an African expression of what it means to be human, it embodies values with universal appeal.

The universal appeal of Ubuntu is further strengthened by findings that highlighted its similarities with other leadership theories, including servant leadership, responsible leadership, and human-centric leadership. Notably, these theories are relevant and applicable in contexts beyond the African continent. Dorfman *et al.* (2006) argued that servant leadership is universal. According to Okecha, Branine and Mamman (2024), Ubuntu and servant leadership foster collaboration and promote interconnectedness among followers. Although there are notable similarities between Ubuntu and servant leadership, it is crucial to understand that these concepts are distinct and are not practised in the same

manner (Okecha *et al.*, 2024). This argument was supported by the study's findings, as the participants highlighted similarities between Ubuntu and servant leadership. However, they did not equate these practices to be the same. The primary objective of a servant leader is to serve others (Greenleaf, 1977), while the primary objective of leaders who adopt Ubuntu into their leadership approach is to create an environment where there is communality, shared humanity, respect interconnectedness, and empathy (Kuada, 2010; Mangaliso, 2001; Msila, 2008; Ncube, 2010).

Participant 8 phrased Ubuntu as putting responsible leadership into action. According to Sachikonye and Ramlogan (2024), Ubuntu is similar to responsible leadership, arguing that:

"...responsible leadership based on Ubuntu proposes that leaders belong to society and are obligated to act in certain ways to ensure belonging. They, and others they work with, are first and foremost human beings with responsibilities to their families, and then to communities including their organisation to which they belong. From this perspective, we suggest that Ubuntu has some alignment with the idea of responsible leaders as citizens but advances the idea in several ways".

As with any other concept, Ubuntu has its challenges. The findings indicated that although Ubuntu might have a universal appeal, challenges such as flawed human behaviour are still prevalent. The participants further identified cultural differences as a notable challenge in the integration of Ubuntu. These differences can result in misunderstandings among team members regarding the principles of Ubuntu. Furthermore, there may be tensions with Western perspectives that are often characterised by individualism, as well as a lack of appreciation for cultures beyond the Ubuntu framework. These findings support Mutwarasibo and Iken's (2019) argument, namely that it could be difficult for people from different cultural backgrounds to understand Ubuntu, therefore making it difficult to adopt. Furthermore, the findings highlighted challenges with regard to the compatibility of Ubuntu with the economic and other world systems. These challenges include the African economic system, with its history of being exploited, which is more capitalist in nature and may not be aligned with Ubuntu. The participants further expressed concerns about the ability of Ubuntu to address issues of unequal distribution of wealth and other social ills such as pay gaps, corruption, and selfishness. This view was confirmed by Mwipikeni (2018), who argued that the individualist, neoliberal nature of the world's economic and political systems is not

aligned with Ubuntu. The author, therefore, questioned whether significant gains can be made by Ubuntu in terms of addressing social ills such as unequal distribution of wealth and redressing the marginalised and impoverished members of society (Mwipikeni, 2018).

Woermann and Engelbrecht (2019:31) highlighted that challenges such as corruption, inadequate corporate governance, significant inequality, corporate failures, and scandals in Africa pose critical questions regarding the applicability of Ubuntu in reflecting the lived experiences of communities. However, this study's findings provided a nuanced perspective that contrasted with Woermann and Engelbrecht's (2019:31) views. Despite the identified societal challenges, participants in this study (n = 15) conveyed that Ubuntu is indeed a tangible aspect of their lived experiences, whether in their personal lives, the communities in which they were raised or the organisations with which they have been associated.

Although only one participant described Ubuntu as a practised philosophy, it is evident that Ubuntu continues to evolve. Research is now beginning to acknowledge it as a practised philosophy that can be translated into lived experiences. As argued by Vilas-Boas, Davel and Bispo, (2018) "research on leadership as practice is scarce.... the view on leadership as cultural practice focuses on the modus operandi of leadership, with a closer interaction with the practitioners".

The findings indicated that a comprehensive understanding of Ubuntu that includes its distinct African nature, its universal appeal, and the challenges associated with it can be an enabler to a leader's ability to integrate Ubuntu into their leadership approach. This is because "leadership is enacted within social space and its meaning constructed based on individual accounts of experience occurring in social reality; one that is itself steeped in cultural norms, values, and practices" (Iwowo, 2015).

6.4 UBUNTU AS AN ENABLER OF EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

This study found that Ubuntu enables effective leadership through the implementation of several key practices. These practices include fostering a strong sense of self-awareness, drawing insights from personal experiences, encouraging open communication, and demonstrating authenticity. Additionally, leaders should prioritise a humanistic approach by

regularly acknowledging and greeting their team members, engaging in mentorship, setting high standards of excellence, and actively listening to their followers. Furthermore, exhibiting emotional intelligence, embracing humility, consulting with others during decision-making processes, empowering team members, and valuing diversity are vital components of leadership that embrace Ubuntu. Leading by example and embodying a grounded and content demeanour are also essential for nurturing a positive and productive environment.

This study found that effective leadership practices (Figure 11) can enhance organisational performance when adopted by leaders who embody Ubuntu values. These findings support the perspective shared by House *et al.* (2013), which emphasises that leadership is the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and empower others. Such leadership qualities contribute to the effectiveness and success of the organisations to which individuals belong, by promoting appropriate leadership behaviours and practices. Fox (2010:125) argued that leadership that embraces Ubuntu encompasses practices such as open communication, offering warm greetings, taking the time to sincerely inquire about the well-being of others, and upholding and embodying values such as care, sharing, respect, listening, and compassion in daily interactions. This study expanded on Fox’s (2010) findings and identified additional leadership practices central to Ubuntu.

Figure 11: Effective leadership practices



The findings revealed that participants (n = 12) identified a strong sense of self-awareness as a leadership quality associated with leaders who embody Ubuntu values. They reported that leaders with a strong sense of self-awareness recognise their strengths and weaknesses, and acknowledge their mistakes while being clear on what must be achieved. These findings were consistent with the views expressed by Bass and Bass (2009), who emphasised the significance of self-awareness in leadership. Furthermore, Mbigi (2005) argued that self-awareness plays a crucial role in the development of effective leaders through the process of continuously clarifying personal values. This study, therefore, found that a self-aware leader is more open to learning and receiving feedback from others. These leaders will also make effective use of skills within their teams, as they are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and would be willing to be led by others when required to ensure that success is achieved. These leaders are also grounded and content with themselves; also referred to as fulfilled. According to Shutte (2001:30), "Our deepest moral obligation is to become more fully human. And this means entering more and more deeply into the community with others. So, although the goal is personal fulfilment, selfishness is excluded". Broodryk (2006) further argued that leaders can find fulfilment when they stand with their colleagues during difficult times. Being content/grounded therefore fosters good relations between leaders and followers.

The findings further indicated that the participants (n = 15) gained insights from their lived experiences. They drew inspiration from role models within their communities who exemplified Ubuntu in their leadership styles, as well as from leaders who demonstrated similar principles. Through these observations, the participants deepened their understanding of Ubuntu and its application in leadership. Lived experience therefore plays an important role in the formation of knowledge relating to Ubuntu and effective leadership. Leaders who embrace these lived experiences can be effective through the development of a robust knowledge framework. These findings supported the existing body of knowledge on learning from lived experience as an enabler to effective leadership. A competency of effective leadership identified by Hassanzadeh, Silong, Asmuni and Abd Wahat (2015:137) is learning from lived experiences. Rukuni (2007) also argued that family and community backgrounds significantly influence the values upheld in many African cultures. Additionally, Iwowo (2015), stated that:

“Knowledge is continually and creatively appropriated, grounded in the lived experiential reality of African leaders (and managers) and of those who follow them. It is believed that such creative experimentation is not only needful, but indeed may well be a pre-requisite necessary to evolve more contextually robust knowledge frameworks”.

The participants (n = 6) emphasised the importance of open communication. The findings indicated that leaders who embody the principles of Ubuntu prioritise transparent communication and adapt traditional communication methods to align with their operating environment, thereby facilitating meaningful discussions within their teams. These findings contributed to the existing literature on indigenous communication methods by demonstrating their applicability within business contexts. Van Norren (2022) argued that leaders who embrace Ubuntu create environments that encourage open communication, inclusivity, and mutual support, allowing for a robust exchange of views between followers and leaders. Newenham-Kahindi (2009) argued that indabas, which are a form of ancient traditional meetings, are an important part of African culture and therefore by extension, they can be associated with Ubuntu. The purpose of these meetings is to discuss issues and resolve conflicts with members of the community. As reported, the participants embraced these ancient communication methods in their organisations, although they might have termed them differently (vuselala, indaba, umphakathi). Ubuntu and Indaba systems represent emerging strategies that address the complex and diverse hybrid cultural systems discussed in international leadership literature (Horwitz *et al.*, 2002; Jackson, 2000). This demonstrates the relevance of ancient communication methods in today's world and how leaders can adopt these concepts to be fit for purpose for their organisations, thus encouraging open dialogue.

This study found that the effectiveness of open dialogue is notably improved when leaders engage in active listening concerning their followers' perspectives. Some participants (n = 3) emphasised that they practice this form of listening attentively and with genuine care, allowing for thoughtful consideration without the need for an immediate response. Mbigi (2002:21) argued that “compromise, persuasion, discussion and accommodation, listening and freedom of speech are the key elements of the African leadership paradigm”. These findings are supported by Chanana and Sangeeta (2021), who noted that leaders who

embrace the values associated with Ubuntu actively listen to others when they share perspectives, ensuring that every voice is respected and acknowledged.

Authenticity is an important aspect of effective leadership, as reported by four participants. They noted that being authentic enables leaders to foster stronger connections with their teams by remaining true to themselves. The significance of authenticity or authentic leadership is well-established within leadership literature, particularly concerning cultural studies. The findings, therefore, confirmed earlier research by Gardner *et al.* (2005) who argued that authentic leaders are focused on their followers' personal needs. Furthermore, according to Gardner *et al.* (2021) authentic leaders display "actions that are guided by the leaders' true self as reflected by core values, beliefs, thoughts and feelings, as opposed to environmental contingencies or pressures from others". Authenticity enables leaders to connect with all the stakeholders, including followers, as the leaders are true to themselves. Gardner *et al.* (2005) also added that leaders who embrace authenticity are focused on their followers' personal needs. Authentic leadership is characterised by a commitment to connecting with individuals at a fundamental level and understanding their perspectives. This approach fosters trust and effectively addresses the unique needs of diverse groups. Freeman and Auster (2011:21) argued that "authenticity becomes the project of finding this unique expression of our humanity that takes account of both individual (and intra-psychic) and community (and inter-subjective) aspirations". The findings, therefore, indicated that Ubuntu has distinctive elements that can complement the authenticity of leaders. As stated by Participant 18, a way to demonstrate authentic leadership is to be at the grassroots level, thereby dealing with people at their level.

This study found that effective leaders demonstrate high emotional intelligence, as highlighted by some participants (n = 3). The findings were consistent with the limited existing literature that explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and the concept of Ubuntu. Participants noted that emotionally intelligent leaders exhibit empathy towards their followers. Additionally, leaders need to possess emotional intelligence to facilitate meaningful connections and properly engage with their followers. As stated by Khoza (2006), "an emotionally intelligent business leader transmits a positive attitude by engaging with others on the level of shared understandings and shared feelings". Butler and Chinowsky (2006) also argued that effective leadership requires empathy, which is a

significant emotional intelligence behaviour. Metz (2018:48) emphasised that leaders are required to be emotionally intelligent to be able to address conflicts, create an inclusive environment within their teams, and develop employees who are not performing optimally. Furthermore, Mamman and Zakaria (2016) argued that within the context of Ubuntu:

“Competence and skills are not detached from the ultimate purpose. In other words, it is the purpose that should determine and judge whether a person is competent or skilful rather than a predetermined and codified proficiency in sets of activities. Therefore, the person should be emotionally in tune with the impact and potential impact of their actions rather than just mechanically going through a predetermined and codified set of motions as typified in the Western-based approach to competencies and skills. This new approach requires the possession of emotional intelligence”.

It is, therefore, important for leaders to be emotionally intelligent in order to relate and engage appropriately with their followers. Furthermore, an emotionally intelligent leader will be empathetic towards their followers during difficult times.

The participants reported how humility enabled them to let their team take the lead when required and put themselves in their followers’ shoes during difficult times. These findings supported the views expressed by Vilakati and Schurink (2021), who argued that incorporating values such as humility and acceptance can create a more humane culture within organisations.

The findings suggested that embracing diversity is a vital component of effective leadership. This approach encompasses engaging with followers who possess varying perspectives, come from diverse cultural backgrounds, and identify with different sexual orientations. Singha and Sivarethnamohan (2022:6) supported these views and argued that the establishment of a positive work environment is greatly enhanced by incorporating the principles of Ubuntu into the management of workforce diversity. The application of Ubuntu is crucial for improving diversity management and creating a more inclusive atmosphere. Employees must have access to a healthy and supportive corporate culture in their workplaces. Jackson (2004) further indicated that leaders could deal effectively with the multiple cultural diversities within organisations by embracing humanistic leadership practices.

This study further found that a core principle of a leadership approach that embraces Ubuntu is the recognition of humanness as essential to effective leadership. Leaders who adopt this approach engage with their followers as fellow human beings, prioritising their well-being. This fosters an environment where leaders can genuinely relate to their followers. Bolden and Kirk (2009) supported these views and argued that leadership in Africa aspire to be based on humanity. Furthermore, Ubuntu encourages members of the community to practice humanism while forming relationships (Broodryk, 2010:81). A humanistic approach will, therefore, nurture the leader-follower relationship resulting in better cohesion.

The importance of greeting was a leadership practice that was reported by four participants. The findings indicated that a cohesive relationship between the leader and the follower can also be enhanced through the practice of greeting. This finding contributed to the limited leadership literature that highlights how seemingly minor practices, such as greetings, can have a meaningful influence on effective leadership strategies. Caldwell and Atwijuka (2018:1) argued that greeting plays a far greater role in the leader-follower relationship, as it not only acknowledges the existence of the other individual but also witnesses their uniqueness, value, and divine potential. Caldwell and Atwijuka (2018:1) further stated that greeting acknowledges the importance of individuals as value contributors, confirms the responsibilities of leaders to serve and create meaningful partnerships with others, and affirms the importance of leadership that is focused on caring and interpersonal relationships. Hailey (2008:3) further indicated that greeting others demonstrates humanity and is not purely focused on being social. Greeting others therefore demonstrates the most basic element of being human - it communicates that the leader sees, hears, and acknowledges those they are engaging with and that everyone within the team is acknowledged as a valuable member.

The study further found that an effective leader mentors others, guides junior staff, cultivates quality leaders, and ensures effective succession planning within their organisations. While many studies have focused on the importance of mentorship, there is limited literature on the value of Ubuntu in mentor-mentee relationships. In a study conducted by April and Peters (2011) exploring how African values such as Ubuntu can be incorporated into workplaces, the authors argued that it is important for organisations to embed mentorship

within their training programmes. This should be done by “creating mentoring circles, led by elders and storytellers, and an environment where each person in the organisation gets to mentor and be mentored” (April & Peters, 2011:18-19). Munir (2020:13-14) argued that experienced leaders should embrace Ubuntu values by mentoring young followers who are joining the workforce. Although these followers might have academic qualifications, they will require guidance in navigating the workplace environment. This could assist in addressing the critical skill shortage in South Africa.

According to participants (n= 4) in this study, effective leaders are those who embrace a consultative approach to problem-solving and decision-making by appreciating the differences expressed by their followers. These leaders are also open to embracing a solution that they did not think of or that was suggested by someone else. These leaders, therefore, adopt an inclusive approach toward deriving solutions to problems faced by their organisation or team. These views are supported by Malunga (2006), who argued that leadership that embraces African values such as Ubuntu encourages appropriate consultation processes to be followed when addressing issues. Khoza (2006) also argued that it is important for followers within an organisation to be consulted as they can proactively influence the strategic direction of an organisation, allowing for reasonable incorporation of all views aired through the consultation process. It is, therefore, important for leaders to seek the input of different stakeholders, including those with expert knowledge or skills to achieve favourable outcomes. As argued by April (2006), “leadership can unite the organisation through the demonstration of genuine humility and commitment and the process of consultative communication”.

The study further found that through this consultative approach, leaders can also empower those they lead by allowing followers to lead when needed in their respective portfolios. This allows the leader to leverage different strengths within the team/organisation. Ncube (2010) supported this view and argued that accepting the interdependence within organisations would result in leaders having the desire to empower others by believing in them and allowing them to act on initiatives they have identified. April (2006) further stated that leaders need to create environments where followers are empowered, engaged and passionate about their work, as this will lead to better results in organisations and the communities which the followers represent. Empowering others is therefore an effective method used by

leaders to enhance the skills of followers. As stated by Participant 15, it is important to seek the input of different stakeholders, including those with expert knowledge or skills to achieve favourable outcomes.

Participants (n= 3) expressed the view that establishing high standards for themselves and their teams constitutes an important aspect of effective leadership. They underscored the significance of leaders being aligned with elevated standards of quality and ethical behaviour. These findings are aligned with the views expressed by Nicolaides and Dlodla (2023:290), who argued that it is important for leaders who embrace Ubuntu to lead by example to enhance ethical standards and behaviours within organisations. These leaders, therefore, set higher standards of quality and ethical conduct for themselves and their teams. A study by Shrivastava *et al.* (2014:24-25) found that the incorporation of Ubuntu, inclusive communication and impartial behaviour were regarded as personal qualities associated with excellence for leaders in South Africa. There was limited literature available on the perception of excellence and Ubuntu. Thus, Shrivastava *et al.* (2014:24-25) recommended that further research on excellence-related perceptions be conducted, to assist the generation of knowledge on how the perception of excellence might develop effective leadership.

Participants (n = 3) also indicated that it is important for them to lead by example and display the leadership practices that they expect from others. Nicolaides and Dlodla (2023:290) noted that it is important for leaders who embrace Ubuntu to lead by example to enhance ethical standards and behaviours within organisations. The findings were also consistent with Poltera and Schreiner's (2019:17) argument, namely that:

“Africans prefer leadership styles that are based on humanistic principles, and desire more participative leadership that values individuality, authenticity, and serving the community in line with the Ubuntu leadership philosophy which promotes leading by example and doing the right thing”.

6.4.1 Ubuntu and its limitations on effective leadership

The findings revealed that leaders who embody Ubuntu implement effective leadership practices. Nevertheless, they encounter challenges stemming from negative perceptions

associated with this leadership style. These perceptions frequently suggest that these leaders may be perceived as weak, that their methods may not be considered effective or that they may be viewed as overly naive in their approach. This was aligned with the views expressed by Wanasika *et al.* (2011), who argued that leaders embracing Ubuntu are seen often as weak and not results-driven. It was argued that African cultural values contribute to ineffective leadership, thereby resulting in a decrease in economic growth and contributing to entrepreneurship constraints (Kuada, 2010:14). Furthermore, the findings indicated that the consultative decision-making process is often viewed as time-consuming by many stakeholders. This perspective was supported by Mangaliso *et al.* (2022:1044), who noted that extensive consultation and active engagement with stakeholders can initially demand considerable time and effort.

The findings further highlighted that leaders also experience challenges whereby their values are not aligned with the organisational values, causing tensions concerning certain organisational decisions or their approach to leadership. These findings confirmed Moyo's (2016) views, who explored a different dimension with regard to leading through Ubuntu. The author found that they experienced similar tensions between the Western cultural practices they were familiar with (due to being exposed to the Western schooling system for most of their academic life) and the values associated with Ubuntu. The findings demonstrated that leaders are required to navigate between the leadership practices they adopt to integrate Ubuntu and the challenges associated with Ubuntu.

This study found that the legacy of apartheid is an obstacle to the effective integration of Ubuntu within organisations. According to feedback from three participants, instances of racism continue to persist in some organisations, underscoring the need for ongoing efforts to address these issues. These findings supported Chetty and Price (2024), who argued that the impact of apartheid is still visible in South Africa's complex social fabric despite the democratic dispensation. It still has an influence on the power dynamic within organisations and thus influences how employees engage within their respective organisations.

6.5 UBUNTU AND THE IMPROVEMENT OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

This study found that Ubuntu can be effectively integrated into organisations through a variety of initiatives. These organisational initiatives include positioning Ubuntu as a fundamental aspect of the organisation's strategic framework, ensuring that the organisation's values are in harmony with the principles of Ubuntu, and promoting sustainability initiatives. Some participants (n = 7) indicated that the successful integration of Ubuntu within their organisations was significantly supported by the alignment of their values with those of the organisation. The values cited by participants included humility, empathy, mutual care, respect, and integrity, all of which were integral to their organisational ethos. These organisational initiatives could have a profound impact on organisational culture, as there is a clear correlation between the articulated organisational values and the values embodied by Ubuntu.

The findings in this study expanded on Coetzee and Veldsman's (2013) findings. The authors argued that values such as teamwork, integrity, customer and shareholder partnership, respect, innovation and performance excellence are preventive organisational values in some South African organisations. The findings further support the argument by Khandelwal and Mohendra (2010), who stated that alignment of personal and organisational values plays an important role as they create a common direction for everyone within the organisation and guide acceptable behavioural standards. The findings further confirmed the views expressed by Veldsman and Johnson (2016), who indicated that it is essential for businesses to cultivate leadership that is aligned with the organisation's overall goals, objectives, and mission. To achieve this alignment, organisations should integrate core values into leadership processes to enhance organisational culture. As argued by Vilakati and Schurink (2021), incorporating values such as humility, acceptance, consideration, interdependence, thoughtfulness and social sensitivity to human virtue can create a more humane culture within an organisation. Ubuntu, can, therefore positively influence the culture within organisations by embracing values such as trust, respect and mutual support (Hailey, 2008) thereby creating an environment where followers feel valued and encouraged to actively participate in their roles - leading to increased employee engagement (Javed *et al.*, 2019).

Participants (n = 3) reported how Ubuntu was instrumental to their business and organisational strategies. These views were supported by Vilakati (2018), who argued that Ubuntu can be the heartbeat of business practices through the translation of Ubuntu values into organisations' strategies and protocols. Ubuntu could, therefore, be instrumental to organisations' strategies thus impacting the organisational culture. As an example, an international consulting firm operating in South Africa adopted the "Ubuntu Bethu" strategy. The "Ubuntu Bethu" strategy is regarded as a mechanism through which the organisation executes its global strategy, with humanity being core to its operations. The organisation uses its resources to develop society, ensuring a lasting societal impact when the organisational strategy is aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), thereby breaking the cycle of poverty in African society.

These findings on Ubuntu and SDGs confirm scholarly work that has argued that a business relies on society for its existence and continued growth (Garriga & Melé, 2004:51-52). This means that businesses have social responsibilities towards the community within which they operate. Organisations can play an important role in society through CSR initiatives (Voegtlin, Frisch, Walther & Schwab, 2020). This can be supported by leaders who take good actions that benefit the stakeholders of the organisation, and actions that avoid harmful consequences to society at large (Stahl & Sully de Luque, 2014). Khoza (2006) argued that it is important for leadership to promote environmental and business sustainability, as the alternative of only focusing on profit maximisation will be detrimental to the organisation and society. Prinsloo (2000:283-284) further argued that Ubuntu advocates for organisations to be involved and care for the communities they operate in. Furthermore, Ubuntu advocates for responsible use of natural resources, as human beings are seen as one with nature (Broodryk, 2005:52-54). Ubuntu further does not encourage natural resources to be used in a way that would compromise the ability of others to use these natural resources in the same way (Sachikonye & Ramlogan, 2024:4). Thus, Ubuntu promotes a culture of environmental sustainability (Etieyibo, 2017); additionally, prioritising SDG initiatives can shape organisational culture. According to Van Norren (2022:2791):

"Ubuntu prioritises the first five social goals, equality (SDG10), inclusivity (SDG16) and partnership (SDG17). Ubuntu would change the leading SDG theme into: 'life is mutual aid' (horizontal Ubuntu relationship) rather than the hierarchical 'leave no one behind' (developed

versus developing countries). Ubuntu would replace sustainability with the 'community of life' and individuality with 'collective agency'; and knowing through measuring with 'knowing through feeling engagement with others'. It prioritises process (strategies/now) over goals (abstract future)".

Participant 6 reported the significant role of Ubuntu in the development of innovative business solutions, particularly through the implementation of the Ubuntu incentive scheme. This initiative represents a groundbreaking AI algorithm designed to enhance organisational reward structures, embodying the principles of Ubuntu in fostering collaboration within organisations. The program was referred to as the Ubuntu incentive mechanism. This finding confirmed that Ubuntu encourages a collaborative work environment culture within organisations that facilitate innovation and collective problem-solving (Mutwarasibo & Iken, 2019). The findings, however, contradicted earlier research by Muller *et al.* (2019), who found that Ubuntu harmed the innovative performance of an organisation. Furthermore, these findings also disproved Matolino and Kwindiwi's (2013) argument, namely that Ubuntu has no possibility of future development.

The study highlighted the importance of leaders effectively navigating various challenges to harness the principles of Ubuntu. By doing so, they can enhance organisational processes, which will positively impact the overall organisational culture. These challenges include the inadequacy of KPIs in focusing on people dynamics, difficulties leaders face in influencing the performance management process, an overemphasis on bonus schemes within performance management, and the absence of a meaningful connection between targets and human values. These findings expanded on the previous views of Woermann and Engelbrecht (2019:41), who argued that common organisational processes such as restructuring and termination of employees are not aligned with the values of promoting harmonious relationships based on shared identity and goodwill. These practices instead create conflict, sever relationships, and bring an end to organisational shared identity.

Although there are challenges with Ubuntu and its influence on organisational culture, Burgess (2017) argued that Ubuntu is still relevant. They emphasised that organisations must embody the collective principles associated with Ubuntu to achieve optimal results. As a result, the pace at which an organisation progresses toward equity and inclusivity is

dependent upon the integration of specific elements related to leadership that embrace a collective approach.

6.6 UBUNTU AND ENHANCEMENT TO PERFORMANCE

This study found that leaders who possess a thorough understanding of Ubuntu are likely to achieve improved performance within their teams and organisations. This is more probable alongside the implementation of effective leadership practices and the support of organisational initiatives, such as the alignment of performance management practices, to Ubuntu. A total of 15 participants reported that the integration of Ubuntu has contributed to a more positive team environment, enhanced organisational performance, and increased team performance. Furthermore, nine participants noted that their leadership approach, which incorporated the principles of Ubuntu, was instrumental in their professional successes.

These findings further expanded on the research of scholars who have highlighted the impact of Ubuntu on organisational and team performance (Guma, 2012; Lutz, 2009; Msila, 2014; Muller *et al.*, 2019; Nkomo, 2006). These authors mentioned that Ubuntu contributes not only to team and organisational success but also enhances a leader's ability to advance within the corporate hierarchy. They have argued that Ubuntu can have a positive impact on organisational performance through good staff morale, commitments of employees to organisational good and enhanced work conditions, concluding that Ubuntu is instrumental to driving success. This study validated the impact of Ubuntu leadership on employee engagement with positive outcomes such as increased commitment, job satisfaction, enhanced performance, and reduced staff turnover, resulting in a flourishing work environment and organisational success (Muller *et al.*, 2019). Followers who are committed and engaged are active participants in their work and will therefore make a meaningful contribution to an organisation's operations (Javed, Naqvi, Khan, Arjoon & Tayyeb, 2019). Incorporating values associated with Ubuntu would, therefore, have a positive impact on employee commitment and team performance (Molose *et al.*, 2018).

The participants reported that they embrace humanity during the performance management process. For example, they encourage constructive feedback to be provided to followers,

the performance management process is focused on being corrective as opposed to being punitive, and the performance management process is open, fair, and transparent. The findings in this study indicated that performance management practices that are aligned to Ubuntu are an enabler to the integration of Ubuntu. This was supported by Molose *et al.* (2018), who argued that Ubuntu directs personal interactions and improves performance management within organisations. These findings, however, contradicted April and Peters' (2011) views, namely that performance management processes within organisations are more aligned with Western leadership approaches. Leaders who embrace Ubuntu will manage the underperformance of followers by not merely trying to correct performance outcomes through disciplinary measures (Woermann & Engelbrecht, 2019:41). These leaders will still acknowledge the follower's abilities, attempt to provide meaningful work, collaborate with the follower to address performance hindrances and create "conditions of group loyalty and unity" to "help employees in difficulty" (Ayiotis, 2008:43–44).

6.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the findings reported in Chapter 5 and highlighted the contribution this study made to the enhancement of understanding Ubuntu and leadership. This study found that Ubuntu can enhance effective leadership when leaders embrace certain practices. These practices included fostering a deep sense of self-awareness, drawing lessons from personal experiences, promoting open communication, demonstrating authenticity, adopting a humanistic approach to leadership, and consistently engaging with followers. They also included mentoring team members, setting high standards for excellence, actively listening to others, exhibiting emotional intelligence, embracing humility, consulting stakeholders in decision-making processes, empowering individuals, valuing diversity, leading by example, and maintaining a sense of grounding and contentment.

Furthermore, Ubuntu plays a pivotal role in shaping organisational culture by positioning Ubuntu at the core of the organisation's strategy, aligning the organisation's values with the principles of Ubuntu, and prioritising sustainability and related initiatives. Thus, the study concludes that leaders with a thorough understanding of Ubuntu, who adopt effective leadership practices supported by organisational initiatives that embrace Ubuntu, are likely to achieve improved performance within their teams and organisations. The findings of this

study contradicted earlier research, namely Muller *et al.* (2019), who found that Ubuntu harmed the innovative performance of an organisation. Furthermore, they also disproved Matolino and Kwindingwi's (2013) argument that Ubuntu has no possibility of future development.

However, as with any concept, Ubuntu presents its challenges. Despite its universal appeal, research by Mutwarasibo and Iken (2019) indicated that individuals from varied cultural backgrounds may find it difficult to fully grasp the essence of Ubuntu, which can hinder its implementation. Additionally, Mwipikeni (2018) argued that the individualistic and neoliberal characteristics of modern economic and political systems may not align with Ubuntu, leading to scepticism regarding its potential to address pressing social challenges.

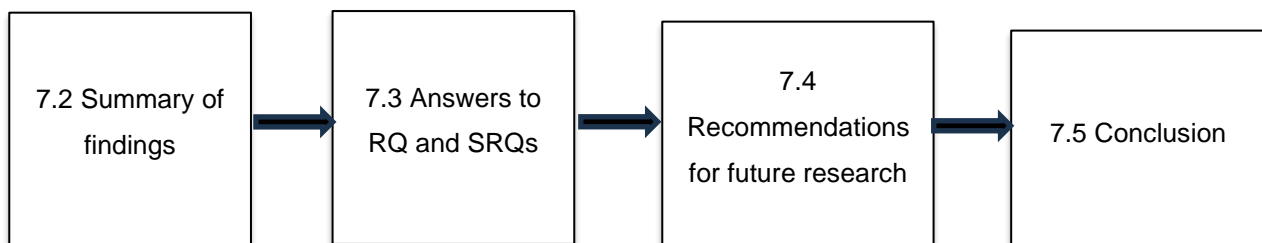
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This study investigated the intersection of culture and leadership in Africa, with a particular emphasis on Ubuntu. It sought to understand how business leaders who regard Ubuntu as part of their cultural heritage can effectively incorporate its principles into their leadership practices.

The study began with a review of the role of culture in traditional leadership studies. This was followed by an exploration of the explicit links between culture and leadership, as well as the interaction between leadership practices and African cultural contexts. Ultimately, the study examined the intersection of Ubuntu and leadership. Details regarding the methodological framework can be found in Chapter 4, while the findings were presented in Chapter 5 and further discussed in Chapter 6. This research contributed to the existing body of knowledge concerning the relationship between culture, specifically Ubuntu, and effective leadership. This chapter aims to summarise the findings of the study, outline its contributions to the current body of knowledge, recognise its limitations, and provide recommendations for future research. An outline of Chapter 7 is provided in Figure 12 below.

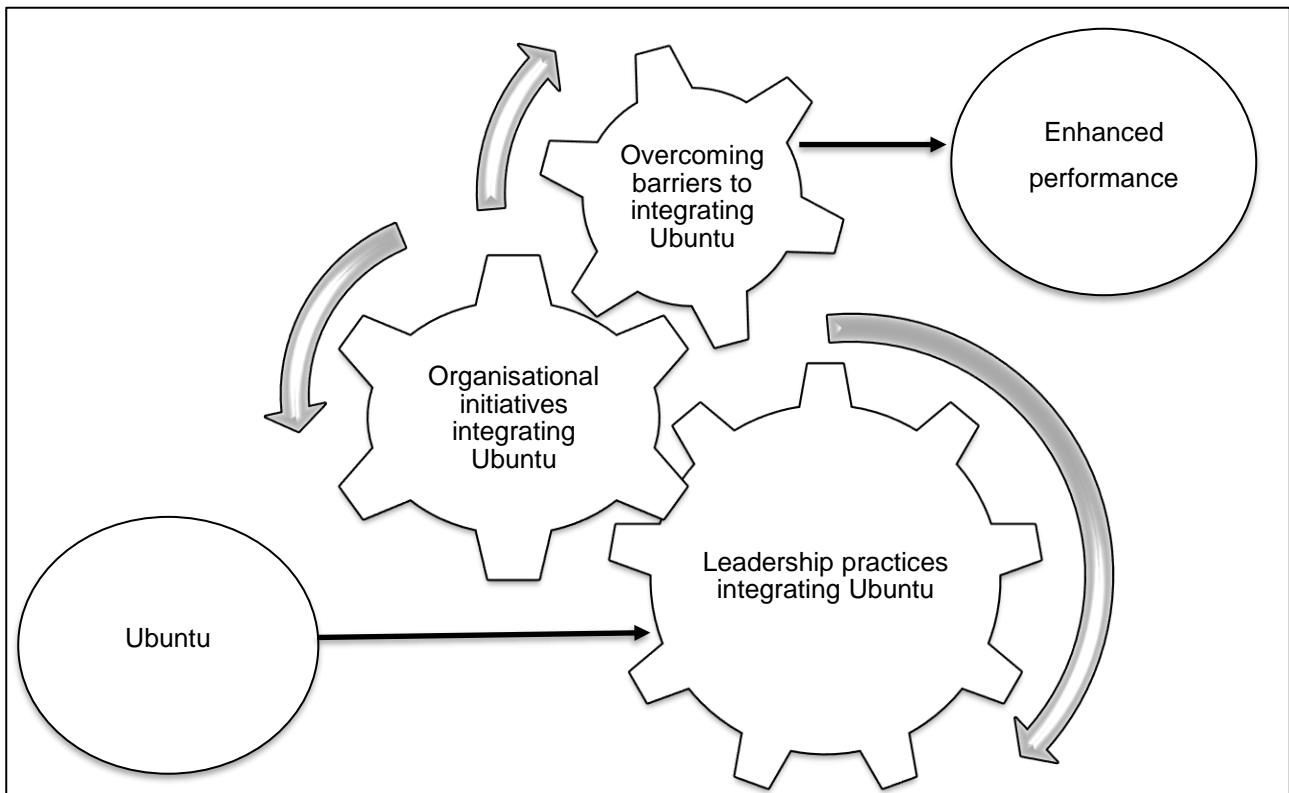
Figure 12: Outline of Chapter 7



7.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study, as presented in Figure 13 below, can be organised into five key themes. These include Theme 1: 'The leader's definition of Ubuntu'; Theme 2: 'Leadership practices integrating Ubuntu'; Theme 3: 'Organisational initiatives integrating Ubuntu'; Theme 4: 'Overcoming barriers to integrating Ubuntu' and Theme 5: 'The influence of Ubuntu on performance'.

Figure 13: Summary of findings



Theme 1 surrounding the definition of Ubuntu among leaders emerged throughout the dialogues, as participants were explicitly asked to articulate their understanding of this term. It became evident that Ubuntu lacks a universal definition, as previously noted in Chapter 3. During the data collection process, participants provided a variety of interpretations, significant values, and associated practices related to Ubuntu. The findings indicated that Ubuntu is viewed as an African expression of humanness and is acknowledged for its universal relevance, with participants recognising that similar values and practices may be expressed differently across diverse cultures and regions. The influence of Ubuntu significantly shaped the participants' interactions and relationships, informed by the core values they associated with the concept. Additionally, the significance of ancient African practices, such as dikgoro, emerged as a crucial factor, continuing to inform leadership styles of the participants.

Concerning Theme 2, participants detailed a range of practices adopted to integrate Ubuntu into their leadership approaches. They conceptualised leadership as inherently tied to the conduct exhibited by a leader. The participants described various practices that they

embrace to embody the principles of Ubuntu. These included strong self-awareness, learning from lived experiences, fostering open communication, maintaining authenticity, adopting a humanistic approach, consistently greeting colleagues and subordinates, and mentoring team members. They also mentioned expecting excellence, engaging in active listening, demonstrating emotional intelligence, exhibiting humility, employing a consultative decision-making style, empowering others, embracing diversity, leading by example, remaining grounded, and cultivating contentment. Furthermore, participants perceived leadership as a socially constructed process influenced by their upbringing and personal experiences. They attributed their successes in corporate environments to the foundational role that Ubuntu values played in their leadership practices.

The integration of Ubuntu extends beyond individual leadership methods and is also reflected within organisational practices (Theme 3). Participants articulated that Ubuntu's integration occurs through strategic alignment with Ubuntu values, the establishment of organisational values that resonate with Ubuntu, performance management systems that complement Ubuntu, and a commitment to sustainability and related initiatives. These initiatives, would, as a result, have an impact on the culture within organisations.

Despite their efforts to incorporate Ubuntu into both their leadership styles and organisational practices, participants faced various challenges that required navigation (Theme 4). The primary challenges identified included flawed human behaviour, negative perceptions of leadership informed by Ubuntu values, misalignment between personal and organisational values, and personal struggles regarding the integration of Ubuntu into their leadership practices.

Concerning Theme 5, participants detailed that incorporating Ubuntu into both their leadership styles and organisational practices created a more humane culture within an organisation. This resulted in an enhanced team environment, enhanced team performance, enhanced team commitments, and organisational and personal success.

7.3 ANSWERS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS (RQS)

The study aimed to answer the following RQ and SRQs:

- RQ1: To what extent do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage integrate Ubuntu into their leadership approach?;
- SRQ1: How do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage define Ubuntu?;
- SRQ2: How do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage view the influence of Ubuntu in their team/organisational performance?; and
- SRQ3: How do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage put Ubuntu into practice within their organisations?

The answers to the RQ and SRQs will be articulated in the sub-sections below.

7.3.2 To what extent do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage integrate Ubuntu into their leadership approach?

Ubuntu can be integrated into the leader's approach by adopting leadership practices such as a strong sense of self-awareness, learning from lived experiences, encouraging open communication, being authentic, valuing a humanistic approach to leadership, and regularly greeting followers. Leaders should also mentor others, expect excellence, actively listen to followers, be emotionally intelligent, embrace humility, consult when making decisions, empower others, embrace diversity, lead by example, and be grounded and content.

The findings of this study aligned with the perspective articulated by House *et al.* (2013), which argued that leadership encompasses the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and empower others. These leadership qualities are critical for enhancing the effectiveness and success of organisations by fostering appropriate leadership behaviours and practices. This study extended the leadership practices described by Fox (2010:125), by identifying additional practices that are fundamental to the concept of leadership that embraces Ubuntu. These included self-awareness, learning from lived experiences, being emotionally

intelligent, mentoring others, expecting excellence, empowering others and embracing diversity, as mentioned.

The findings on self-awareness were consistent with the views expressed by Bass and Bass (2009), who emphasised the significance of self-awareness in leadership. Additionally, Mbigi (2005) argued that self-awareness plays a crucial role in the development of effective leaders through the process of continuously clarifying personal values. The findings highlighted the significance of learning from personal experiences, thereby supporting the existing knowledge on effective leadership. Hassanzadeh *et al.* (2015:137) argued that a key competency of effective leadership is the ability to learn from these lived experiences, as shown in the findings.

The study revealed that effective leaders exhibit high emotional intelligence. This observation was consistent with the limited existing literature examining the relationship between emotional intelligence and the principles of Ubuntu. As Khoza (2006) stated, “An emotionally intelligent business leader transmits a positive attitude by engaging with others on the level of shared understandings and shared feelings.” Additionally, the study found that effective leaders actively mentor others, provide guidance to junior staff, cultivate future leaders, and implement effective succession planning within their organisations. While numerous studies emphasised the importance of mentorship, there was a gap in the literature regarding the role of Ubuntu in mentor-mentee relationships, suggesting a need for further exploration. However, a study conducted by April and Peters (2011:18-19) focused on how African values, including Ubuntu, can be integrated into workplace environments. The authors argued that it is important for organisations to embed mentorship within their training programmes

The findings on expecting excellence were consistent with the views by Shrivastava *et al.* (2014:24-25), who found that qualities such as Ubuntu, inclusive communication, and impartial behaviour were viewed as key attributes of excellence for leaders in South Africa. Given the limited literature on the perceptions of excellence and Ubuntu, Shrivastava *et al.* (2014:24-25) recommended further research to enhance the understanding of how these perceptions can contribute to effective leadership.

The findings highlighted that embracing diversity is essential for effective leadership. This approach involves engaging with followers who offer diverse perspectives due to their cultural backgrounds and sexual orientations. These findings align with Singha and Sivarethnamohan's (2022:6) views, namely that a positive work environment is significantly enhanced by incorporating Ubuntu principles into diversity management, promoting inclusivity and a supportive corporate culture. The study further reported the importance of leading by example, aligning with Poltera and Schreiner (2019), who stated that Africans prefer leadership styles based on humanistic principles that value community service and leading by example, reflecting the Ubuntu philosophy. Furthermore, Nicolaides and Dlodla (2023:290) stressed that leaders who embody Ubuntu can elevate ethical standards and behaviours within their organisations, by leading by example.

The findings indicated that leaders who embody Ubuntu employ effective leadership practices but face challenges due to negative perceptions. Many view these leaders as weak, question their effectiveness or see them as naïve. This echoed Wanasika *et al.* (2011), who asserted that Ubuntu leaders are often seen as lacking strength and a results-driven focus. Additionally, African cultural values can hinder effective leadership, impacting economic growth and entrepreneurship (Kuada, 2010:14). Consultative decision-making is frequently perceived as time-consuming by stakeholders; Mangaliso *et al.* (2022:1044), concurred, having argued that extensive engagement requires considerable time and effort.

Leaders also encounter tensions when their values conflict with organisational values. This aligned with Moyo (2016), who found similar tensions between Western practices and Ubuntu values due to their Western education. Therefore, leaders must navigate the balance of integrating Ubuntu while addressing these challenges. Lastly, the legacy of apartheid poses obstacles to Ubuntu's effective integration. Participants reported ongoing instances of racism in some organisations, underscoring the necessity for continued efforts to address these issues. This supported Chetty and Price's (2024) views, who argued that apartheid's impact is still evident in South Africa's social fabric, influencing power dynamics and employee engagement within organisations.

7.3.1 How do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage define Ubuntu?

This study found that Ubuntu can be defined as an African philosophy that is practised and embodies values with universal appeal such as accountability, empathy, respect, community, connectedness, and the overall betterment of society and humanity. The term "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu" translates to "a person is a person through other persons", and is the commonly used expression for Ubuntu. As a leadership approach, Ubuntu is linked to practices such as chief or king's counsel, dikgoro, and herdsman. It bears similarities to other leadership approaches, including servant-, responsible-, and human-centric leadership.

The findings on the definition of Ubuntu underscored the assertion that while the concept of Ubuntu is intricately rooted in African culture, its associated values possess a universal relevance. This perspective aligned with the extant literature on Ubuntu which generally acknowledged its African origins (Mangaroo-Pillay & Coetzee, 2022; Matupire, 2016; Mbigi, 2007; Msila, 2014; Ncube, 2010; Newenham-Kahindi, 2009; Taylor, 2014). Values such as dignity, respect, harmony, cooperation, and empathy among members of society transcend cultural boundaries and are fundamental to the human experience beyond the African continent (Nzimakwe, 2014:38). In contrast, the notion of Ubuntu's universality presented a divergence from the views expressed by Eyong (2015:69), who contended that Ubuntu may only be pertinent in an indigenous African context and may not be universally applicable due to cultural variances.

The definition of Ubuntu identified in this study enhanced the understanding of its values, particularly highlighting accountability as a fundamental value. The findings indicated that the principles of Ubuntu advocate for both leaders and followers to adhere to high ethical standards and to take responsibility for their actions. It is noteworthy that the role of accountability in the context of Ubuntu values has not been extensively addressed in the existing literature. Nevertheless, April (2006) corroborated the findings of this study by suggesting that accountability enhances the effectiveness of both employees and leaders.

The universal appeal of Ubuntu was further substantiated by findings that illuminate its parallels with other leadership theories, such as servant-, responsible-, and human-centric leadership. These insights resonated with the views articulated by Okecha *et al.* (2024), who argued that both Ubuntu and servant leadership cultivate collaboration and promote interconnectedness among followers, as well as Sachikonye and Ramlogan (2024), who indicated that Ubuntu aligns closely with the principles of responsible leadership.

7.3.3 How do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage put Ubuntu into practice within their organisations?

This study found that the effective integration of Ubuntu within organisational frameworks can be achieved through various strategic initiatives. Key initiatives identified include positioning Ubuntu as a core component of the organisation's strategic framework, ensuring alignment between the organisation's values and the values associated with Ubuntu, and promoting sustainability practices. The findings indicated that the successful integration of Ubuntu is significantly supported by aligning personal values with those of the organisation.

These findings corroborated the argument presented by Khandelwal and Mohendra (2010), which emphasised that the alignment of personal and organisational values is crucial in fostering a unified direction for all members of the organisation and establishing acceptable behavioural standards. Additionally, this study confirmed the assertions by Veldsman and Johnson (2016), who maintained that it is essential for businesses to cultivate leadership that aligns with the organisation's overarching goals, objectives, and mission. To achieve this alignment, organisations should incorporate core values such as respect, harmony, dignity, and compassion into leadership processes to strengthen organisational culture.

The findings regarding Ubuntu's relationship with the SDGs were consistent with scholarly research asserting that businesses depend on society for their existence and continued growth (Garriga & Melé, 2004:51-52). This underscored the social responsibilities that businesses hold toward the communities in which they operate. From the literature, it was clear that organisations can significantly contribute to society through CSR initiatives (Voegtlin *et al.*, 2020).

The study's findings concerning Ubuntu as a facilitator of innovative solutions, such as the Ubuntu incentive mechanism, offered support for Mutwarasibo and Iken's (2019) perspectives. The authors suggested that Ubuntu fosters a collaborative work environment conducive to innovation and collective problem-solving. However, these findings contrasted with earlier research by Muller *et al.* (2019), which indicated that Ubuntu harms an organisation's innovative performance. Additionally, this study challenged the conclusions drawn by Matolino and Kwindingwi (2013), who argued that Ubuntu lacks potential for future development.

The study also highlighted the significance of leaders effectively addressing various challenges. These included inadequacy of KPIs in addressing human dynamics, difficulties in influencing the performance management process, an overemphasis on bonus schemes, and a lack of meaningful connections between targets and human values. By navigating these challenges, leaders can enhance organisational processes, thereby positively influencing the overall organisational culture. These findings expanded on the previous insights of Woermann and Engelbrecht (2019:41), who argued that common organisational processes (such as restructuring and employee terminations) often conflict with the values of promoting harmonious relationships based on shared identity and goodwill.

Despite the challenges associated with Ubuntu and its influence on organisational culture, Burgess (2017) asserted that Ubuntu remains relevant. The author argued that for organisations to achieve optimal results, they must embody the collective principles inherent in Ubuntu. Consequently, the pace at which an organisation advances toward equity and inclusivity is contingent upon the integration of specific leadership elements that foster a collaborative approach.

7.3.4 How do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage view the influence of Ubuntu in their team/organisational performance?

This study found that leaders who have a comprehensive understanding of Ubuntu, along with the implementation of effective leadership practices and supportive organisational initiatives, are more likely to achieve enhanced performance within their teams and organisations. The findings further indicated that the integration of Ubuntu contributes to a

more positive team environment, improves overall organisational performance, and strengthens team dynamics. Furthermore, it was observed that a leadership approach grounded in Ubuntu values is instrumental in driving professional success.

These findings built on the research conducted by various scholars (Guma, 2012; Lutz, 2009; Msila, 2014; Muller *et al.*, 2019; Nkomo, 2006). These scholars highlighted the significant impact of Ubuntu on both organisational and team performance. This research highlighted that Ubuntu not only fosters success within teams and organisations but also enhances a leader's ability to advance within the corporate hierarchy.

7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study mainly focused on the integration of Ubuntu within multinational organisations operating in the South African business environment. However, further research is required in terms of the extent to which Ubuntu can be effectively integrated into the leadership approach of leaders in other jurisdictions outside of Africa.

A comparative analysis study of Ubuntu-based leadership practices and their integration with various leadership approaches from different cultural contexts is also recommended. The objective of the study could be to identify both the similarities and differences between these leadership styles, as well as to explore the potential for cross-cultural adaptation.

It has been argued that individuals within a society who share similar values tend to have aligned perspectives regarding the qualities that characterise an effective leader (House *et al.*, 2013). Further research is, therefore, required about how followers perceive the effectiveness of leaders who embrace Ubuntu in their leadership approach.

Further research is also required about specific effective leadership practices. These are discussed below:

- While numerous studies have emphasised the importance of mentorship, there is a gap in the literature regarding the role of Ubuntu in mentor-mentee relationships, suggesting a need for further exploration;

- Given the limited literature on the perceptions of excellence and Ubuntu, Shrivastava *et al.* (2014:24-25) recommended further research to enhance the understanding of how these perceptions can contribute to effective leadership; and
- The study revealed that effective leaders exhibit high emotional intelligence. There is, however, limited existing literature examining the relationship between emotional intelligence and the principles of Ubuntu.

7.5 CONCLUSION

As argued by Regine (2009:17):

“The great leaders of the twenty-first century will have Ubuntu. Leaders with Ubuntu recognise their interconnectedness and how their humanity is inextricably bound to others, if others are diminished so are they, if others fail, so do they. They take pleasure from other people’s success knowing that their success is everyone’s success. When Ubuntu guides leaders, they realise that we are more alike than we are different. The spirit of Ubuntu leads to cooperative and collaborative work environments because people are encouraged to participate, share, and support each other and the collective effort, and to be team players. Even if Ubuntu-inspired leaders hold high positions in their organisations and wield tremendous power, as they inevitably do, they still create relationships based on mutuality: mutual interest, mutual need, and mutual respect. Today, at all levels, business, politics, and religion, leaders need to be healers. Leaders who have Ubuntu are natural healers, for they can see and hold the collective vulnerability, encourage true collaboration, and one by one, heal the many”.

When implemented effectively, the principles of Ubuntu can enhance team effectiveness and, in turn, enhance both organisational and team performance while promoting ethical behaviour. It is important to recognise that the interaction between Ubuntu and effective leadership is complex and requires leaders to be able to navigate the challenges associated with Ubuntu. Furthermore, Ubuntu should not be regarded as a one-size-fits-all solution for the diverse challenges within organisations.

8: LIST OF REFERENCES

Aktas, M., Gelfand, M.J. & Hanges, P.J. 2016. Cultural tightness–looseness and perceptions of effective leadership. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 47(2):294-309.

Aliye, A.A. 2020. African indigenous leadership philosophy and democratic governance system: Gada's intersectionality with Ubuntu. *Journal of Black Studies*, 51(7):727-759.

Alsaigh, R. & Coyne, I. 2021. Doing a hermeneutic phenomenology research underpinned by Gadamer's philosophy: A framework to facilitate data analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 20:16094069211047820.

Alshenqeeti, H. 2014. Interviewing as a data collection method: A critical review. *English linguistics research*, 3(1):39-45.

Anitha, J. 2014. Determinants of employee engagement and their impact on employee performance. *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*, 63(3):308-323.

Applebaum, S.H., Degbe, M.C., MacDonald, O. & Nguyen-Quang, T. 2015. Organisational outcomes of leadership style and resistance to change. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 47(2):73-80.

April, K. & Peters, K. 2011. Communal versus individual modalities of work: A South African investigation. *Asia Pacific Journal of Business and Management*, 2(1):5-36.

April, K & Shockley, S 2007. Diversity in Africa: The coming of age of a continent, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.

Archer, M., Bhaskar, R., Collier, A., Lawson, T. & Norrie, A. 2013. *Critical realism: Essential Readings*. London: Routledge.

Asamoah, K. & Yeboah-Assiamah, E. 2019. "Ubuntu philosophy" for public leadership and governance praxis: Revisiting the ethos of Africa's collectivism. *Journal of Global Responsibility*, 10(4):307-321.

Asante, M.K. 2007. *An afrocentric manifesto: Toward an African renaissance*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Avolio, B. & Luthans, F. 2003. Authentic leadership: A positive development approach. *Positive Organisational Scholarship*. San Francisco, CA: Barrett-Koehler:241-258.

Avolio, B.J., Gardner, W.L., Walumbwa, F.O., Luthans, F. & May, D.R. 2004. Unlocking the mask: A look at the process by which authentic leaders impact follower attitudes and behaviors. *The leadership quarterly*, 15(6):801-823.

Avolio, B.J., Walumbwa, F.O. & Weber, T.J. 2009. Leadership: Current theories, research, and future directions. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 60:421-449.

Balabanova, E., Efendiev, A., Ehrnrooth, M. & Koveshnikov, A. 2015. Idiosyncrasy, heterogeneity and evolution of managerial styles in contemporary Russia. *Baltic Journal of Management*, 10(1):2-29.

Bass, B.M. 1997. Does the transactional–transformational leadership paradigm transcend organisational and national boundaries? *American Psychologist*, 52(2):130-139.

Bass, B.M. & Avolio, B.J. 1990. Developing transformational leadership: 1992 and beyond. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 14(5).

Bass, B.M. & Bass, R. 2009. *Handbook of leadership: Theory, Research, and Application*. New York: Free Press.

Bass, B.M. & Stogdill, R.M. 1990. *Bass & Stogdill's handbook of leadership: Theory, Research, and Managerial Applications*. Simon and Schuster.

- Bauman, Z. 2013. *Wasted lives: Modernity and its outcasts*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Bedi, A., Alpaslan, C.M. & Green, S. 2016. A meta-analytic review of ethical leadership outcomes and moderators. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 139:517-536.
- Benmira, S. & Agboola, M. 2021. Evolution of leadership theory. *BMJ leader*:3-5.
- Bennis, W. 2009. *On Becoming a Leader (revised edition)*. [Online] Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/>.
- Beugelsdijk, S. & Welzel, C. 2018. Dimensions and dynamics of national culture: Synthesizing Hofstede with Inglehart. *Journal of Cross-cultural Psychology*, 49(10):1469-1505.
- Bezuidenhout, A. & Schultz, C. 2013. Transformational leadership and employee engagement in the mining industry. *Journal of Contemporary Management*, 10(1):279-297.
- Bhana, A. & Suknunan, S. 2022. The relationship between previous leadership theories and ethical leadership in a South African context: a narrative review. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science*, 11:85-96.
- Bhaskar, R. 2008. *Dialectic: The pulse of freedom*. London: Routledge.
- Bhengu, M.J. 2006. *Ubuntu: The global philosophy for humankind*. Cape Town: Lotsha Publications.
- Bolden, R. & Kirk, P. 2009. African leadership: Surfacing new understandings through leadership development. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, 9(1):69-86.
- Boyatzis, R.E. 1998. *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. 2013. *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. London, UK: SAGE.
- Broodryk, J. 2006. *Ubuntu: Life coping skills from Africa*. Knowres Publishing.
- Broodryk, J. 2010. *Understanding South Africa: The Ubuntu way of living*. Waterkloof: Ubuntu School of Philosophy.
- Brown, M.E. & Mitchell, M.S. 2010. Ethical and unethical leadership: Exploring new avenues for future research. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 20(4):583-616.
- Brown, M.E. & Treviño, L.K. 2006. Ethical leadership: A review and future directions. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 17(6):595-616.
- Brown, W. 2006. American nightmare: Neoliberalism, neoconservatism, and de-democratization. *Political Theory*, 34(6):690-714.
- Browning, V. 2006. The relationship between HRM practices and service behaviour in South African service organisations. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 17(7):1321-1338.
- Brubaker, T.A. 2013. Servant leadership, Ubuntu, and leader effectiveness in Rwanda. *Emerging Leadership Journeys*, 6(1):114-147.
- Budur, T. 2020. Effectiveness of transformational leadership among different cultures. *International Journal of Social Sciences & Educational Studies*, 7(3):119-129.
- Burgess, G.J. 2017. Unpacking inclusivity: Lessons from Ubuntu leadership. *Breaking the Zero-Sum Game*: Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Butler, C.J. & Chinowsky, P.S. 2006. Emotional intelligence and leadership behavior in construction executives. *Journal of Management in Engineering*, 22(3):119-125.

- Caldwell, C. & Atwijuka, S. 2018. "I see you!"—The Zulu insight to caring leadership. *The Journal of Values-Based Leadership*, 11(1):1-13.
- Carter, A.D., Sisco, S. & Fowler, R.M. 2023. Since we are, therefore I am: Ubuntu and the experiences of Black women leadership coaches. *Consulting Psychology Journal*, 75(1):51.
- Chanana, N. & Sangeeta 2021. Employee engagement practices during COVID-19 lockdown. *Journal of public affairs*, 21(4):1-8.
- Chen, Y.-S. & Huang, S.Y. 2016. A conservation of resources view of personal engagement in the development of innovative behavior and work-family conflict. *Journal of Organisational Change Management*, 29(6):1030-1040.
- Chetty, K. & Price, G. 2024. Ubuntu leadership as a predictor of employee engagement: A South African study. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, 22:1-11.
- Coetzee, M. & Veldsman, D. 2013. Espoused organisational values in relation to lived values experiences in the South African financial sector. *African Journal of Business Management*, 7(7):480-489.
- Conger, J.A. & Kanungo, R.N. 1994. Charismatic leadership in organisations: Perceived behavioral attributes and their measurement. *Journal of Organisational Behavior*, 15(5):439-452.
- Cornell, D. 2009. uBuntu, pluralism and the responsibility of legal academics to the new South Africa. *Law and Critique*, 20:43-58.
- Cornell, D. & Van Marle, K. 2015. Ubuntu feminism: Tentative reflections. *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 36(2):1-8.
- Creswell, J. 2007. *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. 2 ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J.W. 2012. *Education Research: planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. 4th ed. Boston: Pearson.

Dalitso, S. 2010. " I Am Because We Are": Ubuntu as a Cultural Strategy for OD and Change in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Organisation Development Journal*, 28(4).

Davies, W. 2014. Neoliberalism: A bibliographic review. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 31(7-8):309-317.

De Clercq, D., Bouckennooghe, D., Raja, U. & Matsyborska, G. 2014. Servant leadership and work engagement: The contingency effects of leader–follower social capital. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 25(2):183-212.

De Sousa, M.C. & Van Dierendonck, D. 2014. Servant leadership and engagement in a merge process under high uncertainty. *Journal of Organisational Change Management*, 27(6):877-899.

Den Hartog, D.N. & De Hoogh, A.H. 2024. Cross-Cultural Leadership: What We Know, What We Need to Know, and Where We Need to Go. *Annual Review of Organisational Psychology and Organisational Behavior*, 11(1):535-566.

DeSantis, L. & Ugarriza, D.N. 2000. The concept of theme as used in qualitative nursing research. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 22(3):351-372.

Donald D, Lazarus S and Lolwana P. 1999. Educational Psychology in social context 'challenges of development, social issues, & special needs in Southern Africa. Oxford University Press.

Dorfman, P., Hanges, P. & Brodbeck, F. 2004. *Leadership and cultural variation*. In *culture leadership and organisations: The GLOBE Study of 62 societies* (pp. 669-722). [Online] Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/>.

Dorfman, P., Javidan, M., Hanges, P., Dastmalchian, A. & House, R. 2012. GLOBE: A twenty year journey into the intriguing world of culture and leadership. *Journal of World Business*, 47(4):504-518.

Dorfman, P.W. & House, R.J. 2004. Cultural influences on organisational leadership: Literature review, theoretical rationale, and GLOBE project goals. *Culture, leadership, and organisations: The GLOBE study of*, 62:51-73.

Dorfman, P.W., Howell, J.P., Hibino, S., Lee, J.K., Tate, U. & Bautista, A. 2006. Leadership in Western and Asian countries: Commonalities and differences in effective leadership processes across cultures. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 8(3):233-274.

Du Toit, C.W. 2004. The integrity of the human person in an African context: Perspectives from science and religion., University of South Africa, Pretoria, 28 & 29 August 2003.

Edozie, R.K. 2017. Charting new frames for African global engagement: Resuscitated histories, reimagined concepts, and reapplied contexts. In R.K. Edozie (Eds.), *“Pan” Africa Rising: The Cultural Political Economy of Nigeria’s Afri-Capitalism and South Africa’s Ubuntu Business*:23-51.

Engler, S. & Stausberg, M. 2021. *The Routledge handbook of research methods in the study of religion*. London: Routledge.

Eriksson, P. & Kovalainen, A. 2015. *Qualitative methods in business research: A practical guide to social research*. London: SAGE Publications.

Ernst, B.A., Banks, G.C., Loignon, A.C., Frear, K.A., Williams, C.E., Arciniega, L.M., Gupta, R.K., Kodydek, G. & Subramanian, D. 2022. Virtual charismatic leadership and signaling theory: A prospective meta-analysis in five countries. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 33(5):101541.

Etieyibo, E. 2017. Ubuntu and the environment. *The Palgrave handbook of African philosophy*:633-657.

- Eyong, J.E. 2015. *Constructions of Indigenous African Leadership: A social, anthropological and discursive exploration of two regions*. University of Leeds.
- Eyong, J.E. 2017. Indigenous African leadership: Key differences from Anglo-centric thinking and writings. *Leadership*, 13(2):133-153.
- Fourie, W., Van der Merwe, S.C. & Van der Merwe, B. 2017. Sixty years of research on leadership in Africa: a review of the literature. *Leadership*, 13(2):222-251.
- Fox, W. 2010. *A guide to public ethics*. Cape Town: Juta and Company Ltd.
- Francis, J.J., Johnston, M., Robertson, C., Glidewell, L., Entwistle, V., Eccles, M.P. & Grimshaw, J.M. 2010. What is an adequate sample size? Operationalising data saturation for theory-based interview studies. *Psychology and Health*, 25(10):1229-1245.
- Futhwa, F. 2012. *Setho: Afrikan thought and belief system*. Fezekile Futhwa.
- Gabriel, M. 2015. *Fields of sense: a new realist ontology*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Gade, C.B. 2011. The historical development of the written discourses on Ubuntu. *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 30(3):303-329.
- Gardner, W.L., Avolio, B.J., Luthans, F., May, D.R. & Walumbwa, F. 2005. "Can you see the real me?" A self-based model of authentic leader and follower development. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 16(3):343-372.
- Gardner, W.L., Karam, E.P., Alvesson, M. & Einola, K. 2021. Authentic leadership theory: The case for and against. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 32(6):101495.
- Garriga, E. & Melé, D. 2004. Corporate social responsibility theories: Mapping the territory. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 53(1):51-71.

- Gelfand, M.J., Erez, M. & Aycan, Z. 2007. Cross-cultural organisational behavior. *Annu. Rev. Psychol.*, 58:479-514.
- Giorgi, S., Lockwood, C. & Glynn, M.A. 2015. The many faces of culture: Making sense of 30 years of research on culture in organisation studies. *The Academy of Management Annals*, 9(1):1-54.
- Greenleaf, R.K. 2002. *Servant leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness*. Paulist Press.
- Grobler, A. 2017. Conceptualisation of an ethical risk assessment for higher education institutions. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 31(2):154-171.
- Guma, P.K. 2019. Rethinking management in Africa: Beyond Ubuntu. *SSRN*.
- Gumede, V. 2015. Exploring thought leadership, thought liberation and critical consciousness for Africa's development. *Africa Development*, 40(4):91-111.
- Gumede, V. 2017. Leadership for Africa's development: Revisiting indigenous African leadership and setting the agenda for political leadership. *Journal of Black Studies*, 48(1):74-90.
- Hailey, J. 2008. Ubuntu: A literature review. *Document. London: Tutu Foundation*:1-26.
- Haslam, N., Loughnan, S., Kashima, Y. & Bain, P. 2008. Attributing and denying humanness to others. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 19(1):55-85.
- Hassanzadeh, M., Silong, A.D., Asmuni, A. & Abd Wahat, N.W. 2015. Global leadership competencies. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 5:137-146.
- Hesse-Biber, S.H. 2016. *The practice of qualitative research: Engaging students in the research process*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Himonga, C., Taylor, M. & Pope, A. 2013. Reflections on judicial views of Ubuntu. *Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal*, 16(5):26-36.

Hoch, J.E., Bommer, W.H., Dulebohn, J.H. & Wu, D. 2018. Do ethical, authentic, and servant leadership explain variance above and beyond transformational leadership? A meta-analysis. *Journal of Management*, 44(2):501-529.

Hofstede, G. 1980. *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Hofstede, G. 2001. *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organisations across nations*. sage.

Hofstede, G. 2011. Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede model in context. *Online readings in psychology and culture*, 2(1):2307-0919.1014.

House, R., Javidan, M., Hanges, P. & Dorfman, P. 2002. Understanding cultures and implicit leadership theories across the globe: an introduction to project GLOBE. *Journal of World Business*, 37(1):3-10.

House, R.J., Dorfman, P.W., Javidan, M., Hanges, P.J. & De Luque, M.F.S. 2013. *Strategic leadership across cultures: GLOBE study of CEO leadership behavior and effectiveness in 24 countries*. Sage Publications.

Hunt, T. & Fedynich, L. 2019. Leadership: Past, present, and future: An evolution of an idea. *Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 8(2):22-26.

Hunter, E.M., Neubert, M.J., Perry, S.J., Witt, L., Penney, L.M. & Weinberger, E. 2013. Servant leaders inspire servant followers: Antecedents and outcomes for employees and the organisation. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 24(2):316-331.

Iwowo, V. 2015. Leadership in Africa: rethinking development. *Personnel Review*, 44(3):408-429.

Jackson, T. 2004. *Management and change in Africa*. Routledge London.

Janićijević, N. 2019. The impact of national culture on leadership. *Economic Themes*, 57(2):127-144.

Jansen, H. 2010. The logic of qualitative survey research and its position in the field of social research methods. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 11(2).

Javed, B., Naqvi, S.M.M.R., Khan, A.K., Arjoon, S. & Tayyeb, H.H. 2019. Impact of inclusive leadership on innovative work behavior: The role of psychological safety. *Journal of Management & Organisation*, 25(1):117-136.

Joubert, C.G. 2014. *Followers' Experiences and Expectations of Leadership Behaviours in a Safety-critical Commercial Environment: the Case of the Air Traffic and Navigation Services Company*. Pretoria: University of South Africa.

Judge, T.A. & Piccolo, R.F. 2004. Transformational and transactional leadership: a meta-analytic test of their relative validity. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 89(5):755-768.

Jung, D., Yammarino, F.J. & Lee, J.K. 2009. Moderating role of subordinates' attitudes on transformational leadership and effectiveness: A multi-cultural and multi-level perspective. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 20(4):586-603.

Khandelwal, K.A. & Mohendra, N. 2010. Espoused organisational values, vision, and corporate social responsibility: does it matter to organisational members? *Vikalpa*, 35(3):19-36.

Khoza, R. 2006. *Let Africa Lead: African Transformational Leadership for 21st Century Business* (VezUbuntu, Johannesburg).

- Kirkman, B.L., Chen, G., Farh, J.-L., Chen, Z.X. & Lowe, K.B. 2009. Individual power distance orientation and follower reactions to transformational leaders: A cross-level, cross-cultural examination. *Academy of Management Journal*, 52(4):744-764.
- Kitto, S.C., Chesters, J. & Grbich, C. 2008. Quality in qualitative research. *Medical journal of Australia*, 188(4):243-246.
- Kotter, J.P. & Heskett, J.L. 2008. *Corporate culture and performance*. New York: The Free Press.
- Kouzes, J. & Posner, B. 1995. *The leadership challenge: how to keep getting extraordinary things done in organisations*. San Francisco: Josey-Bass.
- Kroumova, M. & Mittal, R. 2023. Cross-cultural experiences and self-protective leadership: a multi-country comparison of managerial perception. *Global Business and Organisational Excellence*, 42(6):89-100.
- Kuada, J. 2010. Culture and leadership in Africa: a conceptual model and research agenda. *African Journal of Economic and Management Studies*, 1(1):9-24.
- Kuye, J.O. & Mafunisa, M.J. 2003. Responsibility, accountability and ethics: The case for public service leadership. *Journal of Public Administration*, 38(4):421-437.
- Lam, S.S., Chen, X.-P. & Schaubroeck, J. 2002. Participative decision making and employee performance in different cultures: The moderating effects of allocentrism/idiocentrism and efficacy. *Academy of Management Journal*, 45(5):905-914.
- Laughlin, R. 1995. Empirical research in accounting: alternative approaches and a case for "middle-range" thinking. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, 8(1):63-87.
- Lemoine, G.J., Hartnell, C.A. & Leroy, H. 2019. Taking stock of moral approaches to leadership: An integrative review of ethical, authentic, and servant leadership. *Academy of Management Annals*, 13(1):148-187.

Lerutla, M. & Steyn, R. 2021. African business leadership: Perspectives from aspiring young leaders. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, 19:9.

Lerutla, M. & Steyn, R. 2022. Distinct leadership styles and differential effectiveness across culture: An analysis of South African business leaders. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, 20:1-11.

Li, P., Sun, J.-M., Taris, T.W., Xing, L. & Peeters, M.C. 2021. Country differences in the relationship between leadership and employee engagement: A meta-analysis. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 32(1):1-14.

Lian, H., Ferris, D.L. & Brown, D.J. 2012. Does power distance exacerbate or mitigate the effects of abusive supervision? It depends on the outcome. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 97(1):107-123.

Lietz, C.A. & Zayas, L.E. 2010. Evaluating qualitative research for social work practitioners. *Advances in Social Work*, 11(2):188-202.

Lutz, D.W. 2009. African Ubuntu philosophy and global management. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 84(3):313-328.

Luvalo, L.M. 2019. Patriarchy and Ubuntu Philosophy: The views of community elders in the Eastern Cape Province. *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 16(7):1-10.

Madanchian, M., Hussein, N., Noordin, F., & Taherdoost, H. (2017). Leadership effectiveness measurement and its effect on organization outcomes. *Procedia Engineering*, 181(2017): 1043–1048.

Malakyan, P.G. 2023. Trading Global Leadership with Global Followership: A Model for Global Leadership-Followership Exchange. *Handbook of Global Leadership and Followership: Integrating the Best Leadership Theory and Practice*:91-150.

- Malunga, C. 2006. Learning leadership development from African cultures: A personal perspective. *Intrac PraxisNote*, 25:1-13.
- Mamman, A. & Zakaria, H.B. 2016. Spirituality and Ubuntu as the foundation for building African institutions, organisations and leaders. *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion*, 13(3):246-265.
- Mangaliso, M.P. 2001. Building competitive advantage from Ubuntu: Management lessons from South Africa. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 15(3):23-33.
- Mangaliso, M.P., Mangaliso, N.A., Ndanga, L.Z. & Jean-Denis, H. 2022. Contextualizing organisational change management in Africa: Incorporating the core values of Ubuntu. *Journal of African Business*, 23(4):1029-1048.
- Mangaroo-Pillay, M. & Coetzee, R. 2022. A systematic literature review (SLR) comparing Japanese Lean philosophy and the South African Ubuntu philosophy. *International journal of Lean Six Sigma*, 13(1):118-135.
- Manyonganise, M. 2015. Oppressive and liberative: A Zimbabwean woman's reflections on Ubuntu. *VERBUM et Ecclesia*, 36(2):1-7.
- Matolino, B. & Kwindigwi, W. 2013. The end of Ubuntu. *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 32(2):197-205.
- Maxwell, J.A. 2012. *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach: An interactive approach*. London, UK: Sage Publications.
- Mbigi, L. 2007. Spirit of African leadership: A comparative African perspective. *Diversity: new realities in a changing world*:294-303.
- McDonald, D.A. 2010. Ubuntu bashing: the marketisation of 'African values' in South Africa. *Review of African Political Economy*, 37(124):139-152.

Mendelek-Theimann, N., April, K. & Blass, E. 2006. Context tension: Cultural influences on leadership and management practice.

Merriam, S.B. & Tisdell, E.J. 2015. *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.

Merritt, A. 2000. Culture in the cockpit: Do Hofstede's dimensions replicate? *Journal of cross-cultural psychology*, 31(3):283-301.

Metz, T. 2007. Towards an African moral theory. *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 15(3):321-341.

Metz, T. 2011. Ubuntu as a moral theory and human rights in South Africa. *African Human Rights Law Journal*, 11(2):532-559.

Metz, T. 2014. Just the beginning for Ubuntu: Reply to Matolino and Kwindigwi. *South African Journal of Philosophy* 33(1): 65–72.

Metz, T. 2018. An African theory of good leadership. *African Journal of Business Ethics*, 12(2): 37-53.

Miles, M.B., Huberman, A.M. & Saldana, J. 2014. *Qualitative Data Analysis, A Methods Sourcebook*. [Online] Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/>.

Minkov, M. 2018. A revision of Hofstede's model of national culture: Old evidence and new data from 56 countries. *Cross Cultural & Strategic Management*, 25(2):231-256.

Minkov, M., Dutt, P., Schachner, M., Jandosova, J., Khassenbekov, Y., Morales, O. & Blagoev, V. 2019. What would people do with their money if they were rich? A search for Hofstede dimensions across 52 countries. *Cross Cultural & Strategic Management*, 26(1):93-116.

- Minkov, M. & Hofstede, G. 2011. The evolution of Hofstede's doctrine. *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*, 18(1):10-20.
- Minkov, M. & Kaasa, A. 2021. A test of Hofstede's model of culture following his own approach. *Cross Cultural & Strategic Management*, 28(2):384-406.
- Mnyaka, M. & Motlhabi, M. 2005. The African concept of Ubuntu/Botho and its socio-moral significance. *Black Theology*, 3(2):215-237.
- Mokgoro, J.Y. 1998. Ubuntu and the law in South Africa. *Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal*, 1(1).
- Molose, T., Goldman, G. & Thomas, P. 2018. Towards a collective-values framework of Ubuntu: Implications for workplace commitment. *Entrepreneurial Business and economics review*, 6(3):193-206.
- Monette, D.R., Sullivan, T.J. & DeJong, C.R. 2013. *Applied social research: A tool for the human services*. Cengage Learning.
- More, M.P. 2005. *A companion to African philosophy*. London: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Morrow, S.L. 2005. Quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counselling Psychology*, 52(2):250-260.
- Motsei, M. 2007. *The kanga and the kangaroo court: Reflections on the rape trial of Jacob Zuma*. Johannesburg: Spinifex Press.
- Moyo, O.N. 2016. Navigating my journey towards learning Ubuntu-A way of decolonizing myself. *South African Reflections on Social Work and Social Justice*, 22(2):74.
- Msila, V. 2014. African leadership models in education: Leading institutions through Ubuntu. *The Anthropologist*, 18(3):1105-1114.

- Muchiri, M.K. 2011. Leadership in context: A review and research agenda for sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of Occupational and Organisational Psychology*, 84(3):440-452.
- Muenich, J. & Williams, J. 2013. Universally enforced attributes of leadership with current prevalent leadership theories taught at Texas A&M University. *NACTA Journal*, 57(3a):45-50.
- Mujkić, A., Šehić, D., Rahimić, Z. & Jusić, J. 2014. Transformational leadership and employee satisfaction. *Ekonomski vjesnik: Review of Contemporary Entrepreneurship, Business, and Economic Issues*, 27(2):259-270.
- Muller, R.J., Smith, E. & Lillah, R. 2019. Perceptions regarding the impact of Ubuntu and servant leadership on employee engagement in the workplace. *Journal of Contemporary Management*, 16(1):20-51.
- Munir, F. 2020. Ubuntu in the Engineering Workplace: Paying it forward through Mentoring. *Commonwealth Youth and Development*, 18(1):1-17.
- Murithi, T. 2008. African indigenous and endogenous approaches to peace and conflict resolution. *Peace and Conflict in Africa*, 3(2):16-30.
- Mutwarasibo, F. & Iken, A. 2019. I am because we are-the contribution of the Ubuntu philosophy to intercultural management thinking. *interculture journal: Online-Zeitschrift für interkulturelle Studien*, 18(32):15-32.
- Mwipikeni, P. 2018. Ubuntu and the modern society. *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 37(3):322-334.
- Ncube, L.B. 2010. Ubuntu: A transformative leadership philosophy. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 4(3):77-82.
- Netshitangani, T. 2019. Queen bee syndrome: Examining Ubuntu philosophy in women's leadership. *African Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies*:197-212.

- Newenham-Kahindi, A. 2009. The transfer of Ubuntu and Indaba business models abroad: A case of South African multinational banks and telecommunication services in Tanzania. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, 9(1):87-108.
- Newman, A. & Butler, C. 2014. The influence of follower cultural orientation on attitudinal responses towards transformational leadership: evidence from the Chinese hospitality industry. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 25(7):1024-1045.
- Ngcoya, M. 2015. Ubuntu: Toward an emancipatory cosmopolitanism? *International Political Sociology*, 9(3):248-262.
- Ngunjiri, F.W. 2016. "I am because we are" Exploring women's leadership under Ubuntu worldview. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 18(2):223-242.
- Nicolaidis, A. & Dlodla, N. 2023. Virtue ethics and Ubuntu in leadership towards the promotion of ethical organisational operations. *Athens Journal of Business & Economics*, 9(3):285-302.
- Nkomo, S.M. 2011. A postcolonial and anti-colonial reading of 'African' leadership and management in organisation studies: tensions, contradictions and possibilities. *Organisation*, 18(3):365-386.
- Nkomo, S.M. 2015. Challenges for management and business education in a "developmental" state: The case of South Africa. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 14(2):242-258.
- Noble, H. & Smith, J. 2015. Issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research. *Evidence-based Nursing*, 18(2):34-35.
- Ntibagirirwa, S. 2009. Cultural values, economic growth and development. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 84:297-311.

Okazaki, S., David, E. & Abelman, N. 2008. Colonialism and psychology of culture. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 2(1):90-106.

Okecha, C., Branine, M. & Mamman, A. 2024. Investigating servant leadership and Ubuntu in Nigerian private sector enterprises: A parallel conceptual analysis. *Africa Journal of Management*, 10(2):208-228.

Olivier, A. & Rothmann, S. 2007. Antecedents of work engagement in a multinational company. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 33(3):49-56.

Oloruntoba, S. 2015. Pan-Africanism, knowledge production and the third liberation of Africa. *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies-Multi-, Inter-and Transdisciplinarity*, 10(1):7-24.

Oyowe, A.O. & Etieyibo, E. 2018. Ubuntu and social contract theory. *Perspectives in Social Contract Theory*:343.

Patton, M.Q. 2014. *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating Theory and Practice*. 4 ed.: Sage publications.

Perry, S.J., Witt, L., Penney, L.M. & Atwater, L. 2010. The downside of goal-focused leadership: the role of personality in subordinate exhaustion. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 95(6):1145.

Peters, L.D., Pressey, A.D., Vanharanta, M. & Johnston, W.J. 2013. Constructivism and critical realism as alternative approaches to the study of business networks: Convergences and divergences in theory and in research practice. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 42(3):336-346.

Polit, D.F. & Beck, C.T. 2012. *Nursing research: generating and assessing evidence for nursing practice*. 9th ed. Philadelphia: Wolters Kluwer Health.

Poltera, J., & Schreiner, J. (2019). Problematizing women's leadership in the African context. *Agenda*, 33(1), 9–20.

Poovan, N., Du Toit, M.K. & Engelbrecht, A.S. 2006. The effect of the social values of Ubuntu on team effectiveness. *South African Journal of Business Management*, 37(3):17-27.

Pope, C., Ziebland, S. & Mays, N. 2000. Qualitative research in health care Analysing qualitative data. *BMJ*:114-116.

Posner, B.Z. 2013. It's how leaders behave that matters, not where they are from. *Leadership & Organisation Development Journal*, 34(6):573-587.

Praeg, L. 2017. Essential building blocks of the Ubuntu debate; or: I write what I must. *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 36(2):292-304.

Prinsloo, E.D. 2000. The African view of participatory business management. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 25:275-286.

Rabl, T., Jayasinghe, M., Gerhart, B. & Kühlmann, T.M. 2014. A meta-analysis of country differences in the high-performance work system–business performance relationship: The roles of national culture and managerial discretion. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 99(6):1011-1041.

Radebe, S.B. & Phooko, M.R. 2017. Ubuntu and the law in South Africa: Exploring and understanding the substantive content of Ubuntu. *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 36(2):239-251.

Ramose, M.B. 2013. The death of democracy and the resurrection of timocracy. *Journal of Moral Education*, 39(3):25-38.

Ramsook, L. 2018. A methodological approach to hermeneutic phenomenology. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 10(1):14-24.

Rattrie, L.T., Kittler, M.G. & Paul, K.I. 2020. Culture, burnout, and engagement: A meta-analysis on national cultural values as moderators in JD-R theory. *Applied Psychology*, 69(1):176-220.

Regine, B. 2009. Ubuntu: A path to cooperation. *Interbeing*, 3(2):17-21.

Rego, A., Vitória, A., Magalhães, A., Ribeiro, N. & e Cunha, M.P. 2013. Are authentic leaders associated with more virtuous, committed and potent teams? *The Leadership Quarterly*, 24(1):61-79.

Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C.M. & Ormston, R. 2013. *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. London: SAGE Publications.

Roberts, K.H. 1970. On looking at an elephant: an evaluation of cross-cultural research related to organizations. *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 74, pp. 327-50.

Roberts, K.H., Boyacigiller, N., Staw, B. & Cummings, L. 1984. Cross national organisational research: The grasp of the blind men. *Societal Culture and Management*, 51.

Rockstuhl, T., Wu, D., Dulebohn, J.H., Liao, C. & Hoch, J.E. 2023. Cultural congruence or compensation? A meta-analytic test of transformational and transactional leadership effects across cultures. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 54(3):476-504.

Rowe, W.G., Cannella Jr, A.A., Rankin, D. & Gorman, D. 2005. Leader succession and organisational performance: Integrating the common-sense, ritual scapegoating, and vicious-circle succession theories. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 16(2):197-219.

Rowley, J. 2012. Conducting research interviews. *Management research review*, 35(3/4):260-271.

Rubin, H.J. & Rubin, I.S. 2012. *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Rukuni, M. 2007. *Being Afrikan*. Johannesburg, South Africa: Penguin Random House South Africa.

Sachikonye, C. & Ramlogan, R. 2024. A meta-theory of Ubuntu: Implications for responsible leadership in Africa. *South African Journal of Business Management*, 55(1):1-10.

Saldaña, J. 2013. *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. 2nd ed. London, UK: SAGE.

Schaubroeck, J., Lam, S.S. & Cha, S.E. 2007. Embracing transformational leadership: team values and the impact of leader behavior on team performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92(4):10-20.

Schwandt, T.A. 2014. *The Sage dictionary of qualitative inquiry*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage publications.

Sendjaya, S. & Sarros, J.C. 2002. Servant leadership: Its origin, development, and application in organisations. *Journal of leadership & organisational studies*, 9(2):57-64.

Sertel, G., Karadag, E. & Ergin-Kocatürk, H. 2022. Effects of leadership on performance: A cross-cultural meta-analysis. *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management*, 22(1):59-82.

Shamir, B. & Howell, J.M. 1999. Organisational and contextual influences on the emergence and effectiveness of charismatic leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 10(2):257-283.

Sheikh, A. Z., Newman, A., & Al Azzeh, S. A. F. (2013). Transformational leadership and job involvement in the Middle East: The moderating role of individually held cultural values. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 24, 1077–1095.

Shore, M. 2016. *Religion and Conflict Resolution: Christianity and South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. Farnham: Routledge.

Shrivastava, S., Selvarajah, C., Meyer, D. & Dorasamy, N. 2014. Exploring excellence in leadership perceptions amongst South African managers. *Human Resource Development International*, 17(1):47-66.

Shutte, A. 2008. African ethics in a globalising world.

Sigger, D.S., Polak, B. & Pennink, B.J.W. 2010. Ubuntu'or 'humanness' as a management concept. *CDS Research Paper*, 29:1-46.

Stahl, G.K. & Sully de Luque, M. 2014. Antecedents of responsible leader behavior: A research synthesis, conceptual framework, and agenda for future research. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 28(3):235-254.

Steffens, N.K., Haslam, S.A., Reicher, S.D., Platow, M.J., Fransen, K., Yang, J., Ryan, M.K., Jetten, J., Peters, K. & Boen, F. 2014. Leadership as social identity management: Introducing the Identity Leadership Inventory (ILI) to assess and validate a four-dimensional model. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 25(5):1001-1024.

Stogdill, R.M. 1974. *Handbook of leadership: A survey of theory and research*. Free Press.

Sulamoyo, D. 2010. "I Am Because We Are": Ubuntu as a Cultural Strategy for OD and Change in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Organisation Development Journal*, 28(4):41-51.

Swanson, D.M. 2007. Ubuntu: An African contribution to research for/with a'humble togetherness'. *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education*, 2(2):53-67.

Theimann, N.M. & April, K. 2007. Cave canem! the art (or science?) of Western management in an African context. *Diversity in Africa: The Coming of Age of a Continent*:10-34.

Thompson Jr. AA, Strickland III AJ and Gamble JE. 2005. 14th ed. *Crafting and Executing Strategy: The Quest for Competitive Advantage*. McGraw – Hill Irwin.

Tutu, D. 1999. *No future without forgiveness*. New York: Random House.

Uhl-Bien, M., Riggio, R.E., Lowe, K.B., & Carsten, M.K. 2014. Followership theory: a review and research agenda. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 25:83–104.

Valverde-Moreno, M., Torres-Jimenez, M. and Lucia-Casademunt, A.M., 2021. Participative decision-making amongst employees in a cross-cultural employment setting: Evidence from 31 European countries. *European Journal of Training and Development*, 45(1), pp.14-35.

Van den Heuvel, H. 2008. 'Hidden messages' emerging from Afrocentric management perspectives. *Acta Commercii*, 8(1):41-54.

Van Niekerk, J. 2013. *Ubuntu and moral value*. Johannesburg: University of Witwatersrand.

Van Norren, D.E. 2022. African Ubuntu and Sustainable Development Goals: seeking human mutual relations and service in development. *Third World Quarterly*, 43(12):2791-2810.

Veldsman, T.H. & Johnson, A.J. 2016. *Leadership: Perspectives from the front line*. Randburg, South Africa: KR Publishing.

Venter, E. 2004. The notion of Ubuntu and communalism in African educational discourse. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 23:149-160.

Vilakati, M.V. 2012. *African spiritual consciousness within the personal interpersonal and professional leadership perspective*. University of Johannesburg (South Africa).

Vilakati, V.M., Schurink, W. & Van Wyk, R. 2018. Translating African human consciousness into evolving forms of leadership and organisational practice. *Innovation for value creation and beyond*:230-233.

Vilakati, V.M. & Schurink, W.J. 2021. An explorative-descriptive qualitative-constructivist study of three African leaders' experiences and perceptions regarding the translation of

shared African human values into leadership and business practice. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, 19:12.

Vilas-Boas, O.T., Davel, E.P.B. & Bispo, M.d.S. 2018. Leadership as cultural practice. *RAM. Revista de Administração Mackenzie*, 19:1-23.

Voegtlin, C., Frisch, C., Walther, A. & Schwab, P. 2020. Theoretical development and empirical examination of a three-roles model of responsible leadership. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 167(3):411-431.

Vollero, A., Siano, A., Palazzo, M. & Amabile, S. 2020. Hofstede's cultural dimensions and corporate social responsibility in online communication: Are they independent constructs? *Corporate social responsibility and environmental management*, 27(1):53-64.

Wanasika, I., Howell, J.P., Littrell, R. & Dorfman, P. 2011. Managerial leadership and culture in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of World Business*, 46(2):234-241.

Wang, H., Lu, G. & Liu, Y. 2017. Ethical leadership and loyalty to supervisor in China: The roles of interactional justice and collectivistic orientation. *Journal of business ethics*, 146:529-543.

Watts, L.L., Steele, L.M. & Den Hartog, D.N. 2020. Uncertainty avoidance moderates the relationship between transformational leadership and innovation: A meta-analysis. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 51:138-145.

West, A. 2014. Ubuntu and business ethics: Problems, perspectives and prospects. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 121(1):47-61.

Woermann, M. & Engelbrecht, S. 2019. The Ubuntu challenge to business: From stakeholders to relationholders. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 157:27-44.

Yang, J., Zhang, Z.X. & Tsui, A.S. 2010. Middle manager leadership and frontline employee performance: Bypass, cascading, and moderating effects. *Journal of Management Studies*, 47(4):654-678.

Yeboah-Assiamah, E., Asamoah, K., Bawole, J.N. & Musah-Surugu, I.J. 2016. A socio-cultural approach to public sector corruption in Africa: key pointers for reflection. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 16(3):279-293.

Yukl, G. 1999. An evaluation of conceptual weaknesses in transformational and charismatic leadership theories. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 10(2):285-305.

Yukl G. (2010), *Leadership in Organizations*, Pearson, Upper Saddle River, NJ.

Yukl, G. & Gardner, W.L. 2020. *Leadership in Organisations*. 9th Edition - Global Edition ed. Harlow: Pearson.

Zhang, Y., Guo, Y., Zhang, M., Xu, S., Liu, X. & Newman, A. 2022. Antecedents and outcomes of authentic leadership across culture: A meta-analytic review. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 39(4):1399-1435.

9: INTERVIEW GUIDE

ELEMENT 1: TABLE WITH RQ'S VERSUS IQ'S

Table 20 reflects the link between the research questions and the interview questions.

Table 20: Interview Questions

	Research question	Interview question/s	Literature Supporting Questions
Main Question	To what extent do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage integrate Ubuntu in their leadership approach?	1.1 Describe how Ubuntu has influenced your leadership approach. 1.1.1 Please describe the Ubuntu values that influenced your leadership approach. 1.1.2 Could you elaborate further on the positive ways Ubuntu has influenced your leadership approach? 1.1.3 Could you also elaborate on the negative ways Ubuntu might have influenced your leadership approach?	(Prinsloo, 2000) (Mangaliso, 2001) (Mbigi, 2007) (Metz, 2007) (Poovan, Du Toit & Engelbrecht, 2006) (Lutz, 2009) (Ncube, 2010) (Asamoah & Yeboah-Assiamah, 2019) (Woermann & Engelbrecht, 2019) (Molose, Goldman & Thomas, 2018)
		1.2 Describe any challenges you might have experienced integrating Ubuntu into your leadership approach. 1.2.1 Would you say that the limited literature available on Ubuntu compared to Western leadership theories, which are well documented and integrated into educational and business schools, could have impacted your ability to integrate Ubuntu into your leadership approach?	

	Research question	Interview question/s	Literature Supporting Questions
Sub-question 1	How do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage define Ubuntu?	<p>1.3 What is your definition of Ubuntu?</p> <p>1.3.1 Would you regard Ubuntu as distinctively African or universal (meaning Ubuntu embodies attributes that may be general human values ubiquitous in other cultures)? Please elaborate further on your answer.</p> <p>1.3.2 Would you regard Ubuntu as just a theoretical concept that does not necessarily translate to the lived experiences of most communities because of challenges such as high levels of corruption, ineffective or poor corporate governance, high levels of inequality, corporate failure, and corporate scandals in Africa? Please elaborate further on your answer.</p>	
		<p>1.4 Describe the values you will associate with Ubuntu.</p> <p>1.4.1 Do you think any of these values can be associated with Ubuntu:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Care. ○ Collectivism. ○ Compassion. ○ Group Solidarity. ○ Harmony. ○ Interdependence. ○ Respect and dignity. ○ Relations with others. 	

	Research question	Interview question/s	Literature Supporting Questions
Sub-question 2	How do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage view the influence of Ubuntu in their team/organisational performance?	<p>1.5 Describe how the integration of Ubuntu into your leadership approach has impacted your team/organisational performance.</p> <p>1.5.1 Would you say that values such as respect, compassion, dignity, and group solidarity in leadership practices would impact employee commitment and team performance within your organisation?</p> <p>1.5.2 Did you notice any impact on your organisation's operational processes due to the adoption of Ubuntu?</p> <p>1.5.3 Would you say that your organisation's performance management systems enable the integration of Ubuntu within your organisation?</p>	(Muller <i>et al.</i> , 2019)
Sub-question 3	How do leaders for whom Ubuntu forms part of their cultural heritage put Ubuntu into practice within their organisations?	<p>1.6 Describe how you integrated Ubuntu within the organisation you operate in.</p> <p>1.6.1 How did you encourage the adoption of the values associated with Ubuntu within your organisation?</p> <p>1.6.2 Did the lack of awareness by society on foundational concept of Ubuntu have an impact on the integration of Ubuntu within your organisation?</p>	<p>(Molose <i>et al.</i>, 2018)</p> <p>(Vilakati <i>et al.</i>, 2018)</p> <p>(Vilakati and Schurink, 2021)</p>

ELEMENT 2: DISCUSSION GUIDE

Thank you for the time that you have afforded me and your willingness to participate in my study. You indicated during the study recruitment phase that Ubuntu forms part of your cultural heritage. I have therefore recruited you for my study as I believe that I will be able to obtain valuable insights from you with regards to understanding the extent to which Ubuntu, as a cultural resource, is integrated into the leadership practices of business leaders in South Africa.

This interview should be approximately an hour. Do I have your permission to record the discussion? The recording will be treated confidentially, including all the information you would provide during this interview. Your details and your company's details will also not be mentioned in my report. The interview will be informal and there are no right or wrong answers. Will it be ok if we proceed with discussing the questions provided in the meeting invitation?

The questions are as follows:

1 What is your definition of Ubuntu?

1.1 Would you regard Ubuntu as distinctively African or universal (meaning Ubuntu embodies attributes that may be general human values ubiquitous in other cultures)? Please elaborate further on your answer.

1.2 Would you regard Ubuntu as just a theoretical concept that does not necessarily translate to the lived experiences of most of the communities because of the challenges such as high levels of corruption, ineffective or poor corporate governance, high levels of inequality, corporate failure, and corporate scandals in Africa? Please elaborate further on your answer.

2 Describe the values you will associate with Ubuntu.

- 2.1 Do you think any of these values can be associated with Ubuntu:
- Care.
 - Collectivism.
 - Compassion.

- Group Solidarity.
- Harmony.
- Interdependence
- Respect and dignity.
- Relations with others.

Please elaborate further on any of the stated values above which you would associate with Ubuntu.

3 Describe how Ubuntu has influenced your leadership approach.

3.1 Please describe the Ubuntu values that influenced your leadership approach.

3.2 Could you elaborate further on the positive ways Ubuntu has influenced your leadership approach?

3.3 Could you also elaborate on the negative ways Ubuntu might have influenced your leadership approach?

4 Describe any challenges you might have experienced integrating Ubuntu into your leadership approach.

4.1 Would you say that the limited literature available on Ubuntu compared to Western leadership theories that are well documented and integrated into educational and business schools could have impacted your ability to integrate Ubuntu in your leadership approach?

4.2 Did the lack of awareness by society on foundational concept of Ubuntu have an impact on the integration of Ubuntu within your organisation?

5 Describe how you integrated Ubuntu within the organisation you operate in.

5.1 How did you encourage the adoption of the values associated with Ubuntu within your organisation?

6 Describe how the integration of Ubuntu into your leadership approach has impacted your team/organisational performance.

6.1 Would you say that values such as respect, compassion, dignity, and group solidarity in leadership practices would have an impact on employee commitment and team performance within your organisation?

6.2 Did you notice any impact on your organisation's operational processes due to the adoption of Ubuntu?

6.3 Would you say that your organisation's performance management systems enable the integration of Ubuntu within your organisation?

This concludes our interview. A transcript of the discussion will be provided to you to provide you with an opportunity to validate the information recorded.

**APPENDIX A:- LETTER OF INTRODUCTION AND INFORMED
CONSENT -**

Letter of Introduction and Informed Consent

Dept. of Business Management

The integration of Ubuntu into leadership practices of leaders in multinational companies: a South African perspective.

Research conducted by:
Mr. OA Theledi (22613936)
Cell number: 079 495 1974

Dear Participant

You are invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by Ofentse Theledi, a Doctoral student from the Department of Business Management at the University of Pretoria.

The purpose of the study is to understand the extent to which Ubuntu, as a cultural resource, is integrated into leadership practices of business leaders in South Africa as there is limited qualitative research available on the relationship between Ubuntu and the ability to lead through Ubuntu values. When answering the questions, I would therefore like you to reflect on your ability to integrate Ubuntu into your leadership approach. Please note that there is no right or wrong answer. I would also request for your permission to record the discussion.

Please note the following:

- This is an anonymous study, and your personal information will not appear on any transcript. The responses you give will be treated as strictly confidential as you cannot be identified in person based on the answers you give.
- Your participation in this study is very important to us. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without any negative consequences.
- I understand that all data collected for this study will be stored on a safe and secure platform as governed by the University of Pretoria's Research Data Management Policy.
- Please answer the questions during the interview as completely and honestly as possible. This should not take more than an hour of your time.
- The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. We will provide you with a summary of our findings on request.
- Please contact my study leader, Prof. Willem Fourie at willemf@sun.ac.za if you have any questions or comments regarding the study.

In research of this nature the study leader may wish to contact respondents to verify the authenticity of data gathered by the researcher. It is understood that any personal contact details that you may provide will be used only for this purpose and will not compromise your anonymity or the confidentiality of your participation.

Yours sincerely



Ofentse Theledi

APPENDIX B:- EDITORIAL LETTER

Marielle Tappan
Simmetrie & Kegel Street
Meyerspark, Pretoria
Tel 072 474 1158
Email mteditorialinfo@gmail.com



Date of Edit: 24 March 2025

Edit: Ofentse Theledi

THE INTEGRATION OF UBUNTU INTO LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF LEADERS IN MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES: A SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

To whom it may concern,

I, Marielle Tappan, trading under the name MT Editorial, hereby confirm that I am a language editor.

I have extensive experience in the field of language and publishing and received my Bachelor of Information Science in Publishing from the University of Pretoria. I am also a registered member of the Southern African Freelancer's Association.

I hereby declare that the editing done for any client is done with the utmost diligence and the full appreciation of the English language and all of its intricacies, as was done for edited sections of this document. My involvement was restricted to the main body of text's language use, spelling, consistency and completeness, alongside general formatting of the document's layout. I did not restructure any content that would influence the academic outcome in any way. I cannot take responsibility for any changes made by the client once the paper was returned after the above-mentioned 'Date of Edit'.

If there are any other queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kindest Regards,

Marielle Tappan
Owner, MT Editorial
(BIS) Publishing
SAF03058, SAFREA

Marielle Tappan

