THE EFFECT OF VIRTUOUS LEADERSHIP ON ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND THE ETHICAL BEHAVIOUR OF EMPLOYEES

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DECLARATION OF OWN WORK

I **<u>Poelo Matokwe</u>,** student number **<u>44229658</u>** confirm that:

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DEDICATION

This research report is fondly dedicated to my biggest critic, yet loudest cheerleader – my father, Seema Sam Hatane. Mataung, you saw this work started but did not live to see it completed. Thank you for providing me with a firm foundation to grow academically, personally and professionally. Your profound love for education has inspired me to appreciate the value of life long learning.

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ABSTRACT

Leaders are regarded as custodians of organisational ethics and are deemed to inspire an ethical culture and to instil values entrenched with integrity in the organisation. The rampant corruption and ethics failures as well as leadership and employee incompetence that have blemished the reputation of once reputable institutions, may be an indication that South Africa is experiencing a critical shortage of ethical leaders (Reddy, 2017). With human beings being creatures of mimicry, the study hypothesised that the effect of moral leadership, through its endorsement of policies, frameworks and procedures may be more potent if complimented by visible evidence of leadership adherence to its endorsed policies, frameworks and procedures in an effort to promote an ethical organisational culture and to persuade employees to behave ethically.

The opinions of 11 participants were solicited through semi-structured interviews, with the aim of determining the effect that virtuous leadership has on the organisational culture and their ethical behaviour as employees. Furthermore, participants identified virtues that characterised virtuous leadership. The empirical findings of this study indicated that virtuous leadership has a positive influence on organisational culture and the ethical behaviour of employees. A slight majority of the participants indicated that the presence of the identified virtues had a positive influence on their inclination to behave in an ethical manner. Similarly, these participants indicated that unethical leadership at various levels of the institution under review could engender unethical behaviour amongst them.

Keywords: Virtuous leadership · Ethical leadership · Moral leadership · Organisational culture · Virtues · Ethical behaviour

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The implication of leaders in prominent ethical scandals and integrity violations has indeed resulted in virtuous leadership assuming global importance and becoming a significant area of concern (Bedi, Alpaslan & Green, 2016). In an effort to avoid a repetition of the ethics scandals of the early 2000s which brought down Enron, WorldCom, Arthur Anderson, Tyco and others, the United States Congress introduced the Sarbanes–Oxley Act (SOX) in 2002 (Gorshunov, Armenakis, Field & Vansant, 2020). The stipulations of SOX included holding the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) responsible for the financial statements of the companies under their leadership, the protection of whistle-blowers, as well as the following of more rigorous auditing standards. In addition to this, the legislators recognised the importance of organisational culture and prescribed guidelines for ethical culture which included a code of ethics for senior managers (Gorshunov et al*.,* 2020). While the Act was effective in reducing financially corrupt behaviours that introduced a barrage of ethics scandals in the early 2000s (Gorshunov et al*.,* 2020), it did not eradicate the problem of ethics scandals.

Section 195 (1) of the supreme law of the country, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), commands public administration that is governed by democratic values and principles, including a high standard of professional ethics that must be promoted and maintained. Congruent with this section of the Constitution, are the principles of the King IV Report on corporate governance which advocate for ethical and effective leadership towards an ethical culture and sustained good performance. Despite the law and guidelines on good corporate governance, South Africa has not been immune to ethics scandals. From Steinhoff to VBS Bank and KPMG in the private sector, to State Owned Enterprises such as SAA, Eskom and the SABC, the past decade has been

marred by rampant corruption, ethics failures as well as leadership and employee incompetence (Vorster & Konstatinopoulos, 2020).

The occurrence of these scandals has equally amplified the significance of ethical conduct in business and organisations (Goswami, Agrawal & Goswami, 2020). With human resources as the cornerstone of every successful organisation, Yang and Wei (2018) argued that employee commitment and organisational citizenship behaviours are amongst the work attitudes contributing to the effectiveness of an organisation. The success or failure of a business is therefore dependent on the calibre of individuals in its employ. Ethical leaders; through personal virtues which include honesty, integrity, fairness and openness (Li & Bao, 2020), influence the behaviour of their followers through the use of rewards, punishments and verbal persuasion (Bedi et al., 2016). The actions, behaviour and decision-making of leaders are therefore expected to be reflective of the high moral standards which inform their ethical behaviour. Furthermore, ethical leaders are advocates of observational learning, often acting as role models of ethical behaviour. They understand the developmental needs of their followers and encourage them to realise their full potential. Numerous studies over the past decade have demonstrated a positive correlation between virtuous leadership and employee job performance (Peng & Lin, 2017), extra-role performance (Wang & Hackett, 2016), innovative behaviour (Dhar, 2016), as well as ethical behaviour (Nygaard et al., 2017; Filabi & Bulgarella, 2018). Ethical behaviour has previously been found to be an enabler of positive and proactive behaviours as opposed to a mere suppressor of misconduct (Lee, Choi, Youn & Chun, 2017). A negative association between virtuous leadership and individual turnover intention, unethical behaviour and deviant behaviour has similarly been established (Tu, Lu & Yu, 2017). It is through ethical leadership that employees are encouraged to find their moral voice (Lee et al., 2017) and to use it positively towards whistleblowing, thus giving the organisation an opportunity to correct unethical practices (Cheng, Bai & Yang, 2019). Employees under the supervision of virtuous leaders have a clear view of the appropriateness and inappropriateness

of their conduct and a better understanding of their tasks and how best to execute them (Tu et al., 2017).

The extensive list of corporate scandals reinforces the need for ethical leaders to keep an eye on organisational culture, which is generally defined as shared values, beliefs and assumptions guiding behaviour within an organisation (Hald, Gillespie & Reader, 2020). At its finest, organisational culture plays a pivotal role in the retention of employees and motivates them to deliver their best and most productive efforts. At its worst, it can destroy an organisation (Warrick, Milliman, Ferguson, 2016; Warrick, 2017). The success of any organisation starts at the top. It is the leadership that establishes the culture of the organisation. Virtuous leaders will therefore articulate and model the organisation's values, beliefs and assumptions while demanding the highest standards of ethical behaviour from themselves and those they lead. An ethical organisational culture has an influence on the ethical behaviour of employees.

The executive management of the institution under review is committed to the creation of a working environment that seeks to encourage and facilitate honesty, integrity and ethical behaviour. In so-doing, the leadership of the institution ensures that the necessary policies, frameworks and procedures are in place to prevent; and, where possible, eradicate unlawful conduct and unethical behaviour. This being the case, the purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the effect that a virtuous leader has on the culture of the organisation and the susceptibility of employees to imitate the leadership by behaving in an ethical manner.

1.2 Problem statement

In as much as leaders are the custodians of organisational ethics who inspire an ethical culture and instil values entrenched with integrity, Reddy (2017) asserted that South Africa is experiencing a critical shortage of ethical leaders with the ability to raise values to a higher level of awareness. There is a dire need of

leaders capable of raising awareness around how their behaviour affects their own performance as leaders, as well as the performance and behaviour of those under their leadership (Reddy, 2017).

Human beings are creatures of mimicry (Pickering, 2018). The type of tone sent from the top is crucial in any organisation, as employees will mimic the behaviour of leaders and consequently absorb their values (Roszkowska & Melé, 2020).

This study has addressed the suspicion that given the inclination of employees to mimic leadership behaviour, the policies, frameworks and procedures endorsed by the leadership of the institution to prevent and, where possible, eradicate unlawful conduct and unethical behaviour, may not be perceived as adequate to influence an ethical organisational culture and to induce ethical behaviour in employees.

1.3 Research questions

1.3.1 Primary research question

The primary research question which this study endeavoured to answer was, "Are the policies, frameworks and procedures endorsed by the leadership of the institution, with the intention of promoting an ethical organisational culture and inducing ethical behaviour amongst employees, a complete reflection of the virtuous leadership of the institution?"

This research question was based on the theoretical assumption that the effect of moral leadership, through its endorsement of policies, frameworks and procedures may be more potent if complimented by visible evidence of leadership adherence to its endorsed policies, frameworks and procedures in an effort to command an ethical organisational culture and to persuade employees to behave ethically. Leaders are likely to positively influence employees when their virtuous behaviour can be observed and imitated.

1.3.2 Research sub-questions

The following research sub-questions were formulated to assist in answering the primary research question as precisely as possible and with the intention to support the research objectives:

- Which leadership attributes have the potential to influence the ethical inclination of employees?
- What visible example does the leadership of the organisation set for employees in as far as ethical behaviour is concerned?
- Are the current interventions endorsed by the leadership of the organisation to prevent; and, where possible, eradicate unlawful conduct sufficient to promote ethical behaviour?
- Which conditions will persuade employees to behave in an ethical manner?

1.4 Research objectives

1.4.1 Primary research objective

The primary objective of this study was to determine whether the policies, frameworks and procedures endorsed by the leadership of the institution, with the intention of promoting an ethical organisational culture and inducing ethical behaviour amongst employees, are a complete reflection of the virtuous leadership of the institution.

1.4.2 Secondary research objectives

The following secondary research objectives were formulated to unpack the primary research objective:

- To identify leadership attributes with the potential to influence the ethical inclination of employees.
- To determine whether leaders set a visible example of how to behave ethically in the organisation.
- To verify whether the current interventions endorsed by the leadership to prevent; and, where possible, eradicate unlawful conduct and unethical behaviour are sufficient to promote ethical behaviour.
- To identify conditions that will persuade employees to behave in an ethical manner.

1.5 Abbreviated literature review

A preliminary literature review on the concepts of virtuous leadership, organisational culture and ethical employee behaviour seemed to suggest a positive correlation between the concepts. The theme of leadership, and in particular virtuous, ethical or moral leadership, has become one of the recurrent questions amongst the research topics today. It has been researched extensively in relation to various aspects of human life, considering the heightened public interest on the role of leadership in ethics scandals and the collapse of organisations. Some of these studies include Bedi et al., 2016; Wang & Hackett, 2016; Lee et al., 2017; Goswami et al., 2020, as well as Li & Bao, 2020. In the use of their recent materials on the various investigations on moral leadership and its effect on organisational culture and employee behaviour, it emerged that Bedi et al. (2016); Goswami et al. (2020), as well as Li and Bao (2020) have reviewed relevant previous research and cited materials of these investigators with reference to their own topics.

While there may be no single and universally agreed-upon definition for virtue, there is a consensus amongst authors that it has general inferences of excellence, correctness and rightness (Newstead, Macklin, Dawkins, Martin & Tasmania, 2018). Newstead et al. (2018: 454) defined virtue as "The human inclination to feel, think, and act in ways that express moral excellence and

contribute to the common good." Virtuous leadership is the leader-follower relationship wherein the leader's fitting expression of virtues in a situation, triggers employees' perceptions of leader behaviour worthy of imitating (Wang & Hackett, 2016). Like Bedi et al. (2016), Wang and Hackett (2016) believed that the role modelling of virtuous behaviour in organisations affords leaders the opportunity to improve both the overall ethical climate in their organisations and the well-being of employees. Similarly, Hendriks, Burger, Rijsenbilt, Pleeging and Commandeur (2020), believed that a leader's character - as shaped by his or her goals and behaviour - can influence organisational outcomes including the behaviour of employees. Additionally, Hendriks et al. (2020) asserted that virtuous leadership can have an impact on the work-related well-being of employees. Employees under the leadership of virtuous leaders are therefore encouraged to emulate the behaviour of these leaders. A virtuous leader is likely and expected to display consistent behaviour across varying situations. However, Wang and Hackett (2016), contended that the meaning attached to a leader's behaviour by an observer, who in the context of an organisation is likely to be an employee, may vary from situation to situation. This variance can therefore possibly introduce an additional element of contextual dependence in as far as the behaviour of leaders is concerned. According to Newstead et al. (2018), virtues are inherent qualities that are voluntarily displayed in an individual's habitual behaviour in context-related situations. Furthermore, how an employee perceives a virtuous leader can be highly dependent of the employee's level of knowledge of virtuousness (Wang & Hackett, 2016). A leader's character may therefore affect employees differently (Hendriks et al., 2020).

Academics have in the past proposed various frameworks of virtuous leadership with the intention of developing a supreme and universal framework of virtues of virtuous leadership (Hendriks et al., 2020). In their global review of leadership literature, Hackett and Wang (2012) developed a framework of virtuous leadership comprising of six virtues, namely courage, temperance, justice, prudence, humanity and truthfulness. The virtuous leadership model developed

by Adewale (2020) is underpinned by four primary virtues from the African leadership context – truthfulness, courage, humanity and humility.

From the literature reviewed, it can be concluded that the leadership of the institution should be agents of virtue whose aim must be to build collective employee perceptions of a virtuous, ethical organisation. As agents of virtue, it is suggested that the virtuous leadership of the institution under review should practice the six cardinal virtues identified by Hackett and Wang (2012) - courage, temperance, justice, prudence, humanity and honesty. These six virtues are believed to be culturally inclusive due to their entrenchment in western as well as eastern culture (Wang & Hackett, 2016). Of the four primary virtues from the African leadership context (Adewale, 2020), only humility does not form part of the six cardinal virtues. The institution under review is an African institution which interacts with global counterparts. As such, the leadership of the institution should also practice humility. Furthermore, this institution subscribes to the values of respect and trust, open communication, integrity and accountability. In addition to the six cardinal virtues, Hackett and Wang (2012) also identified respect, trust, openness, integrity and accountability as virtues associated with moral and ethical leadership. The virtuous leadership of the institution should therefore; as a minimum, practice courage, temperance, justice, prudence, humanity, honesty, humility, openness, integrity, accountability and trustworthiness as described in Table 1 – Framework of virtuous leadership in the institution.

Table 1.1: Framework of virtuous leadership in the institution

Virtue	Definition
Courage	He/she is brave and determined enough to do what is right, even when it may be discouraged or unpopular.
Temperance	Has the ability to self-restrain and to remain calm and composed in tense situations.
Justice	Remains objective and impartial in his/her decision-making and fair treatment of all employees.
Prudence	Possesses the wisdom to make well thought-through decisions.
Humanity	Shows compassion, empathy and sympathy towards employees.
Honesty	Habitually conforms to truth, and believes in the honesty and reliability of employees.
Humility	Has a modest or low view of oneself, and does not consider himself/herself to be more important than other employees.
Openness	Has the ability to be frank and honest with employees.
Integrity	Has strong moral principles that consistently enable him/her to behave ethically in every situation.
Accountability	Steps up and takes ownership of challenging situations as well as responsibility for decisions and actions.
Trustworthy	Acts in a manner that inspires confidence and trust amongst employees.

1.6 Research methodology

Research methodology involves the higher level of abstraction of research means that is required to execute a certain stage in the research process such as the selection of a group of items from which data will be collected; the actual collection of data; and analysis thereof (Bengtsson, 2016). Although research methodology will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of this study, the purpose of this section is to provide a brief introduction to the research methodology.

1.6.1 Qualitative research approach

For the purpose of this research, which was aimed at analysing the experiences and behaviours of employees, a qualitative research approach premised on interpretivism was adopted. Research based on the interpretivist paradigm is concerned with gaining a deeper understanding of a particular phenomenon through a deep-level investigation of the lived experiences of individuals (Basias & Pollalis, 2018) and studying experiential human behaviour based on awareness, recognition, and sheer understanding; and not on measurements. Participants were; through this research approach, afforded an opportunity to relate their experiences of the culture and leadership of the institution.

1.6.2 Population and sample frame

1.6.2.1   Population

Elfil and Negida (2017) defined a population as a group of people who share a common character or condition of interest for a particular investigation or decision. It is therefore a universe from which data relevant to an investigation can be drawn. The staff complement of the institution under review was the population for this study.

1.6.2.2   Sample

A sample is a subset of the population from which an investigator can draw conclusions about the population (Martínez-Mesa, González-Chica, Duquia, Bonamigo & Basto, 2016). The sample for this study was a group of employees whom the investigator deemed to have sufficient knowledge of the institution's ethics programme and efforts to promote an ethical organisational culture. There are two categories of sampling methods: (1) probability sampling methods where all items or subjects in a population have an equal chance of selection and (2) non-probability sampling methods where a subject does not have an equal chance of inclusion in a sample as the selection is done in a non-systematic manner.

A decision to either work with the entire target population or a sample, is made by researchers during the planning phase of the research (Martínez-Mesa et al., 2016). According to Martínez-Mesa et al. (2016), working with a sample is a process involving a variety of steps, including estimating the sample size, identifying the sample frame, and selecting the sample method to be assumed. Given the impracticality of collecting data from the entire target population, a sample was selected using purposive sampling; which is also known as judgmental sampling as a non-probability sampling technique. This technique permitted the researcher, as an individual familiar with the ethical environment of the institution, to select participants based on subjective judgement. The sampling exercise was therefore relatively quicker since the researcher targeted a sample of employees deemed to have sufficient knowledge of the institution's ethics programme and efforts to promote an ethical organisational culture.

1.6.3   Data collection methods

Data collection enables a researcher to systematically gather and measure information pertaining to the identified variables of interest, with the aim of answering research questions (Kabir, 2016). For the purposes of this study,

primary data was collected from participants individually, using semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted virtually as the majority of the workforce of the institution under review was working remotely at the time of the research in response to the current global pandemic of Covid-19. The researcher compiled an interview guide providing an outline of ethics related issues to be covered. The interview process was however flexible enough to accommodate follow-up and new questions, with the aim of gaining in-depth insight into the topic based on the respondents' interpretation of the situation. The nature of semi-structured interviews is such that the conversation may diverge from the interview guide, and as such, permission was sought from respondents to record the interview sessions with the aim of transcribing the recordings for analysis and reporting at a later stage.

1.6.4 Qualitative data analysis

This study employed the narrative thematic analysis procedure to analyse the collected data. James (2017) defined narrative data analysis as a qualitative research method which enables a researcher to conduct detailed investigations about the lived experiences of research participants. According to Caulfield (2019), thematic analysis is an approach to narrative analysis, where data is identified for common themes. The identification of common themes in the data from the interviews that were conducted, enabled the researcher to convert the collected data into more meaningful information which can be used for decision-making purposes within the institution.

1.6.5 Trustworthiness of the investigation

A lot of thought should go into how data is collected for content analysis, as the selection of the most appropriate data collection method is essential for ensuring credibility of content analysis and the trustworthiness of the research results (Bengtsson, 2016).

Phillips, Saunders, Cossman and Heitman (2019) were of the firm belief that when scholars express unease about trust in science, their focus is usually on whether or not the public trusts research findings. Scholarship is highly dependent on trust as a guiding principle and cornerstone of research (Tenopir et al., 2016). Similarly, Phillips et al. (2019) argued that there is a need for researchers to trust their co-researchers and other scholars at just about every point of the research process, which includes literature reviews, data collection, data analysis, document preparation and peer review. Trustworthiness, which is also referred to as the rigour of an investigation, is therefore the degree of confidence in the data collected, data analysis and methods used to ensure the quality of an investigation (Le Roux, 2017). Validity and reliability are to quantitative research what rigour and trustworthiness are to qualitative research (Bengtsson, 2016).

In their studies, Connelly (2016), Bengtsson (2016) as well as Le Roux (2017) referred to the seminal work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) which suggested alternative criteria of assessing the trustworthiness of qualitative research. These criteria include credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Each of these criteria is discussed in brief herein under.

1.6.5.1　Credibility

Credibility refers to the manner in which the study or investigation was conducted (Bengtsson, 2016). A credible study is a study that is conducted using standard procedures which are typically associated with qualitative research (Connelly, 2016) and that ensures the inclusion of all relevant data (Bengtsson, 2016). For this study, semi-structured interviews; which are associated with qualitative research, were conducted in order to collect primary data from participants. To increase the credibility of this study, the researcher obtained agreement from colleagues deemed to be experts in the ethical environment of the institution under review (Bengtsson, 2016). This was in the form of pre-interviews with two employees from the compliance department of the institution, with the aim of

determining the suitability of the interview questions and their ability to assist in obtaining relevant data to answer the research questions. In addition to this, the researcher used peer debriefing to increase the credibility of this study. According to Hadi and Jose Closs (2016), peer debriefing is a technique that enables the researcher to discuss the research design, data collection process, data analysis and interpretations constantly throughout the research process with an objective peer who does not have a personal interest in the study, but is skilled enough to provoke critical thinking. Furthermore, the researcher's prolonged engagement with the study participants may also promote credibility of this qualitative study (Hadi & Jose Closs, 2016). According to Hadi and Jose Closs (2016), a prolonged engagement between the researcher and the study participants can assist the researcher to obtain more in-depth information from participants, which in turn will enable the inclusion of all relevant data.

1.6.5.2   Transferability

Transferability is the extent to which concepts, findings and theories apply to other settings (Connelly, 2016; Tong & Dew, 2016). The researcher has given a detailed description of the context of the study, as well as the people studied in order to support the transferability of this study. In addition to this, the researcher has been transparent about the trustworthiness and analysis of the study (Connelly, 2016), sample characteristics and data collection methods so as to enable readers to assess the extent to which results can be transferred to other populations, settings and situations (Hadi & Jose Closs, 2016).

1.6.5.3   Dependability

Dependability, which is the coherence across the methodology, methods, data, and findings; as well as transparency and auditability of the research process must be considered in determining the "reliability" of the study, as the interpretive nature of qualitative research makes it impractical for other researchers to produce identical findings (Tong & Dew, 2016). The semi-structured interviews

which were conducted for the purposes of this study have been recorded and the data transcribed.

1.6.5.4   Confirmability

Confirmability is the impartiality of data and the extent to which results are consistent and could be repeated (Connelly, 2016; Bengtsson, 2016). In an effort to promote confirmability in this study, the researcher kept detailed notes pertaining to decisions and analysis as the study progressed (Connelly, 2016). Furthermore, the notes were discussed in peer-debriefing sessions which ensured prevention of possible biases from the researcher's perspective on the research (Connelly, 2016). Additionally, member checking (Connelly, 2016) which involves sharing the interview data with research participants to verify and validate the trustworthiness of the data was conducted. Member checking was used to assist the researcher in improving the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the study.

1.7 Ethical considerations

Unisa, as an academic institution promoting the constitutional values of social justice, human dignity, fairness and equality, is committed to the maintenance of ethically responsible research practices. The Unisa SBL Ethics committee endeavours to protect the rights and interests of human participants in research, and ensures that research activities are conducted with excellence, scholarly integrity, social responsibility and ethical behaviour through the issuance of an ethical clearance certificate. No research data may be collected by any scholar without an ethical clearance certificate from the committee.

1.7.1 Informed consent

Participation in this study was voluntary. All potential participants were made fully aware of the aim of the research and what their participation would entail through an invitation letter.

1.7.2 Protection from harm

Participants in this research were not exposed to any discomfort, and were protected from physical and mental harm. All participants were informed of their right to refuse to participate and withdraw from the research at any time should they have felt uncomfortable. Furthermore, participants had the right to refuse to answer any question and were similarly also allowed to withdraw their data from the study. Research information has been kept confidential. All responses were anonymised and presented in such a manner that no person would be able to be identified by deduction.

1.7.3 Right to privacy

Research participants had the right to protect their identities, personal details and responses. Furthermore, no participant was coerced to divulge any information that he or she did not wish to reveal.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter contextualised the motivation behind the study through a succinct description of the ethical decay which has resulted in corporate and public office malfeasance, both locally and internationally. It further highlighted the problem statement, together with the research questions that were unpacked in the research objectives of the treatise. The chapter has; in addition, and through the literature review, constructed a conceptual framework of leadership virtues, and

provided a brief outline of the research methodology adopted. The next chapter will undertake a review of literature relevant to this study.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

A literature review on virtuous leadership and organisational culture has been conducted with the express purpose to draw parallels and institute the comparisons of their content on the one hand and their contrast and balance on the other. This resulted in obtaining useful research-related knowledge. The review of literature affords the researcher of a new topic the necessary acquisition of helpful background information on aspects of investigation and thereby imparts to the new study a firm foundation without which the new study cannot survive.

In this chapter, attention has been directed to the review of the literature. The researcher intently examined various materials on the attributes of leadership with a particular interest on virtuous leadership, factors that influence an organisational culture, as well as leadership qualities that are likely to induce ethical behaviour amongst employees in an organisation.

Organisations around the world are supposedly under the leadership of influential individuals who recognise that the moral tone of any organisation is set at the top (IIA, 2016). While many of these leaders may be steering employees or followers in the direction of ethical behaviour with the intention of promoting an ethical organisational culture, some are blatantly unethical (Newstead, Dawkins, Macklin & Martin, 2019). The implication of leaders in prominent ethical blunders and integrity violations, such as those associated with Enron, WorldCom, Arthur Anderson, Steinhoff, VBS Bank, SAA, SABC and Eskom to name a few, is indicative of the need to gain an understanding of what constitutes virtuous leadership and how this type of leadership can influence an organisational culture, as well as ethical behaviour amongst employees. The foundation of this understanding was therefore constructed by reviewing the related literature.

2.2 Leadership defined

Like Newstead et al. (2019), Sharma, Aryan, Singh and Kaur (2019) as well as Howieson (2019) conceded that despite the topic of leadership having interested writers for centuries, consensus is yet to be reached about a single universally agreed upon definition of the concept. Gandolfi and Stone (2016) proclaimed that in spite of its recognised importance amongst scholars and laypeople alike, leadership is still a misapprehended concept as little is known about what it is and what it entails. There is however a general understanding amongst writers that leadership entails some sort of coherent process of influencing people towards shared goals (Newstead et al., 2019). Sharma et al. (2019) asserted that a successful leader is one who is able to influence followers to achieve organisational objectives. In agreement, Northouse (2019: 43), defined leadership as, "A process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal." This is the definition of leadership that was adopted for the purpose of this report. Northouse (2019) further identified the following four components which he deemed central to the phenomenon that is leadership: (1) leadership is a process, (2) leadership involves influence, (3) leadership occurs in groups, and (4) leadership involves common goals. Each component is succinctly discussed herein under.

2.2.1 *Leadership is a process*

As a process, leadership is an interactive exercise between the leader and the followers, as opposed to a characteristic or trait unique to the individual formally selected as the leader of the group (Northouse, 2019). It can therefore be concluded that the leadership component of process implies that a leader both affects; and is affected by, followers (Northouse, 2019).

2.2.2 *Leadership involves influence*

Influence, as the *sine qua non* of leadership (Northouse, 2019), is concerned with how an individual can have an effect on the character, development or behaviour of a group of individuals – the followers. The mere existence of leadership is dependent on the component of influence. Without influence, there can be no leadership.

2.2.3 *Leadership occurs in groups*

Leadership occurs in the context of groups, irrespective of the size of the group. It further involves one individual guiding and influencing a group of individuals towards the achievement of common objectives (Northouse, 2019).

2.2.4 *Leadership involves common goals*

A leader's focus is on a group of individuals concerned with achieving shared or common objectives. Northouse (2019) argued that attention to mutual goals grants leadership an ethical overtone, as it emphasises the need for leaders to work with followers in an attempt to achieve the mutual objectives. Mutuality reduces the possibility of leaders acting unethically, particularly towards followers (Northouse, 2019).

2.3 A philosophical view of virtuous leadership

The frequent and fervent reporting of global ethical scandals has cast the limelight on leadership ethics (Li & Bao, 2020; Lee et al*.,* 2017; Bedi et al., 2016; Goswami et al., 2020). As such, scandals illustrate a clear lack of regard for ethical values and norms (Sanz & Fontrodona, 2019). The significant increase in the exploration of ways to counter the temptation of wrong-doing amongst business leaders, therefore comes as no surprise (Wang & Hackett, 2020). In the view of Wang and Hackett (2016), defining leadership in terms of virtues and characters has an

entrenched history in both eastern and western culture. Similar to their western colleagues Aristotle, Plato and Socrates, ancient Chinese philosophers such as Confucius and Mencius have produced influential works on the relevance and significance of ethics in leadership (Zhu, Zheng, He, Wang & Zhang, 2019; Wang & Hackett, 2016; Papouli, 2018). *Xiuji* and *anren* are two Chinese expressions which mean "cultivating oneself" and "bringing the good to others" respectively. These expressions are indicative of the deep entrenchment of moral and ethical values in Chinese culture (Zhu et al., 2019). A leader's personal cultivation and advancement into a good and moral individual is the focus of *xiuji*. In the opinion of Zhu et al. (2019), a leader's ability to guide the behaviour of others in desirable ways as captured by the expression *anren*, resonates with the notion of positively influencing followers. According to Bedi et al. (2016), this positive influence of followers by leaders can be achieved by using rewards, punishments and verbal persuasion. Li and Bao (2020) asserted that leaders' personal virtues which include integrity, fairness, honesty and openness can also contribute positively towards a successful leader-follower relationship (Wang & Hackett, 2016).

Virtue, according to both Aristotle and Confucius – western and eastern culture respectively, is a character trait or a state of human character disposing individuals to accomplish excellence (Wang & Hackett, 2020). This view is consistent with that of Newstead et al. (2018), who believed that virtues are human inclinations towards that which is excellent. Virtuous leaders are concerned with converting virtuous leadership into virtuous followership (Wang & Hackett, 2020). This is achieved through the intentional and consistent role modelling of virtues with the primary aim of cultivating character (Wang & Hackett, 2016). For their study, Nassif, Hackett and Wang (2020), adopted the virtuous leadership definition of Wang and Hackett (2016: 326) which is, "A leader–follower relationship wherein a leader's situational appropriate expression of virtues triggers follower perceptions of leader virtuousness, worthy of emulation." While virtues may to a certain extent be present in every individual from as early as birth, Wang and Hackett (2016), supported by Ghosh (2016), were of the firm

belief that they can only become habitual through learning, education, repetitive actions and practices, as well as early influences.

2.3.1 The six cardinal virtues influencing virtuous leadership

Wang and Hackett (2016) identified six cardinal leadership virtues from Aristotelian and Confucian typology. In their opinion, Wang and Hackett (2016) believed that all six virtues are: (1) dispositions incorporating "good" character traits different from personal traits like skills, capabilities, feelings and competencies; (2) culturally inclusive as they are entrenched in western and eastern traditions; (3) interrelated; and (4) contributors to effective and ethical leadership. While Newstead et al. (2018) alleged that much has changed since philosophising organised human activity and indeed the nature of human character, humans continue to look for moral direction as they engage in organised activity. Each of the six cardinal leadership virtues is discussed briefly herein after.

2.3.1.1 *The virtue of courage*

Aristotle's virtue of *courage* coincides with Confucius' virtue of "Yong" (courage), which according to both philosophers is a character trait that enables leaders to consistently do the right thing without fear, even when they may not be popular for it (Wang & Hackett, 2016). In their study and congruent to Aristotle and Confucius' explanation of the virtue of courage, Magnano, Paolillo, Platania and Santisi (2017) identified three common points that characterise courage: (1) action that is voluntary or intentional, (2) meaningful purpose and (3) presence of fear. Magnano et al. (2017) then concluded that courageous actions encompass the voluntary pursuit of a socially worthy objective in spite of the associated risk and the fear introduced by the challenging event. According to Hulme, Groom and Heltzel (2016), courageous leadership is especially needed to challenge and improve the status quo. Phillips and Phillips (2020) defined a courageous leader as one who despite many challenges, difficulties and uncertainties can deliver in

ambiguous environments. Based on this definition, it is evident that change will seldom occur in the absence of the virtue of courage (Hulme et al., 2016).

2.3.1.2   The virtue of temperance

Temperance is the Aristotelian virtue coinciding with the Confucian virtue "Zhongyong" (moderation). For Wang and Hackett (2016), temperance is a disposition that assists leaders to control their emotional reactions and self-gratification desires. In addition to corporate scandals bearing testimony to the evident lack of regard for ethical values and norms, Sanz and Fontrodona (2019) claimed that they show a lack of the virtue of temperance, which they defined as a display of moderation and balance in the expedition of desirable pleasures for the sake of curbing unethical practices. Sanz and Fontrodona (2019) further argued that temperance is a prerequisite for the attainment of all the other virtues. In the absence of temperance, humans cannot attain moral or intellectual goods. It is for this reason that Sanz and Fontrodona (2019: 991) viewed temperance as the most fundamental of the virtues – "a necessary condition for moral development and the most basic form of self-mastery." Contextually, leaders exemplify temperance when they are able to desist excessive pleasures (Sanz & Fontrodona, 2019) and self-indulgent behaviours that could potentially harm the organisation (Wang and Hackett, 2016).

2.3.1.3   The virtue of justice

"Yi" (righteousness) is the Confucian virtue coinciding with the Aristotelian virtue of *justice*. In the opinion of Wang and Hackett (2016), justice as a human character trait (Huang, 2018) is concerned with the fair and consistent treatment of others. Liu (2017: 179) understood justice to mean "no unacceptable harm to the human" or "respecting the deserved rights of the human". Just leaders are therefore individuals who remain objective and impartial in their decision-making and treatment of others.

2.3.1.4   The virtue of wisdom

Confucius' virtue of "Zhi" (wisdom) coincides with Aristotle's virtue of *prudence* which refers to a leader's ability to make the "right" decisions for the achievement of the "right" goals (Wang & Hackett, 2016). Wisdom goes beyond problem-solving and reasoning, it is also about knowing when to listen to the next person and consideration of both the short- and long-term consequences (Grossmann, 2017). A wise or prudent leader will always evaluate and examine opportunities in light of their possible consequences (Wang & Hackett, 2016).

2.3.1.5   The virtue of humanity

Humanity represents the Aristotelian virtue of friendliness, which aligns with the Confucian virtue of "Ren" (humanity). Wang and Hackett (2016) believed humanity to be a character trait underlying a leader's care, love and respect for others. Contextually, leaders demonstrate their humanity through their interaction with others, and adjust their manners appropriately depending on who they are interacting with.

2.3.1.6   The virtue of truthfulness

The Aristotelian virtue of *truthfulness* corresponds with the Confucian virtue of "Xin" (truthfulness) which refers to a leader's reliability and ability to keep their promises (Wang & Hackett, 2016). As stated by Miller (2020), the virtue of honesty (truthfulness) breeds honest thoughts which in turn can breed honest behaviour. Additionally, Miller (2020) was of the view that honesty in its broadness pertains to at least the following kinds of behaviour:

Deceiving: A leader that practises honesty is inclined to consistently be truthful.

Pilfering: A leader that practises honesty is inclined to consistently show respect for that which does not belong to him or her.

Cheating: A leader that practises honesty is inclined to consistently adhere to fair and appropriate rules.

Promise breaking: A leader that practises honesty is inclined to consistently keep the promises he or she makes.

Misleading: A leader that practises honesty is inclined to sufficiently represent relevant facts.

A leader who succeeds in all five of the above domains as a minimum, may be considered honest or truthful.

2.4 The effect of a virtuous leader on organisational culture

Odor (2018) opined that gaining an understanding of culture is particularly important to individuals with an interest in the study of organisational growth and development, as it has the potential to give an organisation a strong competitive advantage. Before gaining popularity in the 1980s (Carvalho, Sampaio, Rebentisch, Carvalho & Saraiva, 2019), organisational culture may have been a difficult concept to define (Whelan, 2016). Since then, Whelan (2016) has alleged that the concept had been both defined and studied in various ways. Contrary to Whelan (2016), Serpa (2016) was of the belief that while organisational culture may be a concept that has been extensively studied, it does not possess a widely accepted definition, least of all from a cultural perspective. There is however a general agreement between the scholars that culture is the beliefs, values and attitudes shared by most, if not all employees of the organisation, and is closely associated with the objectives and values of the leadership of the organisation. Culture, as something that exists within organisations can be linked to a variety of organisational outcomes including performance (Whelan, 2016). Like Whelan (2016), Odor (2018) believed organisational culture that is expressed in the beliefs and assumptions, values, attitudes and behaviours of employees, contributes immensely to an organisation's motivation and performance.

Dubbed a leading authority (Warrick, 2017) and one of the most influential scholars (Whelan, 2016) in the field of organisational culture, Edgar Schein's research has also been widely cited in the work of organisational culture scholastics including in Odor (2018) and Serpa (2016). It would therefore be incomplete for any research on organisational culture to be conducted without a review of some of the previous research conducted by Edgar Schein on the topic. Subsequent to a review of various categories used by scholars to describe culture, Schein (2004) rendered his definition of culture as basic assumptions which have developed as a result of a group's interactions and which influence how the group thinks and acts. Practically, organisational culture is a description of the environment in which people work and refers to how these people think, act and generally experience their work (Warrick et al., 2016).

Schein (2010) suggested that the culture in organisations is typically the result of the entrenchment of what the leader has imposed on a group that has been successful. To this end, culture is at the end of the day created, embedded, evolved and eventually manipulated by leaders (Schein, 2010) at all levels of the organisation (Warrick et al., 2016). Warrick (2017) concluded that organisational cultures reflect their leaders. In likening culture to personality, Schein (2010) believed that culture is to an organisation, what personality is to humans. Culture can at its best create excellent working environments resulting in a successful organisation, but at its worst, it can bring out the worst in employees and cause the failure of an organisation (Warrick et al., 2016 & Warrick, 2017). The development and sustainability of a desired organisational culture goes far beyond leaders announcing desired values and placing them on the walls of the organisation. Building a strong organisational culture involves intentional linkage to the vision, values and strategy of the organisation, as well as taking decisive and specific action towards aligning organisational systems and practices with it (Warrick et al., 2016).

Behaviours and influential group members have a noteworthy impact on the shaping of organisational culture (Warrick, 2017). Employees are likely to react

to behaviours, good or bad, that are both valued and rewarded. It is for this reason that leaders ought to be judicious about desired organisational behaviours. Amongst the many pay-offs and advantages to a healthy and high-performance organisational culture characterised by commitment to excellence, ethics and doing the right thing (Warrick, 2017), is a positive influence on the ethical behaviour of employees (Warrick, 2017; Odor, 2018). So important is organisational culture, that the financial services regulators in both the United Kingdom and United States of America have identified its active management as a mechanism to reduce corruption (Filabi & Bulgarella, 2018). In addition to the financial services sector, the U.S. Sentencing Commission has, through the Federal Sentencing Guidelines for Organisations – a document outlining the criteria for an effective ethics and compliance program – recognised the impact of organisational culture on ethical conduct (Filabi & Bulgarella, 2018). Trevino, Haidt, and Filabi (2017) believed that organisations should pay particular attention to their culture in order to mitigate the risk of corruption and misconduct. In the opinion of Filabi and Bulgarella (2018), culture as a complex phenomenon drives the behaviour of employees through formal organisational systems which include amongst others, official communications from executives, internal policies and procedures, as well as performance management. Culture also emerges through the mind sets and behaviours of employees by learning and imitating others.

2.5 Leadership induction of ethical behaviour among employees

Promoting business ethics and performance goes far beyond traditional organisational power bases (Nygaard et al., 2017). The ethical behaviours and attitudes of employees can be affected by value-based leadership (Nygaard et al., 2017; Filabi & Bulgarella, 2018). In the opinion of Nygaard et al. (2017), power as a key managerial tool with the capacity to influence the behaviour of others can affect and modify ethical values. Similarly, Reiley and Jacobs (2016) were confident that the extent to which employees perceive their leaders to be ethical has the potential to impact the manner in which they react to the influence of

these leaders. Ethical values within an organisation are best promoted and supported through referent power, which is also known as leadership by role model (Nygaard et al., 2017). Influence by example is more likely to induce ethical behaviour amongst employees, as Nygaard et al. (2017) deemed it more impactful than any other source of influence. In accordance with the social learning theory, employees observe their leaders whose actions they deem credible and legitimate and take their behaviour as a reference (Chen & Hou, 2016; Tu et al., 2017; Li & Bao, 2020). As advocates of organisational consensus to moral commitment rather than a command and control approach, Nygaard et al. (2017) were convinced that the exhibition of ethical codes of conduct on organisations' websites and their inclusion in employee contracts with organisations as an attempt to create ethical corporate conduct may indeed have an undesired effect when compared with leadership by role model.

For the purposes of their respective pieces of research pertaining to ethical leadership, Reiley and Jacobs (2016); Chen and Hou (2016); Lee et al. (2017); Tu et al. (2017); Cheng et al. (2019); Li and Bao (2020); Goswami et al. (2020), as well as Nassif et al. (2020), adopted the ethical leadership definition proposed by Brown et al. (2005: 120), which is "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." In his view, Bauman (2018) believed that a virtuous leader can be regarded as an ethical leader, precisely because his or her virtuous dispositions and moral psychology are expected to guide his or her followers towards ethical conduct. It is predominantly through their actions which are informed by attributes of honesty, trustworthiness, care and fairness that ethical leaders strive to influence the behaviour of their followers (Chen & Hou, 2016). Lee et al. (2017) affirmed that a moral leader is typified by characteristics such as honesty, integrity, fairness and trustworthiness. Furthermore, a moral leader strives to do what is right, makes decisions based on ethical standards and presents concern for others with a level head (Chen & Hou, 2016). It can therefore be argued that an ethical leader, a virtuous leader and a moral leader

possess the same characteristics. Chen and Hou (2016) contended that the ethical behaviour of subordinates is stimulated by the ethical behaviour of their leaders through communication and encouragement. Employees who observe the encouragement demonstrated by their ethical leaders are through voice behaviour, more likely to courageously express their opinions or ideas against inappropriate or unethical actions (Chen & Hou, 2016; Lee et al., 2017).

Moral voice, which according to Lee et al. (2017) is the act of speaking out against inappropriate and particularly unethical behaviour, tends to create tension and discomfort in organisations, and may to an extent introduce fear and risk. Despite its sensitive and difficult nature, moral voice deserves proper attention due to its ability to sustain the organisation (Lee et al., 2017). Ethical leaders use the tools of their position to serve as role models to their subordinates (Lee et al., 2017). By virtue of their position, leaders can coach ethical behaviours in the workplace and possess the power to allocate rewards and punishments to employees who either respect or violate ethical standards (Lee et al., 2017; Tu et al., 2017; Bedi et al., 2016). Aware of the possibility of their behaviours being either rewarded or punished in accordance with ethical standards, employees are more probable to engage in desired behaviours (Lee et al., 2017). Ethical leaders as legitimate role models are therefore expected to create a fair working environment with clear ethical standards and due regard for ethical behaviours. This, in an effort to entice employees to use their moral voice and comment on ethical issues affecting the organisation. Lee et al. (2017) are adamant that the presence of ethical leadership enables employees to speak out against immoral conducts. The gradual convergence of the values of leaders with those of employees is likely to result in employees emulating their ethical leaders, more so as these leaders express their thoughts regarding unethical behaviour in the organisation, unveil their actions to the employees and emphasise the ethical value of the employees (Chen & Hou, 2016).

Lee et al. (2017) proposed that moral voice shares commonalities with whistleblowing, given its nature of entailing an element of personal risk. Moral

voice and whistleblowing are both behaviours based on moral motive with the potential of personal risk as they challenge the status quo (Lee et al., 2017; Li & Bao, 2020). Groenewald (2020) defined whistleblowing as the act of a current or former organisational stakeholder seeking attention from internal or external parties whom they believe can act against wrong-doing that has taken place; is about to take place, or is currently taking place in an organisation. The aim of whistleblowing is to overcome irregular, criminal and unethical behaviour in an organisation (Groenewald, 2020). Whistleblowing only becomes an option for potential whistle-blowers when they feel its potential benefits outweigh its potential costs (Cheng et al., 2019). Cheng et al. (2019) acknowledged the importance of ethical leadership in whistleblowing for three reasons. Firstly, ethical leaders are perceived as trustworthy and responsible individuals with the ability to speak against unethical organisational behaviour, making them imitable. Secondly, the concern that ethical leaders have for employees drives them to interact with the employees. This interaction will consequently prompt employees to reciprocate by reporting unethical behaviour for the welfare of the organisation. Thirdly, ethical leaders have the potential to protect whistle-blowers from wrongdoers and co-workers by promoting whistleblowing as a legitimate and necessary exercise (Cheng et al., 2019).

The purpose of positive organisational behaviours which are self-initiated is to challenge and improve the status quo (Lee et al., 2017; Li & Bao, 2020). The occurrence of disagreement, confrontation, retaliation and general conflict cannot be ruled out when challenging the status quo. Due to safety concerns, some employees may choose to remain inactive (Li & Bao, 2020). Li and Bao (2020) further argued that such safety concerns can indeed be resolved by ethical leadership. Ethical leadership has, in the preceding paragraphs, been exemplified to be an enabler of the moral voices of employees (Lee et al., 2017) and as a motivation for employees to engage in whistleblowing (Cheng et al., 2019). In their research, Tu et al. (2017) concluded that virtues of ethical leaders such as honesty, integrity and trustworthiness can ease the safety concerns of employees. Ethical leaders communicate ethical information to those they lead

and ensure that they understand what is ethically right and wrong through the ethical models that they set; and by expressing their ethical expectations and values to employees (Tu et al., 2017). Employees exposed to these behaviours of ethical leaders are likely to have higher moral awareness that will enable them to remain sensitive to ethical problems and to respond to an ethical dilemma in a normatively appropriate manner (Tu et al., 2017). Moreover, Tu et al. (2017) proposed that ethical leadership will mould the moral identity of employees in three ways. Firstly, by exerting ethical behaviours and preferences in a work environment, ethical leaders provide ethical modelling for employees to follow. Secondly, the more ethical leaders openly communicate and display their ethical values and principles, the more employees are likely to adopt these ethical beliefs and to behave morally. Thirdly, ethical leaders shape employees through the use of rewards and punishments.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with the most essential part of the research – the review of the literature. This is part of the research exercise that was undertaken to find out from an array of literature that which has already been researched on the topic of virtuous leadership and how it impacts on an organisational culture and the behaviour of employees. The review of the literature constitutes the marrow of one's study and the means through which the researcher commits to undertake and demonstrate a satisfactory level of acquaintance with the literature on the topic of virtuous leadership and its effect of organisational culture and the behaviour of employees. The literature reviewing part of the research has provided the investigator with guidelines and useful suggestions regarding the constituents of the study. The next chapter discusses the research design and methodology of the study.

Chapter 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The world's most attractive and beautiful of creations are all products of skilful designs. There is essentially nothing on earth that man has ever achieved without a design in one way or the other. Human beings, therefore, plan carefully and drive meticulously at achieving their goals and objectives. As such, planning is without a doubt an indispensable element to achieving one's predetermination. Designing is as important to a manufacturer as it is to a researcher whose eagerness to investigate the phenomenon of interest can only be realisable through careful strategies. The aim of research design is to provide an accurate image of the structure of the research (Al Kilani & Kobziev, 2016). As a critical topic central to research studies (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018), research design is the blueprint for data collection, analysis and interpretation (Wright, O'Brien & Nimmon, 2016). It was the view of Wright et al. (2016) that how a researcher views and investigates the world (i.e. ontology and epistemology), should be aligned with the approach of collecting data (i.e. methodology) and the tools of collecting and analysing the data (i.e. methods). This alignment is a critical element to quality research design (Wright et al., 2016). In this chapter, the researcher explores the following elements of the research design: research methodology; sampling; data collection instruments and procedures; and data analysis. As a basis for a fuller grasp of the research machinery, this chapter will in the course of specific narrative; demonstrate and uphold a research design as an approach in the assembling, organising, and integrating data from the research subjects in order to provide appropriate answers to the research questions.

3.2 Research philosophies

A research philosophy, which according to Ryan (2018) shapes the beliefs and values that guide the research design, is what is perceived as the truth, reality and knowledge by the researcher. Research methods and analysis are guided by three distinguished research philosophies, namely positivism, interpretivism and critical theory (Ryan, 2018; Pham, 2018). It should however be noted that between these three philosophies, various other increasingly used philosophies such as pragmatism exist (Alharahsheh, 2019). This discussion shall however only give due regard to the core principles of positivism, interpretivism and critical theory.

3.2.1 Positivism

Positivism as a form of empiricism is generally linked to experiments and quantitative research (Ryan, 2018). Under this research philosophy, the world is viewed objectively and knowledge is not influenced by the researcher's values and beliefs (Wright et al., 2016; Ryan, 2018). As such, there must be separation between the researcher and the research participant (Park, Konge & Artino, 2020). Ontologically, positivism implies that reality is the same for everyone, it is measurable and can be proven (Ryan, 2018; Park et al., 2020). Epistemologically, positivists believe that knowledge is definite, harmonious with reality and accurate (Park et al., 2020).

3.2.2 Critical theory

Ryan (2018) believed that critical theory is concerned with challenging world views together with the underlying power structures responsible for their creation. Critical theorists adopt a historical realist standpoint on ontology as they are inclined to consult the past in order to move forward (Ryan, 2018). Furthermore, reality for critical theorists is socially constructed through society, institutions and the media (Pham, 2018). Under this philosophy, both the object and subject of

the study are intimately linked, with the researcher always being part of the object of enquiry (Ryan, 2018).

3.2.3 Interpretivism

Contrary to positivists, interpretivists maintain that the world cannot be understood through the application of experiments adopted from natural sciences (Ryan, 2018). Interpretivism is of the view that knowledge and truth are subjective, as the social world is given meaning by people's lived experiences (Ryan, 2018). Furthermore, interpretivism accepts the diverse viewpoints of different people in different groups, unlike positivism which accepts only one correct answer (Pham, 2018). It is accepted that under this research philosophy, the researcher's own values and beliefs inform the manner in which data is collected, interpreted and analysed (Ryan, 2018).

The philosophical considerations of interpretivism formed the foundation of this study. Each participant was afforded the opportunity to fully relate to the researcher their lived experiences of the culture and leadership of the institution in as far as ethics, morality and virtuousness are concerned. Basias and Pollalis (2018) suggested that research based on the interpretivist paradigm is concerned with gaining a deeper understanding of a particular phenomenon through a deep-level investigation of the lived experiences of individuals. Furthermore, interpretivism is focused on studying experiential human behaviour based on awareness, recognition, and sheer understanding and not on measurements. The interpretivism philosophy recognises the difference between social and natural sciences and as such acknowledges that humans cannot be studied in a similar way to physical phenomena (Alharahsheh, 2019). It was the view of Alharahsheh (2019) that research would adopt several common qualities by following the interpretivist philosophy. First, research would focus on the entire experience as opposed to certain parts of it. Second, the identification and development of research questions and problems is influenced by the researcher's interest, involvement and commitment. Third, the researcher can

use informal discussions and interviews to further explore the depth of individual experiences. Fourth, the researcher could adopt qualitative designs and methodologies for the exploration of human experiences. Fifth, instead of considering generalised measurements or expectations as is the case under positivism, interpretivism enables researchers to explore individual experiences in detail to gain deep insights based on specific context.

3.3 Philosophical assumptions of research

It was the standpoint of Wright et al. (2016) that the reasonable starting point for a research project should be the examination of the researcher's philosophical assumptions and those forming the foundation of their research questions before deciding on their preferred data collection methods. According to Rehman and Alharthi (2016), a research paradigm, which is also known as a research assumption, is a rudimentary belief system and theoretical framework with assumptions pertaining to ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods. Assumptions within epistemology, the nature or philosophical study of knowledge, as well as ontology, the nature or philosophical study of reality, determine the philosophical anchorage of research (Wright et al., 2016; Vildåsen, Keitsch & Fet, 2017). Wright et al. (2016) were of the firm belief that the type of research questions asked by researchers, their research approach, as well as the data collection and analytic methods employed are influenced by worldviews which have an impact on the knowledge beliefs of researchers. While researchers may not write explicitly about epistemology and ontology in their papers, these assumptions remain implied in their research. Understanding these assumptions will however assist scholars to gain a better understanding of research (Lyon, 2017), as such, a succinct overview of each assumption is given herein under.

3.3.1 Epistemology

Epistemology, which is the study of the nature and justification of knowledge, is the foundation of all empirical inquiry (Bowleg, 2017). Furthermore, epistemology

- which answers the question, "How do we know that which we claim to know?" (Wright, 2016; Bowleg, 2017) - is arguably a critical starting point for any research, irrespective of whether the researcher uses a qualitative, quantitative or a mixed research approach (Bowleg, 2017). For the purpose of this study, the knowledge of the researcher was based on her familiarity with the ethical environment of the institution under review.

3.3.2 Ontology

Philosophically, ontology is the study of reality or the nature of being (Alberti, 2016; Nasution, 2018). Ontology is therefore concerned with the phenomenon in terms of its nature of existence (Alharahsheh, 2019). It refers to that which can be known and is believed to be factual. Ethical scandals are a reality. From Steinhoff to VBS Bank and KPMG in the private sector, to State Owned Enterprises such as SAA, Eskom and the SABC, the past decade has been marred by rampant corruption, ethics failures as well as leadership and employee incompetence (Vorster & Konstatinopoulos, 2020).

3.4 Research design

In this study, the researcher used a non-experimental design. According to Reio (2016), non-experimental design is the leading type of research design used in social sciences and refers to any qualitative or quantitative research that is not experimental, i.e. where the researcher has the ability and opportunity to manipulate at least one independent variable. Non-experimental research is instead concerned with finding relations between variables (Reio, 2016). This design involves a group of units of analysis selected from a population (N) of employees in the employ of the institution under review to serve as a sample (n) of employees whom the researcher deems to have perceptible knowledge of the institution's ethics programme and efforts to promote an ethical organisational culture. This selected sample of employees will be studied systematically and intensively.

3.5 Research methodology

According to Mohajan (2018), every researcher conducting a study must construct an explicit, disciplined and systematic approach that will aid the quest of finding the most appropriate results. The choice of research methodology is determined by the research questions which the study endeavours to answer, as well as the subject under investigation (Viswambharan & Priya, 2016). It therefore follows that the format of the investigation should be viewed as a tool that aims to answer the research questions. Hendriks et al. (2020) believed that a leader has the potential to influence organisational outcomes including the behaviour of employees. In the same way, Bauman (2018) believed that a virtuous leader can be regarded as an ethical leader, precisely because his or her virtuous dispositions and moral psychology are expected to guide his or her followers towards ethical conduct. Sharing the same sentiments as Hendriks et al. (2020) and Bauman (2018), the researcher has undertaken this study with the aim of answering the question, "*Are the policies, frameworks and procedures endorsed by the leadership of the institution, with the intention of promoting an ethical organisational culture and inducing ethical behaviour amongst employees, a complete reflection of the virtuous leadership of the institution*?" The study was further guided by the following sub-questions:

- Which leadership attributes have the potential to influence the ethical inclination of employees?
- What visible example does the leadership of the organisation set for employees in as far as ethical behaviour is concerned?
- Are the current interventions endorsed by the leadership of the organisation to prevent and, where possible, eradicate unlawful conduct sufficient to promote ethical behaviour?
- Which conditions will persuade employees to behave in an ethical manner?

The primary objective of this study was therefore to determine whether the policies, frameworks and procedures endorsed by the leadership of the institution, with the intention of promoting an ethical organisational culture and inducing ethical behaviour amongst employees, are a complete reflection of the virtuous leadership of the institution.

The following secondary research objectives were formulated to unpack the primary research objective:

- To identify leadership attributes with the potential to influence the ethical inclination of employees.
- To determine whether leaders set a visible example of how to behave ethically in the organisation.
- To verify whether the current interventions endorsed by the leadership to prevent and, where possible, eradicate unlawful conduct and unethical behaviour are sufficient to promote ethical behaviour.
- To identify conditions that will persuade employees to behave in an ethical manner.

3.6 Research methods

Abutabenjeh and Jaradat (2018) suggested that research methods consist of three elements: (a) data collection, (b) analysis and (c) interpretation. Quantitative research methods such as numeric data or close-ended questions may be used to collect data, while the overall results could be obtained by using statistical analysis and interpretation methods (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018). Alternatively, qualitative research methods comprising of open-ended questions or interviews may be used by the researcher to collect data. The researcher may also obtain the overall research results through the use of themes and patterns interpretation or text and image analysis (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018). A mixed method, which combines both the qualitative and quantitative research methods may also be used by the researcher (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018).

3.6.1 Quantitative research methods

Goertzen (2017) understood quantitative research methods to be concerned with the collection and analysis of data that can be measured and presented numerically. Quantitative research is effective at answering direct and quantifiable questions relating to the "what" or "how" of a given study, precisely because it is premised on measurements (Goertzen, 2017). While quantitative research methods highlight behaviours and trends in data sets or study groups, they fail to provide reasons behind the identified behaviours and trends (Goertzen, 2017). Researchers opting for this method can generalise their findings to a specific population because of the large data sets (Goertzen, 2017; Gerring, 2017). Furthermore, research frameworks and methods can be obtained without effort as quantitative studies are conducted with the aim of enabling their replication over time. In agreement, Dodgson (2017) added that data collected for a quantitative research project by different researchers will be the same. It should however be noted that quantitative research methods are not without limitations. Data acquired for quantitative studies is collected over longer periods of time. Moreover, specific demographic groups such as the vulnerable may pose a challenge to reach (Goertzen, 2017).

3.6.2 Qualitative research methods

The focus of qualitative research methods is on gaining a deep and meaningful understanding of an experience or phenomenon (Cruz & Tantia, 2017). Contrary to quantitative research which is generalised to populations (Goertzen, 2017), the results of qualitative research are bound by specific context (Cruz & Tantia, 2017). Cruz and Tantia (2017) further opined that the selection of participants of a qualitative study is based on the magnitude and relevance of information they possess in relation to the research question(s) posed. For Cruz and Tantia (2017), the selection of individuals selected to participate in the study is by far more critical than the actual number of participants selected. Qualitative research therefore employs small samples which are selected in a purposive or

opportunistic fashion (Gerring, 2017). Qualitative researchers have a different view of the world, as such, they approach the world from a different perspective (Dodgson, 2017). Objectivity does not apply in qualitative research, meaning, the varying views of reality informed by individual perspectives are all taken into consideration. The researcher's interaction within the study enables him or her to become part of the research process (Dodgson, 2017; Yates & Leggett, 2016).

3.6.3 Mixed methods research

Mixed methods research entails a deliberate mixing of qualitative and quantitative research methods in the collection, analysis and interpretation of data for a study (Shorten & Smith, 2017; Gerring, 2017; Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). The intentional mixing of research methods exposes researchers to a wider and more diverse view of their research landscape and enables research questions to be answered at a much deeper and enriched level (Shorten & Smith, 2017). Additionally, Shorten and Smith (2017) believed that mixing research methods can facilitate the answering of questions which otherwise would not be satisfactorily answered by making use of either the qualitative or quantitative methods alone. Furthermore, mixed methods present an opportunity for researchers to better understand the links and contradictions between qualitative and quantitative data and for participants to strongly voice their experiences during the research process (Shorten & Smith, 2017).

The mixing of research methods does however introduce challenges (Gerring, 2017) and a level of complexity (Shorten & Smith, 2017) to the research process. Gerring (2017) was concerned with the effectiveness of this method as according to him, engaging in mixed methods means doing multiple things which is bound to result in the poor execution of certain processes due to limited expertise, time and space. In agreement with Gerring (2017), Shorten and Smith (2017) were of the opinion that mixed methods require more time and trained personnel as the research team needs to be acquainted with the collection, analysis and

interpretation of both qualitative and quantitative research methods for the successful execution of the study.

3.7 Justification for the selection of qualitative research

This study has adopted the qualitative research method guided by the interpretivism philosophy. As attested by Safdar, Abbo, Knobloch and Seo (2016), qualitative research is used to improve the understanding of complex social phenomena or issues and to discover the beliefs, values and behaviour of selected participants. Philosophically, qualitative research takes an interpretivism approach which believes that knowledge and truth are subjective as a result of the social world being given meaning by people's lived experiences (Ryan, 2018). The aim of this study was to determine the effect of virtuous leadership on the culture of the organisation and the ethical behaviour of employees. Using the qualitative research method premised on interpretivism has enabled the researcher to gain a full and in-depth understanding of how the leadership of the institution under review is perceived by the employees selected to participate in the study in relation to its ability to influence their ethical behaviour.

Qualitative methods occur within a natural setting and are influenced by the researcher's own values and beliefs (Ryan, 2018; Safdar et al., 2016). This further contributed positively towards gaining a thorough understanding of the role that virtuous leadership plays in the institution under review. The descriptive nature of qualitative research has further enabled the researcher to capture the detailed descriptions of the lived experiences of the participants. It is also hoped that this descriptive nature of the qualitative study will grant the readers thereof an opportunity to understand the nature of the lived experiences of the participants and their impact on the institution under review.

3.8 Sampling design

In research studies it is often not possible, practical or appropriate to collect and study data from an entire population of interest (Majid, 2018). A population is generally made up of too many individuals to be included as participants in a study (Majid, 2018). It is for this reason that researchers will rather collect and study a subset of the population of interest and draw conclusions from the findings of the subset to the population of interest (Majid, 2018; Martínez-Mesa et al., 2016). It is important for a researcher to describe the demographic characteristics of the preferred research participant; as reflecting on such characteristics is vital for the conceptualisation of the population of interest, study setting, eligibility criteria and the sampling strategies that will optimise the recruitment and retention of participants (Majid, 2018).

3.8.1   Population

A population is a group of individuals who share a common character or condition of interest for a particular investigation or decision (Elfil & Negida, 2017). It is therefore the universe from which data relevant to an investigation can be drawn. The population for this study was the staff complement of the institution under investigation.

3.8.2   Sample

A sample is a subset of the population from which a researcher can draw conclusions about the population (Martínez-Mesa et al., 2016; Majid, 2018). Sampling on the other hand is the process of selecting the subset that is representative of the population (Majid, 2018). The sample for this study was a group of employees whom the researcher deemed to have sufficient knowledge of the institution's ethics programme and efforts to promote an ethical organisational culture.

3.8.3 Sampling techniques

Sampling techniques are strategies which a researcher employs to obtain a subset that is representative of the population. These techniques typically fall into two categories – probability and non-probability sampling (Etikan & Bala, 2017; Kim & Wang, 2019).

3.8.3.1   Probability sampling

Probability sampling, which is also known as random sampling, is a sampling technique where each item in the universe has an equal chance of probability to be selected as part of the sample (Etikan & Bala, 2017, Kim & Wang, 2019). Probability sampling is further divided into the following categories: simple random sampling, systematic random sampling, stratified random sampling, cluster sampling and multi-stage sampling (Rahi, 2017). Each probability sampling category is discussed in brief herein under.

(i) Simple random sampling

Simple random sampling is a sampling technique in which each item in the population has an equal chance of being selected as part of the sample of research participants (Rahi, 2017; Majid, 2018). A simple random sample can be selected with the assistance of a computer programme that generates random numbers (Rahi, 2017).

(ii) Systematic random sampling

In systematic random sampling, only the first item of the sample is selected randomly while the remaining sample items are selected at regular intervals (Rahi, 2017; Etikan & Bala, 2017). For example, a researcher would systematically select the first participant that is represented by number 10, and thereafter the rest of the sample would be selected at regular intervals – 20, 30,

40, and so forth (Rahi, 2017). According to Etikan and Bala (2017), this method is easy to execute, cost effective and convenient to use especially in larger samples.

(iii) Stratified random sampling

Stratified random sampling is the equivalent of simple random sampling, but within predefined subgroups (Majid, 2018).

(iv) Cluster sampling

Majid (2018) suggested that cluster sampling is similar to simple random sampling, but within naturally occurring subgroups or strata. Cluster sampling entails obtaining a sample out of geographically dispersed aggregations of population which a researcher may not be able to access at the same time (Rahi, 2017; Etikan & Bala, 2017).

(v) Multi-stage sampling

As the name suggests, multi-stage sampling involves a series of stages. The first stage entails the selection of a random sample of the entire region in a cluster. During the second stage, a researcher selects a specific region. The last stage is where the researcher selects relevant objects to be represented in the sample (Rahi, 2017).

3.8.3.2 Non-probability sampling

Under non-probability sampling, the chance or probability of an item being selected as part of a sample is neither known nor confirmed (Rahi, 2017). Non-probability sampling includes the following categories: convenience sampling, snowball sampling, quota sampling and purposive sampling (Rahi, 2017; Etikan & Bala, 2017).

(i) Convenience sampling

Convenience sampling enables a researcher to obtain data from a population that is conveniently available, i.e. close at hand and easily accessible (Rahi, 2017).

(ii) Snowball sampling

Under the snowball sampling technique, the researcher initially contacts a small number of potential participants and uses them to get to other individuals (Rahi, 2017; Etikan & Bala, 2017). This method is usually employed in situations where the researcher's knowledge about a group or organisation under review is limited.

(iii) Quota sampling

Quota sampling entails the researcher creating a sample which involves individuals that represent a population (Etikan & Bala, 2017). These individuals are selected based on specific qualities or traits (Etikan & Bala, 2017). Sharma (2017) recognised quota sampling as a technique where the aim is to end up with groups of participants (strata) that are proportional to the population under review. Findings from quota sampling cannot be generalised as a sample is not selected in accordance with a probability sampling method (Rahi, 2017).

(iv) Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling, which is also known as selective, judgemental or subjective sampling (Sharma, 2017), refers to a process where the researcher uses his or her own judgement to select a sample of participants he or she believes to know about the problem (Rahi, 2017). In agreement, Etikan and Bala (2017) defined judgemental or purposive sampling as a sampling technique where the researcher selects participants based on whom he or she believes will give the best information that will lead to the objectives of the study being successfully

met. According to Rahi (2017), this sampling technique is not only convenient, but also cost effective.

Purposive sampling was the preferred sampling technique for this study. Using this technique, the student being familiar with the ethical environment of the institution under review - was able to select participants based on subjective judgement. Employees deemed to have sufficient knowledge of the institution's ethics programme and efforts to promote an ethical organisational culture were therefore selected as participants for the study.

Sample adequacy in qualitative studies speaks to the appropriateness of both the sample composition and size (Vasileiou, Barnett, Thorpe & Young, 2018). Small sample sizes afford the researcher the opportunity to conduct in-depth analysis associated with this type of research (Vasileiou et al. (2018). Furthermore, Vasileiou et al. (2018) suggested qualitative samples to be purposive as they are selected by virtue of their capability to provide comprehensive information relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. Vasileiou et al. (2018) were also of the strong view that *saturation* is the most extensively used principle that influences sample size. Hennink, Kaiser and Marconi (2017) understood saturation to be the point in data collection where no new issues or insights are identified. In their study, Hennink et al. (2017) examined 25 in-depth interviews and found that saturation, the point where no new information could be identified, was reached at nine interviews. It was, however, also noted that the point where an in-depth understanding of the issues was reached came between 16 and 24 interviews (Hennink, 2017). It can therefore be concluded that for Hennink et al. (2017), saturation occurs between nine and 24 interviews. The findings of the study conducted by Hennink et al. (2017) were similar to those of the study conducted by Namey, Guest, McKenna and Chen (2016). Namey et al. (2016) found that saturation occurred between eight and 16 interviews.

Based on evidence from the abovementioned studies, the number of participants for this study was limited to 11. These are 11 individuals whom the researcher

deemed to have the requisite knowledge of the institution's ethics programme and efforts to promote an ethical organisational culture.

3.9 Data collection methods

On the word of Paradis, O'Brien and Nimmon (2016), collecting qualitative data is intended to produce useful information that the researcher can use to not only answer his or her research question(s), but to also capture the lived experiences of the research participants. Similarly, Barrett and Twycross (2018) believed that qualitative research methods enable researchers to gain a better understanding of the experiences of participants. The collection of holistic, rich and meaningful data which allows for the emergence of themes and findings through careful analysis is vital for the development of insights (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). The researcher is the primary instrument of data collection in qualitative research (Clark & Vealé, 2018). According to Barrett and Twycross (2018), interviews, focus groups and observation are the core data collection methods in qualitative research. Paradis et al. (2016) have, in their study, identified textual or content analysis as an additional qualitative data collection method. Each of these four data collection methods is discussed in brief herein under.

3.9.1 Textual or content analysis

According to Paradis et al. (2016), textual analysis is the ideal method to use in a research project or to put findings from another method into context. The research question will guide the choice and number of documents to be used: however, these documents could include newspapers, letters, films, organisational policies and procedures, or meeting minutes. Textual or content analysis is therefore better suited for investigations relating to changes in institutional opinions on a particular subject to capture the context of some practices or to probe the lived experiences or perceptions of people who have captured their reflections (Paradis et al., 2016).

3.9.2 Focus groups

Through focus groups, a researcher is able to use either predetermined interview questions or a script to collect information in a group setting (Paradis et al., 2016). Focus groups are an ideal data collection method in instances where the sum of the experiences of a group of participants is greater than a single individual's experiences in understanding a phenomenon. Barrett and Twycross (2018) were of the opinion that a rich discussion can be facilitated within a focus group provided the number of participants per group is limited to between six and 12 people. Paradis et al. (2016) suggested that the number of participants should rather be limited to between eight and 10.

The nature of the focus group is such that many participants can debate and discuss the same issue with the moderator, thus enabling qualitative researchers to gather information from many people at the same time (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). Barrett and Twycross (2018) further claimed that a focus group offers participants a much more relaxed environment that does not require them to be involved in every part of the discussion, unlike with a one-on-one interview.

3.9.3 Observation

Observation as a data collection method affords the researcher an opportunity to study, analyse and understand the experience and behaviour of individuals, as opposed to focusing on the individuals' perceptions and recollections (Paradis et al., 2016; Barrett & Twycross, 2018). This data collection method does however have methodological and ethical implications attached to it (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). While a researcher may be exposed to a large amount of data, methodologically, there is also a high likelihood that the behaviour of individuals may change when they become aware that they are being observed. This may therefore affect the value of the research findings. Ethically, the researcher may be conflicted about when and how to intervene in the event poor practice is observed during a study (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). Poor practice may range

from the ill-treatment of employees to medical negligence, depending on where the study is conducted.

3.9.4 Interviews

Interviewing in research is a process involving the asking of questions by the researcher and the answering thereof by the research participants. Barrett and Twycross (2018) mentioned that through interviews, researchers can obtain rich and detailed data regarding a particular phenomenon. Additionally, the type of interview employed to collect data can be adjusted to suit the research question, characteristics of the research participants, as well as the preferred approach of the researcher (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). Paradis et al. (2016) and Barrett and Twycross (2018) concurred that interviews are most often used to collect information from participants on a one-on-one basis. Furthermore, there is a difference between interview types as informed by the degree of the structure adopted (Paradis et al., 2016; Barrett & Twycross, 2018). Unstructured interviews are flexible enough to allow the researcher to probe and prompt further to obtain rich information and for participants to relay their experiences in a free and detailed manner, while semi-structured or in-depth interviews generate themes, models and theories, and are an ideal data collection method for stories and perceptions relating to specific phenomena and situations (Paradis et al., 2016).

3.9.4.1 Unstructured interviews

Under the unstructured interview, which is also known as the open interview, the researcher or interviewer encourages the interviewees or research participants to at length answer open-ended questions about matters which are significant or prominent for them (Mann, 2016).

3.9.4.2   Semi-structured interviews

A semi-structured interview relies on an interview guide as opposed to a detailed script as is the case with structured interviews (Mann, 2016). While an interviewer can deviate from the guide, it is important for most of the guide to be covered for comparative purposes (Mann, 2016).

Semi-structured interviews were adopted as the preferred data collection method for this study. Primary data was collected from participants individually. The interviews were conducted virtually via MS Teams, as the majority of the workforce of the institution under review was working remotely in response to the current global pandemic of Covid-19. The researcher compiled an interview guide providing an outline of ethics related issues to be covered. The interview process was however flexible enough to accommodate follow-up and new questions, with the aim of gaining in-depth insight into the topic of virtuous leadership and how it influences organisational culture and the ethical behaviour of employees based on the participants' interpretations of the situation. The nature of semi-structured interviews is such that the conversation may diverge from the interview guide, therefore permission was sought from participants to record the interview sessions with the aim of transcribing the recordings for analysis and reporting at a later stage.

The interview guide was divided into two sections, namely Section A – demographic data and Section B – research questions. The demographic data included the age group of the participant, gender, duration of employment, job grade and highest qualification obtained. The purpose of collecting this demographic data was to provide the reader of the study with a brief overview of the research participants involved in the study. It should however be noted that none of the collected demographic data can result in the positive identification of any participant.

Section B of the interview guide contained questions which the researcher believed would help shed light on how employees of the institution under review perceived the leadership of the institution, and whether the virtues they possess had the potential to influence the culture of the organisation, as well as their ethical behaviour as employees. The interview guide (Annexure A) consisted of the following 12 questions, as shown in the table hereafter:

Table 3.1: Interview questions

No	Questions
1.	What according to you is leadership?

2.	How would you define
	    a. virtuous leadership?
	    b. ethical leadership?
	    c. moral leadership?

3.	What virtues (behaviours showing high moral standards) would you associate with...
	    a. A virtuous leadership?
	    b. An ethical leadership?
	    c. A moral leadership?

4.	What virtues (behaviours showing high moral standards) do you associate with the current leadership of the institution?
5.	What virtues (behaviours showing high moral standards) do you feel should be possessed by the leadership of the institution, but are not?
6.	How would you define organisational culture?
7.	How do the virtuous, ethical or moral leaders in the institution influence organisational culture?
8.	How would you describe ethical behaviour?
9.	How does the leadership of the institution demonstrate its commitment towards ethical behaviour?
10.	What virtues (behaviours showing high moral standards) should the leadership of the institution possess for you as an employee to continue behaving ethically?
11.	Would the absence of certain virtues (behaviours showing high moral standards) in the leadership of the institution result in employees like you behaving unethically?
12.	Are the current interventions endorsed by the leadership to prevent and, where possible, eradicate unlawful conduct and unethical behaviour sufficient to promote ethical behaviour?

These questions assisted the researcher to: (a) understand virtuous, ethical or moral leadership from the perspective of the participants, (b) establish how leaders with virtuous, ethical or moral attributes can influence organisational culture and ethical behaviour amongst employees and (c) determine whether the current interventions endorsed by the leadership of the institution under review to prevent and, where possible, eradicate unlawful conduct and unethical behaviour are sufficient to promote ethical behaviour amongst employees.

The researcher conducted all interviews in English. While English may not be the home language of all participants and the researcher herself, all parties involved had a good command of the language due their social, education and professional status. English is also the language that they mostly conduct the business of the institution under review in. Conducting the interviews in English, as opposed to the various home languages of the participants, enabled the researcher to transcribe the views of the participants as they were presented; and consequently, reduced the risk of inaccurate translation. Furthermore, the interviewer thought it best to present the collected information in English, which is the official language of business for the institution under review.

The researcher scheduled an interview appointment at a time convenient to both herself and the participant; upon a participant indicating their interest to participate in the study. Furthermore, the researcher conducted herself in an ethical manner throughout every interview and treated each participant with respect. The background of the study as well as the ethical considerations of participation were explained to each participant at the beginning of every interview and informed consent was obtained. As an individual familiar with the ethical environment of the institution under review, the researcher could identify with the views and responses of the participants. It should, however, be noted that the researcher guarded against imposing her views on the participants, opting to instead treat each participant as an expert and allowing them to fully and freely present their views without any undue influence.

3.10 Data analysis

Data analysis is the stage in the research process which entails transforming extensive fieldwork into meaningful and actionable conclusions (Raskind et al., 2019). In their study, Sechelski and Onwuegbuzie (2019) referred to five major qualitative data analysis approaches: (1) grounded theory, (2) phenomenological psychology, (3) intuitive, (4) discourse analysis and (5) narrative analysis. Each of these approaches is discussed herein under.

3.10.1 Grounded theory

Grounded theory as a method of qualitative data analysis is concerned with the analysis of a single case to formulate a theory that is grounded and based on methodically collected and analysed data (Noble & Mitchell, 2016). Additional cases are subsequently examined with the aim of determining whether they contribute to the formulated theory. Noble and Mitchell (2016) further identified three stages of data analysis in grounded theory, namely:

3.10.1.1 Open coding

This stage involves the identification of key phrases and concepts which are then transferred into subcategories and eventually into categories (Noble & Mitchell, 2016). The researcher constantly compares data collected from each participant with the aim of identifying similarities that will justify the formulation of a theory (Noble & Mitchell, 2016).

3.10.1.2 Axial coding

During this stage, relationships and connections are identified between categories (Noble & Mitchell, 2016).

3.10.1.3   Selective coding

At this stage of data analysis, relationships are authenticated, categories defined and a grounded theory is formulated (Noble & Mitchell, 2016).

3.10.2 Phenomenological psychology

The interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach encourages the formation of a bonding relationship between researchers and their research participants (Alase, 2017). For Sechelski and Onwuegbuzie (2019), IPA is the detailed analysis of how individuals make sense of a given phenomenon, which often represents personal experiences.

3.10.3 Intuitive

Intuitive data analysis hinges around the researcher's intuition and involves the exploration of the researcher's psyche (Anderson, 2019). As a qualitative research method, intuitive inquiry accentuates intuitive ways of knowing (Anderson, 2019).

3.10.4 Discourse analysis

Discourse analysis is a method which researchers use to examine the manner in which research participants employ language when constructing and communicating their reality (Sechelski & Onwuegbuzie, 2019).

3.10.5 Narrative analysis

Narrative analysis as a method of inquiry that takes varying written and oral forms assumes that social reality can be explored through people's stories (Mura & Sharif, 2017) about their lived experiences. As a methodological approach, narrative analysis extends from merely analysing texts to scrutinising social

phenomena, activating, producing, organising and transmitting stories (Mura & Sharif, 2017). Similarly, Sechelski and Onwuegbuzie (2019) recognised narrative analysis as a data analysis technique that treats data as stories that give meaning to the lives of individuals. Mura and Sharif (2017) believed that narrative analysis has the potential to construct a comprehensive understanding of how social realities are created and shared by individuals and societies. In their studies, James (2017), Mura and Sharif (2017) as well as McAlpine (2016) referred to various forms of narrative analysis, namely structural analysis, dialogic/performance analysis, visual narrative analysis and thematic analysis. A brief description of each of the four narrative analysis types follows.

3.10.5.1   Structural analysis

Structural analysis is an analytical procedure that segments stories into their component parts (Bamberg, 2020). Additionally, structural analysis also investigates the core story (Bamberg, 2020).

3.10.5.2   Dialogic/performance analysis

This type of narrative analysis focuses on the dialogue between speakers, the performance of stories within their given contexts and their historical and cultural contexts (James, 2017).

3.10.5.3   Visual narrative analysis

Visual narrative analysis is a methodological tool concerned with the analysis of visual presentations in their fruitful relationship with text (Freistein & Gadinger, 2020). This narrative analysis approach therefore integrates words and images.

3.10.5.4 Thematic analysis

Javadi and Zarea (2016) understood thematic analysis to be a narrative analysis approach that can be used by researchers to extract meanings and concepts from data and includes the identification and recording of themes or patterns. Thematic analysis is relatively simpler and more flexible than other qualitative research methods (Javadi & Zarea, 2016). It is for this reason that inexperienced researchers in qualitative studies are attracted to this method (Javadi & Zarea, 2016). The results of the study conducted by Mura and Sharif (2017) concurred with the observation of Javadi and Zarea (2017). In their study, Mura and Sharif (2017) concluded that thematic analysis is the method preferred by researchers to conduct narrative analysis. Following suit, thematic narrative analysis was employed to analyse the data collected for this study. Refer to paragraph 4.4 for the detailed description of the process.

3.11 Trustworthiness of qualitative research

Trustworthiness, which is also referred to as the rigour of an investigation, is the degree of confidence in the data collected, data analysis and methods used to ensure the quality of an investigation (Le Roux, 2017). In their studies, Connelly (2016), Bengtsson (2016) as well as Le Roux (2017) referred to the seminal work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) which has suggested alternative criteria of assessing the trustworthiness of qualitative research. These criteria include credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Each of these criteria and the procedures that are used in this study to ensure its trustworthiness is outlined herein under.

3.11.1 Credibility

Bengtsson (2016), defined credibility as the manner in which a study or investigation was conducted. A credible study is conducted using standard procedures which are typically associated with qualitative research (Connelly,

2016) and ensure the inclusion of all relevant data (Bengtsson, 2016). Credibility is therefore centred on how well the research study provides thorough and reliable information from the data gathered. For this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect primary data from participants. An interview guide was constructed with questions that the researcher deemed to be relevant and appropriate to encourage in-depth responses from participants. The credibility of this study has, as a result, been increased by conducting pre-interviews with two employees from the compliance department of the institution, with the aim of determining the suitability of the interview questions and their ability to assist in obtaining relevant data to answer the research questions. In addition to this, peer debriefing was employed. Hadi and Closs (2016) defined peer debriefing as a method enabling the researcher to discuss the research with an independent individual who has no personal interest in the research project, but is skilled enough to provoke critical thinking. Furthermore, the researcher's prolonged engagement with the study participants has also promoted credibility of this qualitative study (Hadi & Closs, 2016). Hadi and Closs (2016) believed that a prolonged engagement between the researcher and the study participants has the potential to ensure that the researcher gets more in-depth information from participants, which in turn will enable the inclusion of all relevant data.

3.11.2 Transferability

Transferability is the extent to which concepts, findings and theories are applicable to other settings (Connelly, 2016; Tong & Dew, 2016). Qualitative studies are conducted on a small scale to provide depth (Tong & Dew, 2016) due to its focus on participants and their lived experiences (Connelly, 2016). In supporting the transferability of this study, the researcher has given a detailed description of the context of the study, as well as the people studied. Furthermore, the researcher has been transparent about the analysis and trustworthiness of the study (Connelly, 2016), sample characteristics and data collection methods with the aim of enabling readers to evaluate the extent to which results are

transferable to other populations, settings and situations (Hadi & Jose Closs, 2016).

3.11.3 Dependability

Dependability is to qualitative research what reliability is to quantitative research (Connelly, 2016; Tong & Dew, 2016). According to Tong and Dew (2016), the interpretive nature of qualitative research makes the production of identical findings by another researcher impractical. Consequently, dependability which is consistency of the research process must be considered in determining the "reliability" of the study. The semi-structured interviews which were conducted for the purposes of this study were recorded and the data transcribed.

3.11.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the impartiality of data and the extent to which findings are consistent and could be repeated (Connelly, 2016; Bengtsson, 2016). According to Tong and Dew (2016), confirmability ensures that the views of the participants are not unduly influenced by the researcher's preferences or personal agenda. In an effort to promote confirmability in this study, the researcher has kept detailed notes pertaining to decisions and analysis as the study progressed (Connelly, 2016). Furthermore, the notes were discussed in peer-debriefing sessions with the aim of preventing possible biases from the researcher's perspective (Connelly, 2016). Additionally, member checking (Connelly, 2016) which involves the research participants validating the research findings and conclusions as documented by the researcher, was conducted.

3.12   Ethical considerations

Appropriate ethical principles must be applied for the protection of all human subjects in any research study, and even more so in qualitative studies, given their in-depth nature (Arifin, 2018). Arifin (2018) was of the firm view that the

consideration of ethical issues in qualitative research is crucial to maintain a balance between possible risks and the probable benefits of the research. The following ethical considerations were considered during the course of this study:

3.12.1 Informed consent and voluntary participation

Participants should be given adequate information about the study and afforded the opportunity to make an informed decision about whether or not to participate in the study (Arifin, 2018).

For the purposes of this research, each potential participant was approached individually and furnished with two documents: (1) a participant information sheet and (2) an informed consent for participation in an academic research project. The participant information sheet explained amongst other things the purpose of the study, the nature of the participant's involvement in the study, the potential benefits and inconvenience of participation, as well as the voluntary nature of participation. Potential participants were given a week to decide whether they wanted to participate based on the information sheet provided to them. The potential participants were then required to sign the informed consent for participation in an academic research project form before the interview, in order to indicate their acceptance of the invitation to participate in the study.

3.12.2 Anonymity and confidentiality

The anonymity and confidentiality of all research participants was protected in the data collection, analysis and reporting phases of the research study. Confidentiality clauses were included in both the participant information sheet, as well as the informed consent form.

3.12.3 Interview session

Each interview was conducted individually via MS Teams. The MS Teams recording was only available to the researcher and the participant.

3.12.4 Data analysis and reporting

Data was transcribed privately with the aid of earphones. Participants were referred to pseudonymously in presenting the findings of the study. All electronic data was stored on a password protected laptop, used only by the researcher.

3.12.5 Ethical clearance

The collection of data for this study only commenced subsequent to the researcher obtaining an ethical clearance certificate from the Unisa SBL Ethics Committee.

3.13 Delimitations of the study

In defining the scope of this qualitative study, the researcher made conscious inclusionary and exclusionary decisions. This study was focused on one institution's activities in one industry due to time and capacity constraints. The findings of the study were therefore specific to the institution reviewed and may as a result not be generalisable to other institutions and industries. Instead of affording each item in the universe an equal chance of probability to be selected as part of the sample through the use of probability sampling, the researcher employed purposive sampling which is a non-probability sampling technique. Purposive sampling enabled the researcher to use her own judgement to select a sample of participants she believed would know more about the subject under investigation. The use of purposive sampling further limited the generalisability of the findings. Furthermore, the use of interviews as the only data collection method was also a delimitation to this study. The use of other data collection methods to

compliment the interviews may have exposed the researcher to a wider and more diverse view of the research landscape and may potentially have enabled research questions to be answered at an even deeper and enriched level.

3.14   Conclusion

In addition to clarifying the philosophies guiding the research methods and analysis, this chapter outlined the research methodology adopted for this study. It further detailed the process employed to select the research participants, the methods used to collect the data, as well as the data analysis approach employed. The next chapter presents the key finding of the study.

CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This research was undertaken with the intention of establishing the effect that virtuous leadership has on organisational culture and the ethical behaviour of employees. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the aim of collecting primary data relating to how the leadership of the institution under review is perceived by the employees selected to participate in the study, in relation to its ability to influence their ethical behaviour. This chapter focuses on the presentation of the research results emanating from the interviews conducted. The discussion of the results is linked to the literature reviewed throughout the construction of report and is aligned to the research objectives.

4.2 Research objectives

The primary objective of this study was to determine whether the policies, frameworks and procedures endorsed by the leadership of the institution, with the intention of promoting an ethical organisational culture and inducing ethical behaviour amongst employees, were a complete reflection of the virtuous leadership of the institution.

The following secondary objectives were formulated with the aim of aiding the achievement of the primary objective:

- To identify leadership attributes with the potential to influence the ethical inclination of employees.
- To determine whether leaders set a visible example of how to behave ethically in the organisation.

- To verify whether the current interventions endorsed by the leadership to prevent - and, where possible, eradicate unlawful conduct and unethical behaviour are sufficient to promote ethical behaviour.
- To identify conditions that will persuade employees to behave in an ethical manner.

4.3 Description of participants

The researcher invited 16 employees whom she deemed to have sufficient knowledge of the institution's ethics programme and efforts to promote an ethical organisational culture. Prospective participants each received a participant information sheet as well as an informed consent form. Those interested in participating in the research were asked to inform the researcher in writing and to sign and return the informed consent form to the researcher. The researcher then scheduled an interview appointment at a time convenient to herself and the participant. Although the initial target was 10 interviews, 11 employees indicated their interest to participate. As a result, 11 interviews were eventually conducted with the interested employees. Due to the current work from home situation as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, not all participants were in a position to sign and return the informed consent form as requested. Consequently, each participant was requested to verbally give consent to participate in the study at the start of each interview and this was recorded.

Table 4.1 below provides a summary of the demographic details of the participants. The demographic data, which includes the gender of the participant, age, highest qualification obtained, years of service in the institution and job grade, was collected to provide the reader of the study with a brief overview of the research participants involved in the study.

Table 4.1 Summary of the demographic details of the participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Highest qualification	Years of service in the institution	Job level
Participant 1	Male	<35	Under-graduate	5-10	Non-managerial
Participant 2	Female	<35	Under-graduate	5-10	Middle-management
Participant 3	Female	35-50	Post-graduate Diploma/ Honours Degree	>10	Non-managerial
Participant 5	Female	>50	Master's Degree	>10	Middle-management
Participant 4	Male	35-50	Post-graduate Diploma/ Honours Degree	>10	Middle-management
Participant 6	Female	35-50	Post-graduate Diploma/ Honours Degree	>10	Non-managerial
Participant 7	Female	35-50	Master's Degree	5-10	Middle-management
Participant 8	Male	35-50	Post-graduate Diploma/ Honours Degree	5-10	Middle-management
Participant 9	Female	<35	Under-graduate	>10	Non-managerial
Participant 10	Male	>50	Under-graduate	>10	Senior Management
Participant 11	Female	35-50	Master's Degree	<5	Middle-management

Participation in this study was dominated by females who accounted for seven out of the 11 participants (63.6%). The younger than 35 years age group was represented by three participants (27.3%), six participants (54.5%) were between the ages of 35 and 50, while the remaining two (18.2%) were over 50 years of age. A total of six participants (54.5%) had been in the employ of the institution under review for longer than 10 years. Four participants (36.4%) had a service history of between five years and 10 years and only one (9.1%) had been with the institution for fewer than five years at the time of the interview. There was equal representation for both the undergraduate and postgraduate participants, with each group being represented by four participants. The remaining three participants were all in possession of a master's degree.

It is the opinion of the researcher that participation in the study was undertaken by employees whose educational background and knowledge of the institution stood them in good stead to contribute meaningfully to this study.

4.4 Data analysis process

The data collected for this study was analysed using thematic narrative analysis. According to Maguire and Delahunt (2017), thematic analysis is a process to identify patterns or themes within qualitative data. Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017), viewed thematic analysis as a qualitative research method that can be used across a various epistemologies and research questions. Thematic analysis is a highly flexible method as it is not tied to a particular epistemological or theoretical perspective (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017; Walters, 2016). In their seminal paper which has been cited thousands of times on Google Scholar; Braun and Clarke (2006) argued that thematic analysis should form the foundation of qualitative analysis as it provides the basis for many other types of qualitative analysis techniques. Maguire and Delahunt (2017) were of the firm belief that Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework was an influential approach for conducting thematic analysis. This framework has therefore been adopted for the purposes of this study. A succinct explanation of each of the six phases of the thematic analysis is given below.

4.4.1   Phase 1: Become familiar with the data

The researcher transcribed the verbal data obtained from the recorded interviews in a verbatim manner and created written text for each interview. Thematic analysis can only be conducted when data has been transcribed into written form (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To protect the identity of each participant, information that could result in the positive identification of participants was intentionally removed from the transcripts. Transcription occurred within 48 hours of the interview, thus enabling the researcher to familiarise herself with the data as soon as possible. Becoming familiar with the collected data is an essential first step in

thematic analysis. It involves reading and re-reading data with the intention of searching for meanings, patterns and themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Believing that ideas and the identification of themes may be shaped as researchers become familiar with their data, Braun and Clarke (2006) recommended that researchers read through their data set at least once before commencing with coding. For the purposes of this paper, the researcher familiarised herself with her data through listening to the recorded interviews as well as reading through transcripts several times with the aim of noting initial ideas.

4.4.2 Phase 2: Generate initial codes

The second phase began subsequent to the researcher familiarising herself with the data through listening to the recorded interviews, repeatedly reading the transcripts and generally gaining a better understanding of the data. Large amounts of data are reduced to smaller chunks of meaningful information through coding (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). In the view of Nowell et al. (2017), coding is a theorising activity that compels the researcher to continuously revisit the collected data with the aim of simplifying and focusing on specific characteristics of that data. The researcher worked through all the transcripts, giving due attention to all the data. Notes were made by the researcher of interesting aspects believed to form the basis of repeated patterns across the data set.

4.4.3 Phase 3: Development of basic themes

During the third phase, all codes that seem similar should be collated together to form basic themes (Walters, 2016). This phase essentially re-focuses the analysis at the broader level of themes as opposed to codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). While initial codes may begin to form main and sub-themes, it is not uncommon for researchers to find codes that may not appear to belong anywhere. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), it is not advisable to abandon any data or codes at this stage. All codes that may not appear to belong under a particular theme should rather be temporarily housed under a theme called

"miscellaneous" (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For this paper, the researcher identified themes by repeatedly listening to the recorded interviews, reading and re-reading transcripts, as well as by using visual aids such as mind-maps and tables.

4.4.4   Phase 4: Review themes

During this phase, researchers review the coded data extracts for each theme with the aim of ensuring they form a comprehensible story about the data (Nowell et al., 2017). The review process may reveal that some themes are not really themes due to the lack of sufficient data to support them. The need to collapse multiple themes into one, while others may have to be broken down into separate themes may also become apparent (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The purpose of this phase is therefore to review, modify and develop the preliminary themes identified during the third phase (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). To ensure relevance to this study's research questions and objectives, the researcher considered the following questions as recommended by Maguire and Delahunt (2017) and refined the themes accordingly:

- Do the identified themes make sense?
- Is there enough data to support the themes?
- Are there themes within the identified themes (sub-themes)?
- Should some themes be separated?
- Are there other themes within the data?

4.4.5   Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

The fifth phase is the final refinement of themes. As such, Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested that during this phase, researchers should conduct and write a detailed and comprehensive analysis identifying the story that each individual theme conveys. It is also important for researchers to consider how each theme fits into the overall broader story being told in relation to the research objectives and questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). At the end of this phase, a researcher

should be in a position to clearly describe the scope and content of each theme in a few sentences, failure of which, further refinement would be needed.

The analysis of the data for this study resulted in the identification of the following themes and sub-themes:
- Theme 1 - Conceptualisation of virtuous leadership
- Theme 2 - Leadership virtues in the institution
    - Sub-theme 2.1 - Dominant leadership virtues in the institution
    - Sub-theme 2.2 – Virtues in need of development
- Theme 3 – Influence of leadership virtues on employees and culture
- Theme 4 – Leadership commitment towards ethical behaviour

4.4.6 Phase 6: Reporting

The end-point and output of any research is some kind of report (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). The purpose of this report should be to convey the complicated story of the researcher's data in a concise, logical, coherent, non-repetitive and interesting manner that will convince the reader of the validity and merit of the analysis conducted (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4.5 Research findings

4.5.1 Theme 1: Conceptualisation of virtuous leadership

Leaders engage in virtuous leadership because it is intrinsically ethical (Wang & Hackett, 2016). Wang and Hackett (2016) further postulated that virtuous leaders concern themselves with the cultivation of character as opposed to serving or motivating followers. Such leaders are therefore inclined to intentionally and consistently model virtues in an effort to guide their followers. The role modelling of virtuous behaviour creates an opportunity for leaders to simultaneously enhance the overall ethical climate and overall well-being of employees in their respective organisations (Wang & Hackett, 2016). In conceptualising virtuous

leadership, participants in this study were requested to provide their understanding of virtuous leadership, ethical leadership and moral leadership, and to possibly make a clear distinction between the three concepts.

There was a general consensus among participants that ethical, moral and virtuous leadership are concepts that are equivalent and could be used interchangeably. The definitions of the concepts as provided by the participants were consistent with Wang and Hackett's (2016) suggestion that virtuous leadership is intrinsically ethical.

> "*In my mind, all three concepts are the same. If you are ethical, you are virtuous, you have morals and some form of integrity. Virtuous leadership is leading with ethics, leading fairly. It is leading in the right way, leading without bias. It is leading without judgment. It is essentially objective leading.*" (Participant 2)

Participant 5 concurred with Participant 2's opinion about the concepts being the same. When asked to define ethical leadership, moral leadership and virtuous leadership, he expressed himself as follows:

> "*I do not think there is a difference. So virtuous leadership, I would say it sort of sums up the other two because it's you possessing those admirable qualities which obviously would make you an ethical leader, a leader with morals. So, I understand virtuous leadership as those positive qualities that as a leader you are supposed to show or possess.*"

In his conceptualisation of virtuous leadership, Participant 1 was adamant that virtuous leaders are characterised by their ability to place the interests of their followers ahead of their own. In agreement, Participant 7 articulated her sentiments comprehensively as follows:

"I would say that for me they're very similar and you find that the terms get used interchangeably and I think that there is overlap around what these concepts really are about. So, I would view them as one because I think at the centre of these concepts is the fact that these leaders put others before themselves. So, it's not about promoting my ability as a leader or showing how great I am as a leader, but it's about those that I lead. Leading them in such a way that they are able to showcase their greatness. It's about me putting their dignity first, putting their rights first. It's about making sure that I develop their capabilities."

4.5.2 Theme 2: Leadership virtues in the institution

In their study, Hackett and Wang (2012) proposed a framework comprising of six cardinal virtues that collectively determine all other virtues – courage, temperance, justice, prudence, humanity and truthfulness. Adewale (2020) developed a virtuous leadership model underpinned by four primary virtues from the African leadership context – truthfulness, courage, humanity and humility. The institution under review subscribes to, and actively encourages and strives towards the values of respect and trust, open communication, integrity and accountability.

A framework of virtuous leadership for this particular institution was developed in the first chapter of this paper, taking into consideration the research conducted by Hackett and Wang (2012) and Adewale (2020), as well as the values of the institution. Table 1.1 - Framework of virtuous leadership in the institution (page 9) defines each of the virtues which the leadership of the institution under review is expected to exhibit. To establish whether the leadership's virtues are consistent with the framework, participants were requested to identify the leadership virtues which they associated with the leadership of the institution. Additionally, participants were also given an opportunity to pinpoint virtues which they believed were not visible in the leadership.

Drawing from the interview data, this study found that the leadership of the institution under review exhibited the following primary virtues which participants considered exemplary for them to behave in an ethical manner: integrity, trustworthiness, accountability, courage, truthfulness, openness, humility, prudence and temperance.

In addition to this, the study also established that the leadership of the institution under review needed to develop additional virtues, failure in which some participants were likely to adopt unethical behavioural practices that could tarnish the image of the institution. These virtues were: humanity and justice.

4.5.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1 Dominant leadership virtues in the institution

(i) Integrity

A leader that displays integrity as a virtue possesses strong moral principles that consistently enable him or her to behave ethically in every situation. Integrity was the one virtue that every participant associated with the leadership of the institution under review. For Participant 8, the positive media coverage that has consistently been afforded to and enjoyed by the leadership of the institution (in an era where many of their peers have been implicated in prominent ethical scandals and integrity violations) is indicative of the leadership's high regard for integrity:

> *"I see them embodying those values [of the institution]. The easiest way to see is if someone outside of the organisation writes an article. You will then see that when they write about these guys [the leadership of the institution], it's never controversial stuff. If someone is writing about the [head of the institution], I've never seen something in bad faith about him, for instance, and that's what I'm basing it upon. The same values that they [the leadership of the institution] are asking us to live, they are living it into the outside world. It's also visible."* (Participant 8)

The above sentiment was shared by Participant 11 who said:

"There's trust and relevance in what we're doing and you can tell by the kind of invites and media coverage that the senior leadership enjoys. Most people within the institution are highly respected in the industry. So, for me it still says there is a bit of integrity in what we do."

(ii) Trustworthiness

Participant 8 was unequivocal about trustworthiness being the most dominant virtue that he has witnessed in the leadership of the institution under review. The participant added that in his view, the perception held by external stakeholders of the institution is generally that of trust and respect. Similarly, Participant 11 stated that under the leadership, there is trust and relevance in what the institution does. These views were shared by Participant 6 who was of the unwavering belief that the high level of integrity exhibited by the leadership of the institution stimulates a sense of trustworthiness that encourages subordinates like her to accept and follow the leadership's vision for the institution.

(iii) Accountability

Participant 10 explained accountability as a virtue that the leadership of the institution exemplify by not only owning up to their mistakes, but by rectifying them too. In agreement, Participant 7 stated that in as much as the leadership is accountable, it holds the staff to account too:

"We are still accountable for performance because at the end of the day we need to maintain that excellence, as an institution."

"Excellence and accountability go hand in hand, you need to account so that you can achieve excellence." These views were articulated by Participant 3 and were echoed by Participant 6 who believes a moral leader to be an individual who takes

accountability in the pursuit of excellence. The participants' reference to excellence is consistent with the observation of Newstead et al. (2018) that virtue has general inferences of excellence.

(iv) Courage

Adewale (2020) posited that the justification of unethical actions and practices in corrupt contexts is often premised on the notion, "*It is how things are done*". Deviating from this notion requires courage (Adewale, 2020), a disposition or character trait that enables leaders to fearlessly execute that which they believe is "right" even when such actions may be unpopular and/ or may put them in harm's way (Wang & Hackett, 2016). Cowardice thrives in the absence of this virtue (Adewale, 2020). Dubbed one of the country's strongest and most exemplary institutions, Participant 11 opined that the courage of the leadership of this institution under review has been demonstrated in dealing with the external pressure presented in the context of business. Participant 7 identified courage as a virtue that captivates her the most about the leadership of the institution. For her, the leadership of the institution has consciously, consistently and courageously fielded attacks levelled against the institution and its decisions despite being unpopular for this decision:

> *"I definitely think courage and integrity are key [virtues] in order for you to be able to behave ethically because it might not always be popular to do so, but you have to be courageous enough to be able to push through"* (Participant 7).

(v) Truthfulness and openness

For Wang and Hackett (2016), truthfulness is a character trait that compels virtuous leaders to be honest and keep their promises. Consistent communication of truthful information and openly sharing information when addressing the concerns of subordinates are behavioural examples of leaders who possess this

character trait (Wang & Hackett, 2016). The leadership of the institution is generally perceived to be honest and open in their communication and dealings. Participant 4 proclaimed, "*They [the leadership] are open communicators*", while Participant 6 was of the opinion that the fact that no scandals have; up to thus far, been associated with the leadership, was indicative of the level of honesty with which they conduct themselves. Participant 10 stated, "*One thing I can tell you is that our leadership is very much supportive of their staff, they are decisive and very, very open.*" This individual further expressed his appreciation for the open and honest feedback that gets disseminated to all staff after each executive meeting. Concurring with the sentiments of Participant 10, Participant 5 said:

> *"I think they [the leadership] communicate everything, like where we are. I mean starting from the mission and vision of the institution. If there are challenges, those challenges will get communicated back. So that's where the honesty comes in. They [the leadership] don't only communicate the positives and shy away from communicating the challenges or the negatives, so to speak, and that for me demonstrates integrity because you're honest. You do not only engage in the positive aspect of things, even the challenges that the organisation is facing. So, it shows that this person has integrity. Where there are failures, or where things were not achieved, then they [the leadership] come back and say so."*

(vi) Humility

The high power-distance permissible in most African countries results in employees being unable to relate to their leaders for fear of being perceived as "disrespectful" or "rude" (Adewale, 2020). According to Adewale (2020), leaders would have to demonstrate the virtue of humility by bringing themselves down to the level of their subordinates for the high power-distance to be narrowed. Participant 7 associated the virtue of humility with the leadership of the institution under review when she stated, "*I think the fact that the leadership is able to stand in the cafeteria with every single level of staff and have these conversations is a*

clear demonstration of humility." The participant further added that, "*If I experience you [the leadership] as behaving in a courageous manner and having integrity in your dealings with people in a respectful manner, and I see you [the leadership], showing humility, I in turn as a follower would be inclined to emulate the same in my dealings with my colleagues, for example, or even my immediate leadership that might not be the executive leadership of the institution.*" Participant 10 concurred. The head of the institution convening staff meetings where the executive leadership of the institution and the heads of departments are present to answer any questions and concerns from subordinates is a clear demonstration that the leadership does not consider themselves as being above other employees. This participant further added that the head of the institution does from time to time conduct "meet and greet" walkabouts, in addition to having his meals in the dining hall alongside his subordinates.

(vii) Prudence

For Participant 2, the leadership of the institution under review possesses the wisdom to make well thought through decisions. This observation was corroborated by Participant 5 for whom the astuteness of the leadership was an admirable quality.

(viii) Temperance

In their study, Sanz and Fontrodona (2019) argued that corporate scandals are indicative of a lack of professionalism, attachment to ethical norms and values and in particular the virtue of temperance which they define as the ability to practice self-restraint, moderation and balance in the hunt of desires and other alluring things for the sake of an ethical purpose. Leaders who exhibit the virtue of temperance are arguably more likely to make prudent decisions. In agreement with this statement, Participant 2 commented on the leadership's ability to make well thought through decisions. This observation was similarly made and shared by Participant 10, who was in awe of the decisiveness of the leadership.

Both Participant 5 and 6 were supportive of the argument made by Sanz and Fontrodona (2019). For Participant 6, the absence of scandals associated with the leadership of the institution is indicative of the presence of the virtue of temperance and the honest manner with which it conducts the affairs of the organisation. Participant 5 expressed that in her experience, the leadership of the institution has always conducted itself in a professional manner. This professional conduct, which is probably the reason why the organisation has not been marred by ethics scandals and integrity violations, has in turn cascaded down to the rest of the institution's employees:

> *"We behave in a professional manner because that's what we see."*
> (Participant 5)

4.5.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2 Virtues in need of development for the leadership

(i) Humanity

Wang and Hackett (2016) viewed humanity as a character trait that underlies a leader's love, care and respect of others. This virtue is best demonstrated through the display of genuine care and help for the less fortunate or disadvantaged (Adewale, 2020). Some participants had not witnessed a significant demonstration of the virtue of humanity by the leadership of the institution. Participant 2 expressed the following view:

> *"I definitely think if you want to build more trust as a leader, you should show those type of virtues or traits [care, compassion and empathy]. You should build a more nurturing, trusting environment otherwise then a person almost feels like you care more about the work that needs to be done. You should also care about me as a person."*

This participant added that a leader should not be a robot, but should instead show a level of care and understanding towards subordinates. For Participant 3,

the leadership of the institution under review is too focussed on excellence to be concerned about anything else. This participant said, *"Sometimes when you are driven by excellence, you tend to give them [care, empathy and sympathy] the last attention."* In agreement, Participant 1 stated that if there is one virtue that the leadership of the institution could do with, it would be humanity:

> *"I think that's the issue with a lot of leaders, I won't call them leaders, I would call them managers. They lack that compassion. For me to comply, for me to go all out, it is all based on how you treat me as a human being. Not as my boss, but treat me as a human being"*

(ii) Justice

Participants 3 and 10 conceded that the head of the institution is a just leader who does not like unfairness, but the same could not be said about the leadership as a collective. In support of this statement, Participant 3 gave an example of how the head of the institution took it upon himself to rectify the racial discrimination which employees in a particular department were subjected to. The participant stated, *"The head of the institution is a big fan of a non-racial organisation, and he reiterates it openly."* This account was confirmed by Participant 9 who had witnessed a significant and positive difference within the affected department. For Participant 10, the head of the institution demonstrates the virtue of justice by continuously challenging his leadership team to be fair when appraising their subordinates, an indication that the virtue of justice is one that leaders in the institution need to develop. The participant added that the argument advanced by the head of the institution in this regard, is that a leader cannot be an outstanding performer without the support and outstanding work of his subordinates. This argument is one that resonated with Participant 7 who stated that:

> *"Being a virtuous leader is not about promoting my ability as a leader or showing how great I am as a leader, but it's about those that I lead.*

Leading them in such a way that they are able to showcase their greatness. It's about me putting their dignity first, putting their rights first. It's about making sure that I develop their capabilities so that they can stand out."

Participant 6 highlighted her experience of the lack of the virtue of justice amongst the leaders who would often receive praises and credit for a task completed by a subordinate, without acknowledging that particular subordinate. *"They [leaders] only take the credit of their subordinates within the team, that's it. When things go wrong, then it's not their problem."* Participant 1 also mentioned fairness as a virtue that should be possessed by the leadership of the institution, but is not: "*That level of fairness is not applied. I can see how certain people are treated and it shows that level of unfairness."*

4.5.3   Theme 3: Influence of leadership virtues on employees and culture

Newstead et al. (2019) defined leadership as a coherent process of influencing people towards shared goals. According to Wang and Hackett (2016), virtuous leadership is the leader-follower relationship wherein the leader's fitting expression of virtues in a situation triggers employees' perceptions of leader behaviour worthy of imitating. This study found that in the opinion of the 11 participants, the collective leadership team of the institution under review exhibits virtues of integrity, trustworthiness, accountability, courage, truthfulness, openness, humility, prudence and temperance. The leadership team was however found wanting when it comes to the virtues of humanity and justice. All identified virtues have a direct influence on the behaviour of employees and the organisational culture of the institution.

From the discussions with participants it is evident that they generally concur with Pickering (2018) as well as Roszkowska and Melé, (2020) who were of the view that human beings are creatures of mimicry and are inclined to imitate the behaviour of leaders and to consequently absorb their values. When asked how

the virtuous, ethical or moral leaders in the institution influence organisational culture and the ethical behaviour of employees in the institution under review, Participant 4 succinctly stated, "*The culture of an organisation is influenced by the traits of the people who are in leadership.*" This statement was expounded on by Participant 10 who said:

> "*If my boss is dishonest. If my boss lies. If she's not truthful. If her integrity is on the line. It's easy for me to copy and do what she does. It's easy to learn the tricks from her and apply them.*"

The views expressed by both Participant 4 and 10 were seemingly shared by Participants 1, 2, 5, and 6. While Participants 3, 7, 8, 9 and 11 acknowledged the nature of human beings as creatures of mimicry, unlike their peers, they explicitly stated that they would only mimic the leadership behaviour that complemented their own personal values. The absence of certain virtues in the leadership would therefore not deter them from behaving ethically. Participant 9 defined virtues as innate values that cannot be changed by anyone:

> "*I wouldn't necessarily modify my behaviour according to what they [leaders] were showing because of my personal set of beliefs. I would first of all model my behaviour after my personal set of beliefs. Someone who's morally compromised would be swayed into behaving badly, but someone who feels strongly about their set morals and beliefs would rather leave the organisation than stay and be compromised.*" (Participant 8)

Sharing the same sentiments as Participant 9, Participants 3, 7, 8, and 11 opined that virtuous individuals find it fairly natural to behave morally and would not allow themselves to be subject to the influence of any behaviour that goes against their beliefs.

4.5.4 Theme 4: Leadership commitment towards ethical behaviour

In their study, Mitonga-Monga and Cilliers (2016) highlighted the importance of ethical leadership to organisational health and well-being. They concluded that employees' organisational commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour is influenced by positive perceptions they have of their leaders being role models who act with integrity and treat them with respect and fairness.

Participants were unanimous that the leadership of the institution was fully committed towards ethical behaviour in the institution. Amongst some of the interventions which the leadership has endorsed as evidence of its commitment towards ethical behaviour in the organisation are:

Firstly, an ethics policy which every employee must read at least annually, and declare their understanding thereof.

Secondly, all employees, including the executive leadership, who receive gifts from external parties with whom the institution interacts are obliged to declare these gifts.

Thirdly, employees with outside interests are compelled to declare such interests.

Fourthly, a whistle-blowing process which all staff members, individuals and organisations interacting with the institution under review are encouraged to use to report unethical behaviour.

Lastly, ethics awareness sessions which are mainly aimed at enabling staff members to identify and deal with ethical issues.

In substantiating her observation of the leadership's commitment towards ethical behaviour in the institution, Participant 2 gave a detailed account of how the leadership instituted a full investigation into the racial allegations levelled against the senior management of a particular department within the institution. The result of the investigation was the departure of the perpetrators. *"What I liked about that period in time was the fact that the head of the institution was very open and vocal*

about racism and how he would not tolerate it", said Participant 2. She further added that the head of the institution extended a personal invitation to all employees affected by racism to approach him. In her recollection of how the leadership has demonstrated its commitment towards ethical behaviour in the institution, this participant also gave an example of how the deputy head of the institution took it upon herself to address a sexual harassment incident in another department. Participant 2 concluded by saying, *"The one thing that I do appreciate is they [the leadership] do try around ethics and especially when things come out from engagement surveys. It is things that they will speak about. And even with us, from our department, if there is anything that is untoward, they do encourage us to speak about it."*

As part of the institution's transformational journey, the leadership has commissioned a 36-month diversity and inclusion programme with the aim of establishing a sense of belonging for all employees and to foster a diverse and inclusive workforce. Participants 3, 4, 7, 8, 9 and 10 identified this programme as yet another form of demonstration of the leadership's commitment towards ethical behaviour in the institution.

For Participant 5, the establishment of various committees to adjudicate on different operational issues of the organisation, was indicative of leadership's commitment towards ethical behaviour. *"You don't want maybe one person making decisions, so that's why you would set up all these different committees within the organisation in terms of the operations of the organisation, so that also, I guess assists in ensuring that ethical behaviour."*

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter outlined and discussed the themes that emanated from the interviews conducted with 11 participants about virtuous leadership and its effect on organisational culture and the ethical behaviour of employees. The themes identified were the conceptualisation of virtuous leadership, leadership virtues in

the institution, the influence of virtues on employees and organisational culture, as well as the commitment of the institution's leaders towards ethical behaviour. In their conceptualisation of virtuous leadership, participants concurred with Wang and Hackett's (2016) suggestion that virtuous leadership is intrinsically ethical. As such, participants viewed ethical, moral and virtuous leadership as concepts that are equivalent and qualify for interchangeable use.

According to the participants, the leadership of the institution is fully committed towards ethical behaviour in the institution. The leaders of the institution under review collectively exemplify the virtues of integrity, trustworthiness, accountability, courage, truthfulness, openness, humility, prudence and temperance. The leadership's open exhibition of these virtues has a direct influence on the behaviour of employees and on the organisational culture of the institution. Participants did however feel that the leadership needs to work on developing the virtues of humanity and justice in order for them as subordinates or followers to continue safeguarding the image and reputation of the institution through ethical behaviour.

In the next chapter, a conclusion is formulated based on the findings of the study and literature reviewed. Furthermore, recommendations are made and potential future areas of research are identified.

Chapter 5
CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Employees have the tendency to mimic leadership behaviour (Roszkowska & Melé, 2020). Policies, frameworks and procedures endorsed by the leadership of the institution to prevent and, where possible, eradicate unlawful conduct and unethical behaviour, may therefore not be perceived to be adequate to induce an ethical organisational culture and ethical behaviour amongst employees.

In this study, there was a theoretical assumption based on the studies conducted by Pickering (2018) as well as Roszkowska and Melé, (2020) who were of the view that human beings are creatures of mimicry. Employees are therefore inclined to imitate the behaviour of leaders and to consequently absorb their values (Roszkowska & Melé, 2020). As a result, the researcher assumed that leaders are likely to positively influence employees when their virtuous behaviour can be observed and imitated. The effect of moral leadership, through its endorsement of policies, frameworks and procedures may therefore be more potent if complimented by visible evidence of leadership adherence to its endorsed policies, frameworks and procedures in an effort to promote an ethical organisational culture and persuade employees to behave ethically.

The findings of the semi-structured interviews were presented as four themes and two sub-themes in the previous chapter. In this chapter, the discussion of the results is aligned to the research aim and objectives and the researcher provides explanations and direct responses to the research questions and the central problem statement. The chapter concludes by presenting the limitations of the study as well as making recommendations for future research based on both the identified limitations of this particular study as well as its findings.

## 5.2	Discussion of results

In this section, the findings of the study are discussed in relation to both the research questions and objectives.

### 5.2.1	Primary research objective

The primary objective of this study was to determine whether the policies, frameworks and procedures endorsed by the leadership of the institution, with the intention of promoting an ethical organisational culture and inducing ethical behaviour amongst employees, are a complete reflection of the virtuous leadership of the institution. In achieving this objective, this study endeavoured to answer the question, "*Are the policies, frameworks and procedures endorsed by the leadership of the institution, with the intention of promoting an ethical organisational culture and inducing ethical behaviour amongst employees, a complete reflection of the virtuous leadership of the institution?*"

Organisational culture is the social glue that binds the organisation together. It mirrors the beliefs, values and behavioural norms of influential individuals who recognise that the moral tone of any organisation is set at the top by the very individuals tasked with steering the organisation towards the achievement of its objectives. As a result, participants were of the firm belief that organisational culture can have an influence on the attitudes and behaviours of employees. The findings of this study indicated that organisational culture and the ethical behaviour of employees are mostly influenced by how followers perceive the leaders' behaviour; which behaviour is likely to be influenced by the virtues possessed by the leaders, and the manner in which they exhibit these virtues throughout the organisation.

Value-based leadership can affect the ethical behaviours and attitudes of employees (Nygaard et al., 2017; Filabi & Bulgarella, 2018). With human beings being creatures of mimicry, the interaction between the leadership and

employees is therefore bound to transcend beyond policies, frameworks and procedures. According to Nygaard et al. (2017), influence by example is more impactful than any other source of influence. The mere exhibition of codes of conduct in the workplace may not have the desired effect on employees when compared to leadership by role model (Nygaard et al., 2017). The results of this study support these previous studies. Apart from the development and endorsement of policies, frameworks and procedures on ethical conduct, leaders would have to physically demonstrate their ethical leadership in their everyday talk, behaviours, actions and choices in order to have an influence on organisational culture and the ethical inclination of employees.

5.2.2 Secondary research objectives

The following secondary research objectives were formulated to unpack the primary research objective:

5.2.2.1   To identify leadership attributes with the potential to influence the ethical inclination of employees

The research sub-question formulated with the intention of achieving this objective was, "*Which leadership attributes have the potential to influence the ethical inclination of employees?*". In responding to the question to determine the virtues leadership should exhibit for employees to behave ethically, participants conceptualised virtuous leadership. In their conceptualisation of virtuous leadership, it was found that participants equated the concept to ethical and moral leadership, which is characterised by the virtues of integrity, trustworthiness, accountability, courage, truthfulness and openness, humility, prudence, temperance, humanity and justice.

The empirical findings of this study indicated that virtuous leadership has a positive influence on organisational culture and the ethical behaviour of employees. A slight majority of the participants, nevertheless a majority, indicated

that the presence of the abovementioned virtues had a positive influence on their inclination to behave in an ethical manner. Just over half of the participants (six) were of the firm view that unethical leadership at various levels of the institution under review could engender unethical behaviour amongst them, while just under half of the participants (five) were adamant that the absence of any one of the virtues would not alter their natural inclination to always behave in an ethical manner, as their behaviour is guided by their own personal values and beliefs. These five participants did however indicate that serving under a leader who lacked certain virtues would be demoralising at the very least. Two of the five participants indicated that they would not only withdraw their support from unethical leaders, but would in fact terminate their employment with the institution. For these participants, unethical or non-virtuous leadership reduced organisational effectiveness and increased organisational misbehaviour.

5.2.2.2 To determine whether leaders set a visible example of how to behave ethically in the organisation

To achieve this objective, the researcher posed the sub-question, "*What visible example does the leadership of the organisation set for employees in as far as ethical behaviour is concerned?*" The participants' responses confirmed the visibility of the leadership's intentional efforts to not only promote ethical behaviour in the institution, but to lead it. Participants acknowledged the presence of an ethics policy which was not only endorsed by the leadership of the institution, but was visibly adhered to by the leaders in the same manner that subordinates were expected to adhere to it. In addition to declaring their outside interests, leaders within the institution declared gifts received from; and given to, external parties with whom the institution interacts. These declarations are made with the intention of subjecting them to scrutiny for actual or potential conflicts of interest which may undermine efforts to promote an ethical organisation.

Most noticeable to the participants of this study, was the leadership's readiness and willingness to avail funding for the institution's ethics awareness sessions,

whistle-blowing programme and the 36-month long diversity and inclusion programme. The diversity and inclusion programme was established to promote a sense of belonging for all employees, and to foster a diverse and inclusive workforce. The head of the institution was particularly singled out as having zero-tolerance for unethical behaviour. This according to the participants, has been demonstrated time and time again during his engagements with staff members at staff meetings, where he would talk harshly against unethical behaviour and make known his discouragement and disapproval thereof. In arriving at the conclusion that the leadership of the institution under review does indeed exemplify ethical behaviour, participants also considered the decisive action taken by the leadership when allegations of racism and sexual harassment surfaced internally.

5.2.2.3 To verify whether the current interventions endorsed by the leadership to prevent; and, where possible, eradicate unlawful conduct and unethical behaviour are sufficient to promote ethical behaviour.

The achievement of this objective was enabled by asking the sub-question, "*Are the current interventions endorsed by the leadership of the organisation to prevent; and, where possible, eradicate unlawful conduct sufficient to promote ethical behaviour?*" Participants acknowledged that the current measures (which include the ethics policy, declaration of gifts and outside interests, the whistle-blowing process, as well as the ethics awareness sessions) played a critical role in the prevention; and where possible eradication, of unlawful conduct with the aim of promoting ethical behaviour in the organisation. In the case of the ethics policy, for example, participants were encouraged by its attempt to serve as a reference when it comes to the standard of conduct expected from all employees and to guide employees in matters of professional ethics. The institution's commitment to a policy of fairness, integrity and ethical behaviour is endorsed by both its Board and the Executive Committee. All employees are expected to

familiarise themselves with this policy on an annual basis, and to declare their understanding thereof in writing.

Each department has a gift register which is maintained by either the Head of Department's Personal Assistant (PA) or a Compliance Coordinator. All gifts, entertainment and hospitality offered, declined or accepted, are declared and registered in the departmental gift register. Furthermore, the institution has an annual declaration cycle where all employees must file their declarations of outside interests within a given period.

From the responses given by the participants, it is undeniable that the listed interventions above contribute positively towards the prevention; and where possible eradication, of unlawful conduct and unethical behaviour, but they may not necessarily be sufficient to promote ethical behaviour and a sustainable ethical organisational culture. The majority of the participants were of the view that the current interventions could still be improved upon in order to promote a strong ethical environment. Apart from all leaders being appraised on all the virtues which participants identified as critical for virtuous leadership, it was further suggested for the leadership of the institution to authorise the internal publication of high-level statistics pertaining to ethical violations, as well as the leadership's response to such violations. This, participants believed, would not only create visibility around ethical violations but would send a strong message to would-be violators that such violations would not go unpunished. Additionally, participants were of the opinion that the identified and investigated ethical violations should form part of the ethics awareness sessions.

5.2.2.4   To identify conditions that will persuade employees to behave in an ethical manner.

The achievement of this objective was enabled by asking the question, "*Which conditions will persuade employees to behave in an ethical manner?*" In their responses, participants affirmed that working in an environment where the virtues

mentioned under paragraph 5.2.2.1 were openly exhibited by those tasked with guiding members of the institution towards the achievement of its mandate, would without a doubt induce ethicality in them. Participants suggested that being exposed to honest leaders who exhibited consistent and inflexible adherence to strong, ethical and moral principles and values would persuade them as followers to behave in an ethical manner. Furthermore, the willingness of leaders to take ownership of the impact of both their actions and inactions was likely to promote a culture of accountability that according to the participants would have a positive influence on their ethical inclination.

5.3 Limitations of the study

The sample for this study was selected using purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique which is also known as judgmental sampling, selective or subjective sampling. This sampling technique relies on the judgment of the researcher when it comes to selecting a sample of the population from which the researcher would be able to draw conclusions about the population. As an individual familiar with the ethical environment of the institution, the researcher used her subjective judgement and selected participants whom she deemed to have sufficient knowledge of the institution's ethics programme and efforts to promote an ethical organisational culture. The familiarity between the researcher and the participants, as well as the topic of ethics in the institution under review, made the interview process relatively effortless. Although the mutual understanding of the topic and environment between the researcher and the participants was beneficial for the research process, the researcher's experiences may have limited the extent to which she interrogated some of the responses from the participants. It must however be noted that despite the researcher having her own understanding of the ethical environment of the institution under review, she remained open to understanding the lived experiences of the interviewees as employees of the institution under review.

Given its subjective nature, purposive sampling as a non-probability sampling technique is highly prone to researcher biases when compared with probability sampling techniques (Alkassim & Tran, 2016). Alkassim and Tran (2016) further argued that the subjective and non-probable nature of this sampling technique makes it difficult to defend the appropriateness and representativeness of the sample. Another criticism of the study could be due to the methodology used. Unlike in quantitative research where the involvement of the researcher is deemed to be detached, in qualitative research the role of the researcher is participatory. A qualitative researcher is the primary instrument of data collection (Clark & Vealé, 2018). It can therefore be argued that qualitative research cannot be entirely objective as it is almost certain that the researcher will introduce a level of subjectivity to the study. Furthermore, under the qualitative research methodology, only a few participants are typically selected for participation. Samples in qualitative research are generally small as a result of the depth of the interview specific analysis associated with this mode of inquiry. Consequently, only 11 participants from a few departments within the institution were selected for this study. The findings of the study can as a result not be generalised to all employees and all departments of the institution under review.

Despite the abovementioned limitations, steps were taken to ensure the trustworthiness of this study. The researcher attempted to reduce and limit her own biases and interpretations by constantly verifying her understanding of the participants' lived experiences directly with them during the interviews. The prolonged engagement between the researcher and the study participants enabled the researcher to obtain more in-depth information from participants, which in turn enabled the inclusion of as much relevant data as possible. In an attempt to further increase the credibility of the study, the researcher conducted pre-interviews with two employees from the compliance department of the institution. The aim of the pre-interviews was to determine the suitability of the interview questions and their ability to assist in obtaining relevant data to answer the research questions. In addition to this, the researcher adopted a peer debriefing process which entailed discussing the research methodology, data

analysis and interpretations continuously throughout the research process with a peer who was not directly involved in the research project, but was skilled enough to provoke critical thinking. Even though it became glaringly apparent after the sixth interview that no new information was being conveyed by the participants, the researcher continued with the remaining five interviews to ensure that indeed a point of saturation had been reached.

5.4 Recommendations for future research

In spite of there being no shortage of guidance around governance in South Africa, the country has over the past decade been marred by a series of scandals demonstrating a clear lack of ethics and exemplary leadership. Even in the midst of endless examples of rampant corruption, ethics failures and leadership incompetence, there appears to be limited research available on the effect of virtuous leadership on organisational culture and the ethical behaviour of employees, particularly in the South African context. It is therefore recommended that further reach be conducted on this topic to verify whether the broader South African workforce concurs with the participants of this study when it comes to the leadership virtues deemed exemplary for employees to behave ethically. While this study also explored the effect of a lack of certain leadership virtues on the ethical behaviour of employees, it did not look at possible ways of acquiring these virtues with the aim of influencing the behaviour of employees in a positive and ethical manner.

The use of other research methods could be explored by researchers when conducting related studies. This, with the aim of obtaining different data that could enable researchers to make comparisons of the results. Such methods could include quantitative research methods, or even a combination of both quantitative and qualitative research methods which may result in larger samples. A large sample may in some respects reduce the likelihood of sample bias (Taherdoost, 2016).

It may also be beneficial for future research to compare the experiences of employees based on gender, age, level of qualification, years of service in the institution and job level to determine whether their inclination to mimic the behaviour of superiors would vary significantly from one variable to the next. A significant number of participants indicated that while the presence of virtues in the leadership of the institution under review was likely to motivate them to continue behaving ethically, the absence of any virtue in the leadership would not result in a change in their natural inclination to always behave in an ethical manner. This presents an opportunity for future research to delve into the impact that the absence of certain virtues in the leadership is likely to have on employees whose natural inclination to behave ethically is unlikely to be altered by the absence of certain virtues in the leadership.

5.5 Concluding remarks

Ethical behaviour is a critical and desirable attribute for the employees of any organisation that does not want to go down into the history books of prominent ethical scandals and integrity violations. Virtuous leadership has been identified as an effective predictor of ethical behaviour. This study has found that a good exhibition of virtuous leadership can have a positive effect on organisational culture and the ethical behaviour of employees. This finding is indicative of the participants' perception that leadership exemplification of the virtues of integrity, trustworthiness, accountability, courage, truthfulness and openness, humility, prudence, temperance, humanity and justice, has the ability to influence a conducive organisational culture and to persuade employees to behave in an ethical manner.

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LIST OF ANNEXURES

Annexure A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Section 1: Demographic Data

Place an 'x 'in the applicable box

Gender	Male		Female	
Age	<35	35-50		>50
Highest Qualification	National Certificate/ Grade 12/Matric	Under-graduate	Post-graduate Diploma/ Honours Degree	Master's Degree	Doctoral Degree
Years of service in institution	<5	5-10		>10
Job Level	Non-managerial	Middle-management		Senior Management

Section 2: Research Questions

1. What, according to you, is leadership?

_____

2. How would you define
    a. virtuous leadership

_____

    b. ethical leadership

_____

    c. moral leadership?

_____

3. What virtues (behaviours showing high moral standards) would you associate with...

      a. A virtuous leader?

_____

      b. An ethical leader?

_____

      c. A Moral leader?

_____

4. What virtues (behaviours showing high moral standards) do you associate with the current leadership of the institution?

_____

5. What virtues (behaviours showing high moral standards) do you feel should be possessed by the leadership of the institution, but are not?

_____

6. How would you define organisational culture?

_____

7. How do the virtuous, ethical or moral leaders in the institution influence organisational culture?

_____

8. How would you describe ethical behaviour?

_____

9. How does the leadership of the institution demonstrate its commitment towards ethical behaviour?

_____

10. What virtues (behaviours showing high moral standards) should the leadership of the institution possess for you as an employee to continue behaving ethically?

_____

11. Would the absence of certain virtues (behaviours showing high moral standards) in the leadership of the institution result in employees like you behaving unethically?

_____

12. Are the current interventions endorsed by the leadership to prevent and, where possible, eradicate unlawful conduct and unethical behaviour sufficient to promote ethical behaviour?

_____

ANNEXURE B: TURN-IT-IN SIMILARITY INDEX

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ANNEXURE C: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS LEADERSHIP

RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE (GSBL CRERC)

27 July 2021

Ref #:   2021_SBL_MBA_008_FA

Name of applicant: Mrs P Matokwe

Student #:   44229658

Dear Mrs Matokwe

Decision: Ethics Approval

Student: Mrs P Matokwe, (44229658@mylife.unisa.ac.za, 083 576 3042)

Supervisor: Dr E Thirion-Venter, (elsa@markdata.co.za, 083 250 6678)

Project Title: The effect of virtuous leadership on organisational culture and the ethical behaviour of employees

Qualification: Master of Business Administration (MBA)

Expiry Date: December 2022

Thank you for applying for research ethics clearance, SBL Research Ethics Review Committee reviewed your application in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics.

Outcome of the SBL Research Committee:

Approval is granted for the duration of the Project

The application was reviewed in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics by the SBL Research Ethics Review Committee on the 26/07/2021.

The proposed research may now commence with the proviso that:

1) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached

2) The researcher/s will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

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3) Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the SBL Research Ethics Review Committee.

4) An amended application could be requested if there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for the research participants.

5) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.

Kind regards,

NBWMlitwa

Prof N Mlitwa

Chairperson: SBL Research Ethics Committee

011 - 652 0000/ wiltonb@unisa.ac.za

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ANNEXURE D: CONSENT TO SUBMIT RESEARCH REPORT

MBLREP / MBL5913 / MBA5929

CONSENT TO SUBMIT RESEARCH REPORT FOR EXAMINATION 2021

Consent is hereby given to:

Student name: …Poelo Matokwe…………………………

Student number: …44229658…………………….. to submit her research report in its final form.

Supervisor Signature: ……………………………. Date: 2021/12/8 ………………………..

Supervisor Name: … Dr Elsa Thirion-Venter ……..

The student acknowledges that sufficient feedback was provided by the supervisor and that s/he took the responsibility to attend to the feedback in a way that satisfies the requirements for a research dissertation on the MBA and MBL level.

Student signature… ………….. Date: …7 December 2021……………………

ANNEXURE E: CERTIFICATE OF EDITING

CERTIFICATE OF EDITING

Date issued:
4 DECEMBER 2021

Author of edited document:
POELO MATOKWE, STUDENT NR 44229658

Title:

THE EFFECT OF VIRTUOUS LEADERSHIP ON ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND THE

ETHICAL BEHAVIOUR OF EMPLOYEES.

This certifies that the above document was proofread and edited by Erna Jörgensen (member of the Professional Editor's Guild – South Africa - membership nr JOR004).

The document was edited for proper English language, grammar, punctuation, spelling, inconsistencies, and overall style. The editor endeavoured not to change the author's intended meaning, and all amendments were tracked with the Microsoft Word "Track Changes" which the author had the right to accept or reject.

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