THE IMPACT OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT ON MIDDLE MANAGEMENT'S EXPERIENCE OF INTEGRITY

by

ANNELIZE VAN NIEKERK

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DECLARATION

I, Annelize van Niekerk, student number 32615981, declare that

   "The impact of senior management on middle management's experience of integrity"

is my own work, and that all the sources that I have used or have quoted from have been indicated and are acknowledged by means of a complete reference list.

SIGNATURE_____   DATE _____

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Most importantly, I would like to thank my Father in Heaven for leading me on this journey and who was the only one who really understood all the way. God, you brought me to this, gave me the strength, guided me through it and blessed me with your grace.

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Lastly, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my father. Daddy, I would have loved for you to read it. Sadly, it was not meant to be.

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SUMMARY

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by

A van Niekerk

Degree: MA (Industrial & Organisational Psychology)

Supervisor: Dr M.S. MAY

A rise in the number of high-profile cases of management failure and leadership misconduct increased the awareness of one of the core challenges of management, namely to lead responsibly and with integrity. The environment which senior managers create and within which middle managers need to function seems to have a direct bearing on the moral behaviour and integrity of the middle manager. The aim of this research was therefore to gain a better understanding of how middle managers view the impact of senior managers on their experience of integrity. There is an increasing need in organisations for responsible leadership, leadership with integrity and leadership towards developing the integrity of the follower. This study was conducted within the interpretive research paradigm. Sampling was directed by criterion-based guidelines, focusing on current middle managers from different industries in the private sector. In-depth interviews were conducted and the data was analysed using a grounded theory method.

The main findings indicated that senior managers should engage in two debates with middle managers in the organisation. Firstly, integrity is not something that is demonstrated but rather means that leaders can be differentiated from other leaders when they lead with integrity. Secondly, defining integrity and linking it to personal standards and values, as well as aligning these standards and values to the organisational strategy, vision and mission, are important. The findings of this study can assist senior managers with decreasing unethical behaviour and increasing integrity in the organisation. The research provided a basic framework that can assist in creating a positive context for the

relationship between senior managers and middle managers within which to function, in order to decrease unethical employee activity and increase integrity.

KEYWORDS

Organisational psychology; integrity; responsible leadership; management; senior managers; middle managers; qualitative research; interpretive paradigm; grounded theory method

CHAPTER 1

SCIENTIFIC ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH

This dissertation focuses on exploring how middle managers experience their integrity being impacted on by senior managers. Chapter 1 contains the background and motivation for the research. In this chapter, the problem statement and the aims for the literature review and interpretative study will be formulated. The paradigm perspective, disciplinary relationship, applicable psychological paradigm and theories, concepts and constructs will be clarified. The research design and research methodology will be detailed after which a layout of the chapters to follow will be provided.

1.1 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

After the recent moral and financial collapse of numerous organisations, many in the business community and popular press have apparently rediscovered the importance of individual character strengths and organisational virtues as possible determinants of both individual betterment and organisational efficiency and performance (McCann & Holt, 2009; Wright & Goodstein, 2007). With the rising number of high-profile cases of senior management failure and leadership misconduct, there has been an increasing awareness that one of the core challenges of management is to lead responsibly and with integrity (Maak & Pless, 2006).

Business environments have become increasingly competitive and complex. Balgobind (2002) emphasises the important role managers as leaders need to play towards assuring the success of an organisation in the increasingly competitive and complex business environments. The increased pressure that comes with such an environment opens the door for challenges towards integrity and testing the leadership of management (Cohen, 2008; Maak & Pless, 2006). A great deal of research has been conducted conceptualising integrity and considering integrity at individual, group and organisational level (Barnard, Schurink & De Beer, 2008; Ciulla, 2004; Palanski & Yammarino, 2009; Storr, 2004). Yet,

leadership with integrity is still considered as one of the challenges that organisations face in managing ethical behaviour (Rossouw & Van Vuuren, 2010).

Contrary to what would be expected, empirical research on the relationship between leadership, as a competency of management, and the integrity of managers and the impact it has on the middle manager seems to be lacking (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008; Palanski & Yammarino, 2009). Yet, in order to effectively impact on the behaviour of people towards achieving organisational goals and objectives, a relationship should exist between the leading function of a senior manager, the importance of fulfilling an interpersonal role and possessing human skills (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982).

Maxwell (2003) claims that integrity is crucial in the leader–follower relationship. In their study, White and Lean (2008) found that perceived leader integrity has a definite impact on the ethical intentions of team members, and therefore impacts in a major way on the ethical behaviour of the followers, and it can therefore also be relevant to the relationship between senior managers and middle managers.

Although integrity has a lot to do with how one has been brought up, moral development is not only influenced by one's upbringing. Moral development is a lifelong process; it continues right through one's career (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2006). People today are seeking to follow leaders who not only demonstrate the necessary leadership competencies, but who also exhibit character, integrity, courage and consideration (Covey, 1997; Pastoriza, Ariño & Ricart, 2009; White & Lean, 2008). Managers impact on integrity by being true to themselves, consistent in their messages and behaviour, and honest and trustworthy in their dealings with others (Johnson, 2009). Johnson (2009) also states that the follower closely observes the behaviour of the leader and any untrustworthy act can weaken such leader's credibility.

The modern workplace can be an extraordinarily powerful and positive character-building institution. In a fast-moving, competitive global culture and marketplace, both personal character and corporate character, which includes integrity, is an organisation's most valuable resource and attribute (Larsen, 1999; McCann & Holt, 2009; Petrick & Quinn,

2001). Yet, most organisations today still neglect to consider this and the value of a responsible leader–follower relationship when mapping their strategies and developing programmes. In order to raise the ethical performance in an organisation, companies need to promote ethical behaviour pro-actively, starting with senior managers and cascading it downwards to embrace middle managers. Corporate ethical standards and values must be set, and should incorporate the employees' moral expectation of the organisation. Both senior managers and middle managers have to commit themselves to these newly set standards and values, and the responsibility for ethical behaviour should be a collective effort shared by all employees (Rossouw & Van Vuuren, 2010). Senior managers should also ensure integrity through incorporating accountability structures whereby middle managers need to provide an account of their behaviour so as to support their integrity when questioned (Brenkert, 2006).

In line with the above, throughout my schooling years, I was taught a strong protestant work ethic, which resulted in a strong sense of wanting to achieve. Early in my childhood, influenced by various role models, I started the journey towards developing my own moral and ethical capacity. These role models taught me how to have courage, integrity, modesty, respect, optimism, justice and compassion towards others. As I entered the place of work, all these virtues seemed to come to the fore much stronger. In some of the organisations where I worked, my integrity was developed through hardships such as career setbacks, problems with leaders and colleagues and personal traumas such as the passing away of a colleague, which enabled me to learn important principles and skills and also made it possible for me to move on towards more complex challenges. In some of these organisations, I also learned the value of further developing good habits, identifying personal and professional mission statements and listing the values that need to serve as a moral compass to guide me on my journey.

Agreeing with Rossouw and Van Vuuren (2010), I observed and experienced during my career as human resource manager how the environment within which people operate has a direct bearing on their moral behaviour and integrity. Senior managers damage relationships between themselves and middle managers through inappropriate behaviour. Such behaviour includes breaking rules and regulations, displaying arrogant attitudes,

misusing funds, denying the need to change and breaking promises. Apart from experiencing it myself, I have also seen many middle managers becoming discouraged in such a relationship with their senior managers. Some chose to adapt the behaviour of the senior manager by lacking transparency and integrity and by contradicting their own ethical beliefs, just for the sake of surviving. On the other hand, one finds middle managers who refuse to succumb to such behaviour and who will not compromise their ethical beliefs. These conflicting standards and values result in middle managers resigning and the company losing valuable employees. In my own experience, I have also refused to succumb to such behaviour, and consequently experienced how the relationship between my senior manager and myself disintegrated. This resulted in me often questioning the senior manager's integrity in terms of his behaviour and decision-making. This implies that the relationship between the senior and middle manager, or leader and follower, and the way this impacts on integrity, become critical in organisations. Given the above, I developed a keen interest to explore the matter further in order to gain a better understanding of how exactly senior managers impact on middle manager's experience of integrity. If companies are serious about sustaining high performance levels in today's complex and competitive business environment this matter should be an immediate concern to them.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Moral progress in business comes about through an increase in stakeholders who regularly handle moral intricacy by demonstrating process, judgement, developmental and system integrity capacity nationally and worldwide (Petrick & Quinn, 2001). Business scandals draw the attention to the profound challenges of remediation and the importance of individual and organisational consciences as forms of prevention. One should also consider legitimacy questions such as the special duty of loyalty owed by managers, on all levels, and directors to stakeholders. Goodpaster (2007) questions how we should understand the force of this obligation in relation to the conscientious manager's duties to other stakeholders.

Goodpaster (2007) furthermore believes the leader to be the principal originator of corporate conscience and the one who manages the stimulus–response paradox. The senior manager as leader is the person most responsible for giving substance to the moral agenda of the organised group and therefore also the followers. Two questions can be posed as it is increasingly becoming important for organisations to search for ways in which unethical employee activity can be decreased and integrity increased:

- Do senior managers realise the important role they play in establishing such leadership?
- Do senior managers realise the impact such leadership can have on their relationship with middle managers and the way middle managers ultimately view integrity?

White and Lean (2008) note that team leaders who are perceived by their team members as having high integrity, impacts on the team environment and organisation towards a commitment of less unethical acts. Elevating leader integrity to a higher level of importance in order to develop and refine understandings of how senior managers and middle managers come to identify, understand and impact on each other and develop integrity, becomes very important (Grover & Moorman, 2007).

To address the above issues, the research question of this project was:

- What is the impact of senior management on middle management's experience of integrity?

The study was therefore designed to answer the following literature and empirical questions in order to answer the research question:

- What are management and its related dimensions?
- What is integrity and what are its dimensions?
- What is the theoretical impact of the way senior manager's impact on middle management's experience of integrity?

The specific objective included an attempt to formulate recommendations in terms of how

senior management can more positively impact on middle management's experience of integrity.

1.3 AIMS

The general aim of this research was to explore how middle managers experience the impact of senior managers on their integrity.

The specific aims relating to the literature review were:
- to conceptualise management;
- to conceptualise integrity; and
- to explore how senior managers impact on middle manager's experience of integrity.

The specific aims relating to the interpretative study were:
- to gain a better understanding of how middle managers experience the impact of senior managers on their integrity;
- to provide a basic framework that can assist in understanding the relationship between senior managers and middle managers; and
- to make recommendations in order to decrease unethical employee activity and increase integrity.

1.4 THE PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE

This research is part of the discipline of industrial psychology and the sub-discipline of organisational psychology (Landy & Conte, 2004; Luthans, 2008).

Most ongoing social research is based on positivism and interpretive social science (Neuman, 2007). If the researcher believes that the reality to be studied consists of people's subjective experiences of the external world, she or he may adopt an

intersubjective or interactional epistemological stance toward that reality (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006).

This research project was situated within the interpretive research paradigm with its emphasis on experience and interpretation (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2005; Smith, 2008). Interpretive research is fundamentally concerned with meaning and it seeks to understand social members' definitions and understanding of situations. The interpretive paradigm does not concern itself with the search for broadly applicable laws and rules, but rather seeks to produce descriptive analysis that emphasises deep, interpretive understanding of social phenomena (Henning *et al.*, 2005).

These assumptions of the interpretive paradigm tie in with the focus of the research, as its purpose was to gain a deep understanding of the experience of a specific group of middle managers. More specifically, this research focused on understanding how individual participants, in middle management positions, experience their integrity being impacted on by senior managers.

The interpretive researcher looks at different places and at different things in order to understand a phenomenon. That is why interpretive research is a communal process, informed by participating practitioners and scrutinised and/or endorsed by others. Phenomena and events are understood through mental processes of interpretation, which are influenced by and interact with social contexts (Terre Blance, Kelly & Durrheim, 2006). The types of knowledge frameworks that drive society, also known as its discourses, become key role players in the interpretive project. These knowledge systems are interrogated by the interpretive researcher who analyses texts to look for the *way* in which people make meaning in their lives, not just *that* they make meaning, and *what* meaning they make. Thus, the interpretive researcher looks for the frames that shape the meaning. It thus holds that researchers in this paradigm are extremely sensitive to the role of context (Henning *et al.*, 2005).

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

Selltiz, Jahoda, Deutsch and Cook (1965, p. 50) define research design as "the arrangement of conditions and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure". The aim of a research design is to plan and structure a given research project in such a way that the eventual validity of the research findings is maximised (Mouton & Marais, 1996). In this study, an interpretive approach was followed.

The research approach, method, sampling, measuring instruments, procedure and data analysis were planned as follows.

1.5.1   Research approach

This study aimed to be interpretive with the purpose of exploring participants' experiences of integrity as impacted on by senior managers, and therefore the use of qualitative data was most appropriate (Henning *et al.*, 2005). Qualitative research has a longstanding history of contributing to an understanding of social structures, behaviours and cultures (Snape & Spencer, 2003). Qualitative research gives us a clear and detailed account of actions and the representation of actions so that we can gain a better understanding of our world, hopefully in order to bring about a measure of social change (Marshall & Rossman, 1999), which is in line with the aim of this study. Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that well-collected qualitative data is important because it focuses on naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings, so that we have a strong handle on what real life is like. Another feature of qualitative data is that it is filled with depth, richness and holism, and that it has a strong potential for revealing complexity (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Terre Blance *et al.*, 2006).

1.5.2   Research method

In the next section, a discussion will follow on the techniques and procedures used to conduct the empirical study. Descriptions will be provided on the research strategy, research setting and the entrée and establishing researcher roles, sampling, data collection methods, recording of the data, data analyses, and strategies employed to ensure data quality and reporting.

1.5.2.1   Research strategy

Within this qualitative research study and in line with the interpretivist research paradigm as well as the data analysis technique of grounded theory, an in-depth interviewing technique was applied (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). The unit of analysis in this study was experienced individuals employed as middle managers. As suggested by De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2002), the selection of the unit of analysis for this study, happened almost automatically during the problem identification stage.

1.5.2.2   Research setting

In an interpretative study, participants must have experienced the phenomenon being explored and be able to express their conscious experiences (Creswell, 1998). Participants located in various organisations can provide valuable information pertaining to their specific context, which in turn can assist during the axial coding phase of the data analysis. Therefore, in this study, the macro setting is an organisational setup.

The social interaction during the interview can only develop once the logistics of the process have been well coordinated (Henning *et al.*, 2005). The study was conducted after hours at the homes of the participants. The homes of the participants are therefore the micro setting in this study. Through this, I ensured that the physical environment was well planned by securing a private space with no outside disturbances to ensure that there were no disruptions.

In a study aimed at being interpretive, the interviewer takes more control over the construction of the data than most other methods (Charmaz, 2006). I therefore assumed ownership of the interviews in order to provide some direction to the process. I also took care to ensure that the interviewees did not feel that they were being examined, but rather that they were giving their opinions in a two-way dialogue. Staying focused on the purpose of the interview as per the research question enabled me to establish what the interviewees regarded as burning issues (Creswell, 1998; Eatough & Smith, 2008; Henning *et al.*, 2005).

1.5.2.3   Entrée and establishing the researcher's role

Middle managers were identified from a variety of corporate and medium-sized organisations in the following industries: financial services, manufacturing, engineering and food production. I identified them as they were recommended as reputable individuals. I approached the participants individually and began a dialogue around the aims of my study as well as the possibility of their participation. The participants were provided with background information as well as the interview questions to be addressed during the interviews. Their possible contribution to the study was then discussed and their involvement was secured after the matter of confidentiality was addressed.

Before the onset of this study I qualified myself further in the various aspects related to qualitative research. I also have extensive experience in conducting in-depth interviews and am therefore ready to conduct this research.

1.5.2.4   Sampling

One should understand that the unit of analysis refers to the "what" of the study – the object, phenomenon, entity, process or event that forms part of the study (Mouton, 2001). Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee (1996) explain it further by stating that the unit of analysis can be seen as the person or object from which the social researcher collects data. As stated by De Vos *et al.*, (2002), the selection of a unit of analysis happens almost

automatically at the problem identification stage. In this study, the unit of analysis were individuals, the middle managers.

For the purpose of this research, the sampling was done through criterion-based sampling, also known as purposive sampling. This means that the members of the sample were chosen with the purpose of representing a location or type in relation to a key criterion (Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003). This sampling method therefore assisted in assuring participation, designed towards obtaining rich data, as all the participants had a strong sense of what they believe in, which was critical for this research. The strength of purposive sampling lies in the fact that it allows the researcher to select participants whose experiences permit an understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 1998).

I used a grounded theory method in analysing the data and therefore a theoretical sampling strategy was followed. Theoretical sampling is a particular kind of purposive sampling in which the researcher samples incidents, people or units on the basis of their potential contribution to the development and testing of theoretical constructs (Ritchie *et al.*, 2003). In this study, three participants were selected. They had been recommended by key informants on account of being reputable. At the time of data collection all three participants were employed in middle management positions. Each participant also had approximately 10 years experience on middle management level and reported to various senior managers during that period. Within qualitative research, it was quite acceptable for me to deal with such a small sample size. The focus of this study was to explore the quality of the data, rather than the quantity (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996). The following table indicates the distribution of participants according to gender, race, age and years' experience per industry in a middle management position:

Table 1: Details of gender, race, age and years' experience per industry

GENDER	RACE	AGE	NUMBER OF YEARS' EXPERIENCE PER INDUSTRY				
			Financial	Government	Engineering	Manufacturing	Agriculture
Male	White	38	2			7	3
Female	White	40		7	7		
Male	White	37	12				

A total of three participants were interviewed. There were two males and one female. In terms of racial composition, all of them were white. Their ages ranged between 37 and 40 years. Their experience in middle management positions ranged between 12 and 14 years. At that stage, the participants were employed in the private sector, in the financial, engineering and manufacturing sectors. Their experience at middle management level, however, included exposure in the public sector, i.e. manufacturing, engineering, agriculture and finance.

1.5.2.5   Data collection

As an interpretivist researcher, I believed the participants could relate their experience best when asked to do so in their own words, in lengthy individual reflective interviews (Henning *et al*., 2005). In-depth interviews allowed me to obtain a detailed picture of the participants' beliefs about or experience of particular themes (De Vos *et al*., 2002). Therefore, I applied an in-depth interviewing technique that is in line with the interpretivist research paradigm as well as the data analysis technique of grounded theory.

Prior to the interviews, I shared the following information with the participants (refer to Annexure A):

- the research topic;
- background information and literature on the topic;
- guaranteed privacy, anonymity and confidentiality; and

- secure storage of the information after recording.

Before the interviews started, I also obtained consent from the interviewees to use an audio recorder and to make notes during the interview. The interviewees also signed an informed consent form (refer to Annexure B). I collected the data from the participants in individual interviews in order to obtain a fuller understanding of how they, as middle managers, experience the impact of senior managers on their integrity. I used the iterative process of theoretical sampling whereby I first selected one participant, analysed the data and then selected another participant in order to refine the themes and sub-themes. I also made notes of my observations during the interviews, on which I reflected afterwards. I followed this process until I believed I had reached data saturation, in other words a point where themes and sub-themes repeated and adding further participants would not lead to further insights (Legard, Keegan & Ward, 2003).

Mouton and Marais (1996) mention four variables that influence reliability during data collection, namely the researcher, the participants, the data collection instrument and the context within which the research is conducted. As the researcher, I was aware of my own opinions and possible bias and therefore took care not to allow these into the interviews. Despite having extensive experience in developing interview guides and conducting in-depth interviews, I paid careful attention during the design of the in-depth interview questions and the interview itself to ensure the collection of sufficient detail. The use of leading questions was minimised and participants were allowed flexibility as to how they wanted to respond to the questions. In order to ensure confidentiality and privacy, the interviews were conducted at the homes of the participants.

1.5.2.6   Recording of data

The interviews were tape recorded after the necessary permission had been obtained from the participants. I transcribed the interviews verbatim and in order to verify the reliability, I reread the transcriptions while listening to the recordings (Kelly, 2006a). After transcribing the interviews recorded verbatim and analysing the resulting texts, I checked the

transcriptions for completeness and for errors. I also took field notes during the interviews and reflected on these during the data processing and data analysis phases.

1.5.2.7   Data analysis

I analysed the recorded and documented interviews according to the methodology of grounded theory (Henning *et al.,* 2005). The goal of the grounded theory approach is to formulate hypotheses based on conceptual ideas as well as to discover the participants' main concern and the way they continually try to resolve it. Using the grounded theory approach, enabled me to discover what occurs in the research settings I joined and what the lives of my research participants were like. This ensured an abstract theoretical understanding of how middle managers experience the impact of senior managers on their integrity (Charmaz, 2006). Babbie (2001) states that the grounded theory approach allows the researcher to be both scientific and creative, as long as the researcher periodically steps back to review the data, and follows the research procedure. In this study, the analytic procedure that was followed included working with the data as it was generated and then integrated.

My aim with the data analysis was to get very close to the data and to obtain an in-depth understanding of what is contained in it. The use of a qualitative research software package could potentially create distance between me and the data and I therefore decided to not utilise such software. I used Microsoft Office Word 2007 to develop documents that assisted me in meeting the objectives of coding. Although this process was quite time intensive, it allowed me abundant contact with the data, which assisted me in gaining an in-depth understanding of the data (Henning *et al.*, 2005).

As explained by Strauss and Corbin (1990), the grounded theory approach uses set procedures for data analysis, which consists of open, axial and selective coding. According to Creswell (1998), the first phase is open coding, which identifies and defines phenomena in order to assist with developing categories of information, followed by the second phase, axial coding, which searches for specific relationships and interconnects the categories.

The process concludes with the third phase of selective coding, which identifies the core categories.

Open coding phase

In the open coding phase, I examined the transcriptions and interview notes of the first interview in order to reduce the data to a small set of themes, which I labelled "phenomena". I then grouped these phenomena according to specific elements into codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Instead of coding words, lines or paragraphs, I coded themes or topics that arose from the data (Charmaz, 2006). Using the constant comparative method of analysis (Silverman, 2000), I identified similar and relevant codes in the second and third interviews, as well as new codes that emerged from the data. As recommended by Strauss and Corbin (1990), I continued with this process until I felt themes were being repeated.

During this process, I also continuously made use of memoing as this prompts one to analyse the data collected early in the research process (Charmaz, 2006). Memos were written in the margins of the transcribed data and interview notes. Writing of these memos involved writing notes on ideas that came to mind as a result of particular incidents in the data (Locke, 2001). Memoing also reflects how I analysed, thought and interpreted the data and questions I asked (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It furthermore directed me after each interview towards data to be collected in the next interview.

Axial coding phase

During axial coding, I identified single sub-themes and began exploring the interrelationship between them. From this, I developed a coding paradigm in order to portray these interrelationships visually. I built theory through making comparisons between phenomena and contexts (Neuman, 2007) in order to strengthen the theory. I made a distinct effort to see relationships between different themes and sub-themes related to management and integrity, and to reason the positioning of certain data across the interviews.

Selective coding

I then proceeded to the last phase of selective coding and started writing the substantive theory. Interpretive theory places the emphasis on understanding the studied phenomena. According to Charmaz (2006), interpretive theory aims to understand the studied phenomena through conceptualising it. Meaning was given by rearranging, examining and discussing the textual data of the interviews in a way that conveyed an authentic voice and remained true to the original understandings of the people interviewed (Neuman, 2007). I therefore asked questions about how one theme may illuminate another and how there may be explanations and clarifications of social processes and phenomena in the data and fitting these logically into patterns, themes, sub-themes and related aspects (Henning *et al.*, 2005). In conceptualising the analytical story, the nature and scope of the interrelationship between themes and their sub-themes and related aspects were specified. I also aimed at enhancing the interpretation of the data through referencing relevant literature and including my personal experiences. I then proceeded to create the framework, as depicted in Chapter 3, Figure 1, illustrating how middle managers experience integrity as impacted on by senior managers.

Stage of interpretation

As suggested by Henning *et al.* (2005), the following three stages took place during the interpretation of the data. The first-order interpretation contained the motives, personal reasons and points of view of the participants. The second-order interpretation included the point that, although I aimed to get very close to the participants, I remained an "outsider" looking in. Lastly, the third-order interpretation represented my own understanding in a way that enabled communication to people who are further away from the original data source. Throughout the three phases, I was aware of my own interest, position and assumptions in this research topic, which could possibly influence my inquiry. Through reflexivity, I scrutinised my own experience, decision-making and interpretations of this research. In this way, I ensured sound representation of the views of the research participants.

In order to verify reliability and to make replications of this research possible, I recorded in detail all steps followed during the analysis of the data (Henning *et al.*, 2005). I also ensured reliability by consistently assigning similar codes to phenomena identified during the three interviews, as recommended by Silverman (2000). In order to ensure validity, the original extracts of the participants are provided in the results section that follows in Chapter 3. The linkages between themes, sub-themes and related aspects are also explained.

1.5.2.8   Strategy to ensure quality data

The aim of a research design is to plan and structure a given research project in such a manner that it produces findings that are reliable, valid, generalisable and conclusive (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006). Although the concepts of validity and reliability were developed in the natural sciences, Lewis and Ritchie (2003) believe they have relevance for qualitative research as they assist in defining the strength of the data. Validity of data refers to data being well grounded and sound while reliability refers to consistency, stability or repeatability (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006).

Therefore, this research study was designed so as to allow the incorporation of various methods to ensure the validity and reliability of the study.

Validity

Mouton and Marais (1996) conclude that the primary aim of research in the social sciences is to generate valid findings, i.e. the findings should approximate reality as closely as possible. Because measurement is fallible, the interpretive researcher encourages varieties of data and different sources and analysis methods in order to strive for validity (Henning *et al.*, 2005). According to interpretive researchers, different viewpoints of the world do not refer to relativism. Reality is assumed to exist but to be imperfectly grasped because of basically flawed humans with their biases or theoretical standpoints that underpin their work. Interpretivism begins, from an epistemological point of view, with a

range of theories about the mind and the way we observe and reason about and seek to explain phenomena we encounter in the world (Smith, 2008).

Henning *et al.* (2005, p. 148) argue with regard to the validity in qualitative research that "the concord of methodology and methods will assist in creating coherence, but with that also comes a cohesive theoretical structure and substantial theoretical knowledge". Therefore, in this research project, I saw theoretical knowledge as a cohesive agent. I furthermore aimed in this study to continually interrogate the applied methods used with checks of the following kind, as suggested by Lewis and Ritchie (2003), to ensure that this research project would be sound:

- I ensured that the sample coverage was free of any known bias and that the criteria used for selection were inclusive of the constituencies known or thought to be of importance.
- In using the interview as instrument, I ensured that the interview process was seen as a data-making process and not just a data-eliciting mechanism.
- As the interviewer, I guarded against giving information, and as a result yielded "pure" information that can be analysed for its content.
- Being aware of interviewer bias, I embarked on the exercise as though I knew nothing and worked hard at being open to interpretations and patterns that differed from my own prior assumptions.
- During the capturing of the phenomena, I ensured that the environment and the quality of the questioning were sufficiently effective for the participants to fully express/explore their views.
- During the identification or labelling of the phenomena, I ensured that they had been identified, categorised and named in ways that reflect the meanings assigned by study participants.
- Throughout the interpretation, I ensured the presence of sufficient internal evidence for the explanatory accounts that had been developed.
- In the display of the results, I focused on portraying the findings in a way that remains true to the original data and which allows others to see the analytic constructions that have occurred.

As advised by Kelly (2006b), a process of peer reviewing was followed during the planning phase, to ensure that the methodology and research design were valid. This peer review process entailed the submission of a detailed research proposal that was reviewed and examined by a research committee, appointed in line with the university's guidelines. I also questioned myself about the transferability or generalisability of the findings of the research. In other words, does the manner in which the data was collected, analysed and interpreted, specify all that the reader needs to know (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to help him/her gain a better understanding of the impact senior managers have on the middle manager's view of integrity?

Reliability

Within qualitative research, the reliability of the findings depends on the likely recurrence of the original data and the way it is interpreted (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). Lewis and Ritchie (2003) further state that questions surrounding the appropriate design and conduct of the research are crucial and need to be asked throughout the research process. I therefore utilised the following checks to ensure reliability:

- I ensured that bias of the sample design/selection was minimised or minimal, symbolically representative of the target population and comprehensive of all known constituencies. I was also sensitive towards finding any known feature of non-response or attrition within the sample.
- I carried out the fieldwork in a consistent manner and allowed the respondents sufficient opportunities to cover relevant ground and to portray their experiences.
- The analysis was carried out systematically and comprehensively and I ensured that classifications and typologies were confirmed by multiple assessments.
- I ensured that the interpretations were well supported by evidence.
- The design/conduct allowed equal opportunity for all perspectives to be identified and I ensured that features that could lead to selective or missing coverage were removed.

- I ensured that the narrative of the study specified all that the reader needs to know in order to understand the findings of the research and so ensured transferability (Lincoln & Guba (1985).

Methods to ensure ethical research principles

I remain accountable for the ethical quality of the inquiry and had to take great care throughout the study and, when in doubt, asked for advice (Henning *et al.*, 2005). In line with university policy, I commenced with the research only once I had obtained permission to continue. Obtaining permission entailed the submission of a completed research proposal, which had to be approved by the research committee of the university. I then approached the participants individually and began a dialogue around the aims of the study. I furthermore assured the participants that all information provided by them would be treated as confidential.

Obtaining informed consent from all the participants is vital and was done after their willingness to participate in the research study was assessed (refer to Annexure B). As De Vos *et al.* (2002) state, emphasis should be placed on accurate and complete information, so that participants will fully comprehend the extent of the research and consequently be able to make a voluntary, thoroughly reasoned decision about their possible participation. In order to do so, the participants were provided with sufficient background information and in advance received the questions to be addressed during the interviews (refer to Annexure A). Attention was given to the quality of information shared with the participants.

Participants were also guaranteed of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality. As the researcher, I protected the privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of the participants by not disclosing their identity once the information was gathered, analysed and reported. This was done by using "Participant A", "Participant B" and "Participant C" instead of their names (Neuman, 2007). I also employed member checking after the data had been analysed and reported. This entailed providing participants with transcribed copies of the interviews, as well as with the findings. Participants were given sufficient time to work through these documents and to provide me with written feedback agreeing with the

content. One of the participants specifically commented on the agreement found by this study between his view and that of the other participants.

1.5.2.9   Reporting

Meaning was given by rearranging, examining and discussing the data obtained during the interviews in a way that conveyed an authentic voice and by remaining true to the original understandings of the people interviewed (Neuman, 2007). As researcher, my aim was to translate the data in such a way that it would be understandable to other people (Henning *et al.*, 2005; White, Woodfield & Ritchie, 2003). I aimed at reporting the analysed data and my interpretation thereof through referencing relevant literature and by providing verbatim evidence from the data to strengthen my arguments. The findings of this study were utilised towards the development of a framework, which will be presented in Chapter 3.

1.5.2.10   Conclusion and recommendations

The conclusions of both the literature review and empirical study are reported in order to explain the findings of this research study and to determine whether the problem statement and aims of the research had been met. The themes, sub-themes and related aspects developed from this study are illustrated and a framework is designed based on the analysed data, assisting in gaining a better understanding as to how middle managers experience integrity as impacted on by senior managers.

1.5.2.11   Limitations

The limitations of the literature review and empirical study are examined and discussed in Chapter 4.

1.6 ARTICLE DEVELOPMENT

In accordance with the requirements for this dissertation, Chapter 3 is presented in the format of an academic article. When I wrote the article, Chapter 3, I first focused on the introductory section, which included the key focus of the study, background to the study, the research purpose, trends obtained from research literature, the research problem and objectives and the potential value-add of the study. I then progressed to the research design and methodology sections, which include the research approach, research method, research setting, entrée and the researcher's role, sampling, data collection and recording of the data. I then proceeded with the data analysis, and it was during the selective coding phase that I started writing the substantive theory. I used interpretive theory to understand the studied phenomena, following which I started with the conceptualisation of the findings. When I started asking questions and drawing mind maps and diagrams, themes started illuminating each other. This assisted me in fitting the data into logical patterns, themes, sub-themes and the related aspects as depicted in Chapter 3, Table 1. Throughout this process, I also referenced relevant literature and included my own personal experiences. As a result of all the above, I was able to design the framework, as portrayed in Chapter 3, Figure 1. I then proceeded to complete the reporting and concluded Chapter 3 with a conclusion, recommendation for future research and limitations of the study.

1.7 CHAPTER LAYOUT

This dissertation comprises four chapters. The first chapter includes the background and motivation for the research study. In this chapter, the problem statement was generated and the aims for the literature review and empirical study were formulated. The paradigm perspective, disciplinary relationship, applicable psychological paradigm and theories, concepts and constructs were clarified and the research design and research methodology were detailed.

The aim of Chapter 2 is to define management, leadership and integrity together with the dimensions of each. This chapter furthermore aims towards exploring and better understanding of senior managers as leaders, through their behaviour and beliefs, impacts on the middle manager's experience of integrity.

The presentation of Chapter 3 is unique in that the layout used in this dissertation is different from the customary layout used for dissertations. The research methodology and research findings have been combined in this chapter. Chapter 3 was written according to the guidelines and style for authors who intend to publish in the specific accredited academic journal. The chapter starts with an introduction, providing the key focus of the study, background to the study, the research purpose, trends obtained from research literature, the research problem and objectives and the potential value-add of the study. This is followed by the research design and methodology, which includes the research approach, research method, research setting, entrée and researcher's role, sampling, data collection, recording of the data, data analysis and reporting. This chapter will furthermore report on the findings of the research study and will discuss these in relation to current literature and research.

The objective of Chapter 4 is to present the conclusions, limitations and recommendations of this study. The research aims as discussed in Chapter 1 were used to evaluate the conclusions of the literature review and the interpretative study. The limitations of this study are then discussed and recommendations are made for practical use and further research.

1.8   CHAPTER SUMMARY

In Chapter 1, the scientific orientation to the research was discussed. This contained the background and motivation, the research problem, aims, the paradigm perspective, the research design and method. The chapter ended with the chapter layout.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

In line with the research aims, this chapter defines management and integrity. Together with some of their dimensions, management and integrity are also explored further. Management is specifically considered in relation to its leading function, and therefore the relationship between management and leadership and the way they complement each other are explored. This chapter also aims to explore and create a better understand of how senior managers, through their behaviour and beliefs, impact on middle manager's experience of integrity.

As this study is situated within the interpretive research paradigm, with its emphasis on experience and interpretation (Henning *et al.*, 2005; Smith, 2008), and its attempt to explore the impact of senior management on middle management's experience of integrity, the findings need to be related to an existing body of theory and research. However, in order to prevent the possibility of the literature review sending the findings of this study in a certain direction, the literature review was concluded after the findings of the research had been formulated (De Vos *et al.*, 2002). The act of managing people in a responsible, ethical manner was explored as well as the impact managers as leaders have on the creation of an ethical work context (Karp & Helgø, 2009; Maak & Pless, 2006). Integrity was considered as the heart of management and is seen as a specific type of relationship, which consists of morally unappealing or appealing behaviours (Ciulla, 2004). The relationship between management and integrity was conceptualised at individual and organisational level revealing what middle managers expect from their senior managers (Covey, 1997; Pastoriza *et al.,* 2009; White & Lean, 2008). To conclude, the impact of the integrity of senior management as perceived by the middle manager, and the middle manager's attitudes were also explored (Davis & Rothstein, 2006; White & Lean, 2008).

2.1 MANAGEMENT

Organisations, who wish to be successful in today's competitive, challenging world, should be able to act quickly and effectively on the challenges they face. The job of a manager plays an integral role towards ensuring such success. In order to better understand this job of managing, it is important to firstly explore how management is defined. Consideration should also be given to the role and functions a manager fulfils. Lastly, management and leadership are often seen as one and the same thing, yet there is a significant difference between them which needs to be discussed.

2.2.1 Defining management

During a review of literature it was quite astonishing to discover the existence of so many definitions of management. Yet, all these definitions seem to have one thing in common and that is the aim towards accomplishing organisational goals and objectives through the utilisation of human capital.

According to Williams (2011, p. 6), management is simply "getting work done through others". Hersey and Blanchard (1982, p. 3) define management as "working with and through individuals and groups to accomplish organisational goals". Kotter (1990) sees management as a planning process that assists towards ensuring smooth organisational operation. Schermerhorn (2004, p. 6) defines management as "the process of planning, organising, leading and controlling the use of resources to accomplish performance goals".

Perhaps a more comprehensive definition of management is that of Wagner and Hollenbeck (1992, p. 24), who defined management as "a process of planning, organising, directing and controlling organisational behaviours in order to accomplish a mission through the division of labour". The current research adopted the definitions of Schermerhorn (2004) and Wagner and Hollenbeck (1992), as these definitions provide an exact account of the way management is often defined in literature.

2.2.2 The functions and roles of a manager

In the early part of the 20th century, one of the founders of the field of management, Henri Fayol, identified what he called "the rules of his administrative doctrine" (Brodie, 1967, p. 12). According to Fayol, managers had to perform five managerial functions to ensure success: planning, organising, coordinating, controlling and commanding (Robbins, Judge, Odendaal & Roodt, 2009; Williams, 2011). Today, these five functions have been condensed to four: planning, organising, controlling and leading.

Planning entails forward thinking and can be seen as a manager's attempt to anticipate the future. Goals and objectives are set for the future of the organisation, and a list of actions is planned that will assist in achieving these goals and objectives (Wagner & Hollenbeck, 1992).

In organising, managers organise tasks into a structure of what will be done by whom. In this structure, managers also decide who will be working with whom, and also clearly illustrate the reporting lines (Williams, 2011).

Controlling involves the evaluation of work performance against the set goals and objectives determined in the planning phase. Managers need to maintain active contact with their employees performing the tasks and also need to collect sufficient information in order to determine whether the actual results are in line with the desired results (Schermerhorn, 2004).

According to Hersey and Blanchard (1982, p. 3), for organisations to be successful, organisational goals should be achieved by management through leadership. Leading involves inspiring and motivating employees and nurturing commitments to work hard in order to achieve the set organisational goals and objectives (Schermerhorn, 2004; Williams, 2011).

These four functions in the management process are however more complicated than they appear to be and are also affected by the position the manager has within the hierarchy of authority. These differences in position impact on managers' jobs, the roles they fulfil, the skills they use and the behaviour they engage in (Wagner & Hollenbeck, 1992).

Distinction can be made between senior management, middle management and junior management. Senior managers are usually managers functioning at executive management and board level in organisations. They are also mainly responsible at a strategic level for the four management functions of planning, organising, leading and controlling. Middle managers usually report to senior managers and are responsible for the execution of the action list set by senior management towards obtaining the organisational goals and objectives. Junior management report to middle managers and function more on a team leader or supervisory level (Schermerhorn, 2004; Williams, 2011).

Although these various levels of management engage on a daily basis in activities that involve planning, organising, leading and controlling, they all have various roles to fulfil. Mintzberg (1973) conducted a study where he observed five CEOs for a week. During his research, Mintzberg identified three major roles manager fulfil while performing their jobs, namely an decisional role, an informational role and a interpersonal role. The decisional role entails being an entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator and negotiator. In the informational role, the manager monitors, disseminates information and becomes the spokesperson to outside parties. Within the interpersonal role, the focus is on the interaction of managers with people both inside and outside of the organisation (Schermerhorn, 2004). In the interpersonal role, managers fulfil three sub-roles, namely that of figurehead, leader and liaison. The figurehead role is the role managers play when they perform ceremonial duties, whilst the liaison role entails dealing with people outside the manager's department or division. The leadership role involves motivating and encouraging employees towards accomplishing organisational goals and objectives (Williams, 2011).

Apart from the need to have technical and conceptual skills, and in order to fulfil the interpersonal role successfully, managers should also possess human or interpersonal skills (Robbins *et al.*, 2009). The importance of interpersonal skills seems to be key to such success as, according to Hersey and Blanchard (1982, p. 3), leadership occurs only once a manager attempts to impact on the behaviour of an individual or group towards performing specific tasks. Interpersonal skills surface in the form of the manager gaining the trust of employees and having an authentic involvement in employees' work life (Schermerhorn, 2004; Wagner & Hollenbeck, 1992).

From the above, it is evident that an association exists between the leading function of especially a senior manager, the importance of fulfilling an interpersonal role, and possessing human skills, in order to effectively impact on the behaviour of people towards achieving organisational goals and objectives. In order to ensure success, a competency such as leadership consequently becomes important for a manager, and hence the current study was focused on the leading function of the manager.

2.2.3 Distinguishing between management and leadership

Management and leadership are frequently considered to be the same concept (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982; Kotterman, 2006). Though, to understand what leadership is all about, it is necessary to make a distinction between leadership and management. Leadership and management can rather be viewed as complementary to each other (Gardner & Schermerhorn, 1992). Whereas, other researchers (Hunt & Ropo cited in Antonakis, Cianciolo & Sternberg, 2004) are of the opinion that leadership exceeds beyond management. Storr (2004) believes leadership can be treated as a shared influence process whereby any member of management can take up the process and carry out the leadership role. Leaders and managers are viewed by some as different types of people (Zaleznik, 1989), others argue that, in order to be regarded as a successful leader, successful management is required (Antonakis *et al.,* 2004).

This section defined management, and looked at the functions and roles managers have to fulfil in order to be successful. This section furthermore concluded that leadership is central in the role management fulfils. Therefore, to be a successful manager, successful leadership is essential. In the next section the leadership function of the managers will be discussed in more detail.

2.3 LEADERSHIP AS A CORE COMPONENT OF MANAGEMENT

Despite many years of leadership research, thousands of studies and endless books and publications, it is quite surprising that we still do not have a clear understanding of what leadership is and how it can be achieved by managers (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Maak & Pless, 2006). Today people are seeking to follow managers who not only demonstrate the necessary leadership competencies, but who also exhibit character, integrity, courage and consideration (Covey, 1997; Pastoriza *et al.,* 2009; White & Lean, 2008). It is therefore important to define leadership and some of its dimensions and approaches by considering leader behaviour.

Kotter (1990) sees leadership as a direction-setting process that produces useful change. Maxwell (2003) defines a leader as someone who not only knows the way, but who also directs his or her followers in that direction and then heads into that direction him- or herself. In order to go in a certain direction as proposed by Maxwell (2003), organisations need to promote leadership in management that speaks of high integrity and a deep sense of purpose and which stays true to the organisation's core values (George, 2003).

Leadership emerges as the act of recognition when management and followers interact and credibility is gained to perform as a leader (Karp & Helgø, 2009). Antonakis *et al.* (2004, p. 5) define leadership as –

> … the nature of the influencing process, and its resultant outcomes, that occurs between a leader and followers and how this influencing process is explained by the leader's dispositional characteristics and behaviours, follower perceptions and attributions of the leader, and the context in which the influencing process occurs.

Ciulla (2004) and Storr (2004) explain leadership as a specific type of human relationship with a distinctive set of morally unappealing behaviours such as intimidation and manipulation by which the needs and opinions of followers can be lessened in worth or ignored. It seems that the more defective managers are as leaders, the greater the desire of their followers becomes to have responsible leaders. Leaders need certain capabilities and should possess good character to be responsible leaders, yet they are not born that way. Kets de Vries (1999) and Maak and Pless (2006) argue that responsible leadership is a balance of the managers character, the manager's relationship with people and followers, the roles and tasks he or she fulfils and sound processes.

Maak and Pless (2006) see the roles and responsibilities of a responsible leader as that of being a servant to others, a steward and custodian of values and resources, an architect of systems and processes and moral infrastructure, a change agent as transformative leader, a coach who supports and nurtures followers, and lastly as a storyteller, creator and communicator of moral experiences who shares systems of meaning. The power of leaders is the result of a manager's ability to form alliances and to engage the talent of others in the collective enterprise (Bennis as cited in Antonakis *et al.*, 2004).

It is also worth noting that responsible leadership depends not only on principled individuals and their education and training, but also on a "holding environment". In order to protect followers and organisations, it becomes necessary to define leadership by means of an "ethical or moral code of conduct", through which accountability can be imposed (Storr, 2004).

This research adopted the definition provided by Antonakis *et al.* (2004), who described leadership as an influencing process wherein the dyadic relationship of the managers leadership characteristics and behaviour, coupled with the followers' perceptions and the context within which this relationship functions, should be considered.

This section looked at the difference between leadership and management, and explored the act of leading people in a responsible, ethical manner, as well as the impact managers

as leaders have on the creation of an ethical work context. In the light of the above, it is important to further consider integrity as the heart of leadership, and leadership with integrity as the heart of management.

2.4 INTEGRITY

In this section, integrity and the place it has within the leadership function of a manager will be discussed. The concept *integrity*, from a philosophical point of view, refers to the quality of a person's character and can be attributed to various aspects of a person's life (Cox, La Caze & Levine, 2008). McCoy (2007) sees the meaning of integrity as a person's willingness "to be accountable in all facets of one's life". He refers to the presence of wholeness to life, without the need for a person to lose her or his basic values and within which the authentic self is visible. As integrity refers specifically to human character, a person with integrity is seen as someone who consistently adheres to a set of ethical standards (Rossouw & Van Vuuren, 2010). Becker (1998, p. 157) defines integrity as "commitment in action to a morally justified set of principles and values". Characteristics such as fairness, consistency and morality makes a person of integrity trustworthy to others as someone with integrity will always adhere to her or his values. This is an important of a manager who wants to be regarded as a leader. However, these values differ between cultures and societies, and are not universal at all.

Johnson (2009) also views integrity as a wholeness or completeness. According to Johnson (2009), managers with integrity are authentic and consistently mirror what they say publicly with what they think and the way they act in private. This research adopted the definitions of Johnson (2009) and McCoy (2007) as these definitions provide an accurate accord of how integrity is often defined in literature.

The main cause in any important case involving major business failures seems to be a lack of both personal and organisational integrity. Integrity and the direction that it provides are part of the required solution to many problems experienced by organisations (Brenkert, 2006; White & Lean, 2008). According to George (2003), organisations need to promote

leadership in management that speaks of high integrity, a deep sense of purpose and which stays true to their core values.

The foregoing discussion focused our attention towards two different challenges. The first challenge arises when one's basic values or principles seem to call for one to act in a different manner from what the situation you face demands. Secondly, a challenge occurs when the values and characteristics of people who are successful in certain positions are in conflict with their integrity. The characteristics attributed to some managers may make it difficult or impossible for such persons to act with integrity. In both the above cases, though in different ways, someone's integrity is at stake (Davis & Rothstein, 2006; White & Lean, 2008)

2.5 EXPLORING HOW SENIOR MANAGERS IMPACT ON MIDDLE MANAGER'S EXPERIENCE OF INTEGRITY

As I collected background information and reviewed literature pertaining to senior managers' impact on middle managers' experience of integrity, it became evident that the following three questions need to be addressed:

- Firstly, what role do organisations play in developing or breaking down people's integrity?
- Secondly, how do people in organisations develop each other's integrity or break it down?
- Lastly, how do leaders impact positively or negatively on the integrity of their followers?

2.5.1 The role of organisations in developing or breaking down people's integrity

Business and work are about making a profit, producing a product or delivering a service and making money in order to earn a living. Ciulla (2004) reminds us that the "enterprise of business is not distinct from the enterprise of life and living because they share the same bottom line – people". Who are these people? These people are the stakeholders in an

organisation and they include the employees, shareholders and clients. It is essential to remember that stakeholders are motivated by the need to attain monetary wealth, and this might result in rationalisations and business practices aligned towards economic self-interest. Sadly, this drive is often to the detriment of other humans, society at large and the environment within which these businesses operate. This leads people to believe and rationalise their reasoning that business and ethics cannot and should not be mixed. Often organisations and their senior managers consider ethical beliefs to be inappropriate in business and that the management of business should be amoral (De George, 1999; Rossouw & Van Vuuren, 2010).

The environment within which people operate has a direct bearing on their moral behaviour and integrity (Rossouw & Van Vuuren, 2010). The impact of senior managers as leaders in such an environment and on corporate integrity is obviously significant. Leadership plays a very important role in establishing the climate of an organisation, whether amoral or moral. Bowie (2010) describes a moral climate as "shared perceptions of prevailing organisational norms established for addressing issues with a moral component". According to him, organisational integrity exists when an organisation has a moral climate. He further states that a moral climate only exists when –

> … an organisation with integrity is not viewed as a mere instrument for individual personal advancement, but is rather seen as a cooperative endeavour of those within the organisation that provides value to its corporate stakeholders.

In order to determine the role organisations play in developing or breaking down people's integrity, it is important to understand the differences between organisational integrity and individual integrity. According to Bowie (2010), organisational integrity requires certain kinds of organisational structures or organisational incentives that are aligned to organisational values and norms. Brown (2005) proposed five dimensions of corporate integrity, namely

- a first dimension, which is culture that consists of language, practices and patterns of communication, which create the context within which people relate to each other, experiences and things;

- a second dimension, namely the interpersonal, which centres on the interactions that define the self;

- the third dimension, which refers to corporations as agents and which is the organisation;

- the fourth dimension, which comprise corporate relationships to society; and

- fifth dimension, which comprise corporate relationships to society and nature.

These five dimensions foster the establishment and growth of a moral organisational climate. Individual integrity, on the other hand, has to do with individuals accepting liability for negative consequences caused by their behaviour. Achieving organisational integrity might require managers to place issues of personal responsibility in the background or even ignoring them (Bowie, 2010), for example when personal values are in conflict with an organisation's profit motives.

Corporate integrity is a relational phenomenon and requires responsible engagement with all stakeholders when they enter into a relationship (Maak, 2008). As employees are important stakeholders in an organisation, cognisance should be taken of the fact that they are more informed and perceptive nowadays. They have a heightened expectation of organisations to act according to high ethical standards and the creation of an ethical work climate (Rochlin, 2004). The creation of such an ethical work climate, in which corporate and personal values can meet each other, will enable the achievement of a higher level of shared developed integrity capability (Petrick & Quinn, 2001). This will also provide support towards the creation of a context for continuous moral development. This context should also be assessed on a regular basis by senior managers in order to ensure a supportive context within which the developmental integrity capacity of individuals may be enhanced (Johnson, 2007; Petrick & Quinn, 2001).

Senior managers should show their commitment towards high moral standards and should back this up with their actions. Senior managers who keep their promises, share authority for decision-making, share factual information, consult in a fair manner, take risks and work in partnership with their followers, create an ethical climate within which the followers' integrity is supported and developed (Johnson, 2009; Petrick & Quinn, 1997). Like Johnson (2009), Bowie (2010) and Brenkert (2004), I believe organisational behaviour should consistently be in line with its developed goals and purposes, in other words to senior managers should "walk the talk".

Lynn Paine (1996), well-known business ethicist, is of the opinion that, in this "walk the talk", manager's leadership behaviour should embrace the following rudiments, if an organisation wishes to improve organisational integrity:

- values and commitments should be reasonable and clearly communicated;
- leadership should be dedicated to these values and operate accordingly;
- all decisions and organisational activities should incorporate the values;
- organisational systems and structures should strengthen these commitments; and
- leaders in the organisation should have all the required knowledge and skills to enable them to make ethical decisions.

Maak (2008) believes much is to be gained by utilising corporate integrity as a "sense-making device" and that corporate integrity could possibly be the most valuable asset an organisation can own.

2.5.2 How people in organisations develop each other's integrity or break it down

Values assist people in establishing a frame of reference according to which they operate. Values also play an important role in assisting people in the process of determining priorities and in the formation of a perception of what is right and what is wrong. A person's core values are formed at an early stage. However, at a certain point one's values and ethical conduct will be shaped by peers and mentors (Miller & Thomas, 2005). According to Kohlberg's model of cognitive moral development (Kohlberg, 1969), most people

function at the conventional level where they define right and wrong based on the behaviour observed from others surrounding them (Granitz & Ward, 2001). Johnson (2009) believes a lot of ethical discomfort can be avoided if one is able to identify your core values.

Rossouw and Van Vuuren (2010) suggest that all actions are always ethically laden and can therefore impact positively or negatively on the interests of others. The people in an organisation, working together, determine the quality of each other's lives (Rossouw & Van Vuuren, 2010). In a study by Barker (1993), it was found that people working together construct their own value systems and norms. These value systems and norms appear to stand free from the organisation and can even replace organisational rules intended towards influencing employee behaviour.

Working together, with a consistent unity of purpose and shared values, assists in the creation of an ethical relationship, which in turn enables a relationship of trust (Rossouw & Van Vuuren, 2010). Trust is increased through consistent actions and this encourages people to be vulnerable to one another (Johnson, 2009). Colleagues assist in defining reality and in doing so impact on the reactions of peers (Greenberger, Miceli & Cohen, 1987). This implies that people are inclined to succumb to pressures from colleagues, even in instances where their personal values are violated (Miller & Thomas, 2005). Integrity is a relational phenomenon and therefore it is inevitable that the organisation and the people surrounding a person will have an impact on the development or breakdown of that person's integrity (Johnson, 2007).

2.5.3 The impact of leaders on the integrity of their followers

Literature seems to refer to the relationship between leader and follower. The relationship between senior manager and middle manager specifically seems to be absent. There can be many followers in an organisation, but in this study, "the follower" refers specifically to middle managers and "leadership" to senior managers. A theoretical integration will now be given of how leadership, or senior managers, impacts positively or negatively on the integrity of followers. Organisations should consider the value of a responsible leader–

follower relationship when mapping strategies and developing programmes. This implies that the relationship between the senior and middle manager, or leader and follower, and the way it impacts on integrity, become critical in organisations and should be an immediate concern.

William Cohen (2008) conducted research during the late 1990s on military leaders, who after leaving the service, had gone on to achieve extraordinary success as leaders in other organisations. Cohen's interest was specifically focused on the principles such leaders learned during their military careers. He clustered their responses into eight categories, which he called "The Eight Universal Laws of Leadership". His first law was "Integrity First", on which famous author on leadership, Peter Drucker (Cohen, 2008, p. 187), responded during a discussion as follows,

> You are entirely right and absolutely correct in listing this as your first law. A leader can be well liked and popular and even competent, and that's all well and good, but if he lacks integrity of character he is not fit to be a leader.

Peter Drucker (Cohen, 2008, p. 120) continued by saying, "Ethics and integrity should be measured primarily by the oath of the Greek physician Hippocrates, as *primum non nocere* – first, do no harm".

Storr (2004, p. 423) responds by stating,

> … leaders with integrity are more concerned with the welfare of the community and others than oneself, in that the wellbeing of others and the common good overrides and is more important than one's own.

This ultimately leads to the vision of Nelson Mandela (1994) as expressed during his inaugural address speech on 10 of May 1994.

> We shall build a society in which all South Africans … will be able to walk tall without any fear in their hearts … a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world.

Leaders develop relationships with each member of the group that they lead. Almost all transformational and charismatic leadership theories discuss role modelling as a key characteristic wherein the values and actions of followers are impacted on by the leader through the example of his or her personal conduct (Palanski & Yammarino, 2009). Bandura (1986) not only refers to modelling, but also to the process whereby learning takes place through the observation of others' behaviour and the consequences of such behaviour.

In a study by Lamboo, Lasthuizen and Huberts (2008), the qualities of ethical leadership most often cited in relation to integrity violations of employees seem to be:

- role modelling of managers by setting a good example for employees;
- strictness of managers in applying clear norms and sanctioning misbehaviour of employees; and
- openness of managers to discuss integrity problems and dilemmas.

Managers, through their leading function, therefore act as role models for followers in terms of ways to circumvent integrity violations and lead through the example they set (Ciulla, 2004). Managers who display high integrity are likely to develop followers who also display high integrity, as acting as role model has a cascading effect (Brown, Treviño & Harrison, 2005; De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008; Palanski & Yammarino, 2009; White & Lean, 2008).

According to Mason (2004), managers who encourage open communication, reduce the probability of employee misconduct. Such an environment opens the door for employees to discuss their mistakes, obtain advice, discuss integrity issues and even feel less threatened, should they need to report deviant behaviour (Lamboo *et al.,* 2008). According to Kohn (1993), reward or discipline systems should be designed in order to ensure sustainable productivity, fairness, continued development and the creation of a pleasant work environment. Followers are more likely to do that which they get rewarded for and would avoid acts that could lead to punishment (Butterfield, Treviño & Ball, 1996). Ethics are the responsibility of each employee in the organisation and should therefore form an

essential part of the job. Rossouw and Van Vuuren (2010) propose the incorporation of ethics into the key performance areas of employees. Employees should be part of the process determining which actions need to be measured and how such actions will be rewarded. This makes the reward system a powerful determinant of ethical or unethical behaviour (Johnson, 2007).

In order to understand the relationship between senior and middle managers and to obtain a more balanced understanding of the multi-faceted nature of leadership situations, consideration should be given to the domains of the follower (as shown in Figure 1) (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Kelley, 1988) and the dyadic relationship between the leader and follower (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1991).
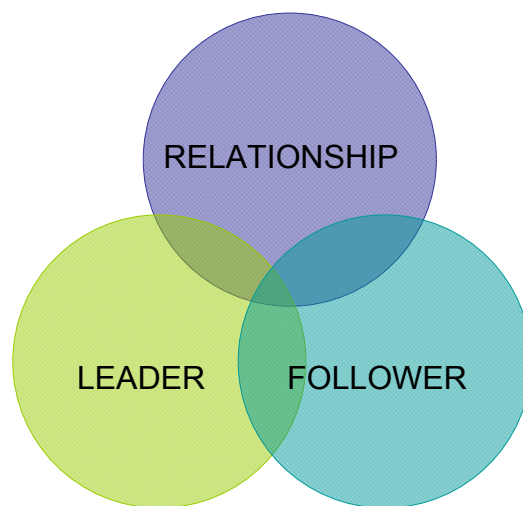
Figure 1: The domains of leadership (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995)

The leader–member exchange (LMX) theory focuses on the vertical dyadic relationship between a leader and a follower (Antonakis *et al.,* 2004; Gerstner & Day, 1997). The LMX theory furthermore explains how this two-way relationship develops in a unique way. Leaders are faced with challenges such as time constraints on the job, and therefore develop close relationships with a few of their followers (Graen, 1976). Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) explain that leaders usually have special relationships with such followers, who are often assigned high levels of responsibility and who have access to resources. Such followers often comprise the "in-group", and their position can come at a price. These

followers have to work harder and also have to be more committed to task objectives. They are expected to be totally committed and loyal to their leader. The remainder of the followers in the team are referred to as the "out-group". With these followers, the leader relies on formal authority, policies and rules in order to ensure sufficient performance (Dienesch & Liden, 1986). Followers in the "out-group" are given low levels of choice or authority by the leader and in many ways they constrain the leader. These two groups seem to develop early on in the leader–follower relationship and remain stable thereafter (Liden & Graen, 1980).

According to Dienesch and Liden (1986), the LMX relationship is multidimensional and can be categorised according to the following dimensions:

- degree of trust between leader and follower;
- subordinate competence;
- degree of loyalty between leader and follower;
- degree of perceived equity of exchange in the relationship by both leader and follower;
- degree of mutual influence; and
- amount of interpersonal attraction between leader and follower.

The LMX theory predicts that high-quality relations between leaders and followers generate more positive leader outcomes than do lower-quality relations (Antonakis *et al.,* 2004). The LMX theory is therefore linked to the outcome of this study in order to assist in explaining the relationship between senior and middle managers and the impact of this on middle managers' integrity.

In summary, senior managers play a very important role in developing or breaking down people's integrity through the climate they establish for all their stakeholders. The establishment of an ethical work environment will enhance the attainment of a higher level of shared developed integrity potential. Furthermore, as integrity is a relational phenomenon, the breaking down or development of someone's integrity will be prejudiced by not only the organisation, but also by the people who surround him or her. This

highlights the relevance of the LMX theory in that this theory predicts that high-quality relations between leaders and followers generate more positive leader outcomes. Therefore, managers displaying high integrity in their leadership will almost certainly develop followers who also exhibit high integrity.

2.6 SUMMARY

According to the research aims, this chapter defined management and some of its dimensions. Consideration was also given to the functions and roles managers fulfil, with specific emphasis on the leading function of managers. A distinction was also made between management and leadership.

Literature pertaining to integrity was reviewed and specific consideration was given to the role integrity plays in major business failures. Limitations and a lack of empirical research on the relationship between the senior manager as leader and integrity and the impact this has on the middle managers' experience of integrity, were articulated in Chapter 2. In considering the way senior managers impact on middle manager's experience of integrity, literature addressing three questions was explored. Firstly, consideration was give to the role organisations play in developing or breaking down people's integrity. Secondly, the way people in organisations develop each other's integrity or break it down was discussed. Finally, literature was presented on how senior managers impact on the integrity of the middle manager. In this manner, a framework was established against which the research aims of this empirical study were pursued.

Chapter 3 will detail the research design and methodology followed. This includes the research approach, research method, research setting, entrée and researcher's role, sampling, data collection, recording of the data, data analysis and reporting. Chapter 3 will furthermore report on the results of this study and discuss these in relation to current literature and research.

CHAPTER 3
ARTICLE

EXPLORING HOW MIDDLE MANAGERS EXPERIENCE THE IMPACT OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT ON THEIR INTEGRITY

ANNELIZE VAN NIEKERK

Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology

UNISA

South Africa

MICHELLE MAY

Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology

UNISA

South Africa

Correspondence to: Annelize van Niekerk

Email: vnieka2@unisa.ac.za

Postal Address: PO Box 55, Montana Park, 0159

Phone number: 012 429 8231

ABSTRACT

Orientation: A rise in the number of high-profile cases of senior management failure and leadership misconduct increased the awareness that one of the core challenges of management is to lead responsibly and with integrity.

Research purpose: The purpose of this research was to gain a better understanding of how middle managers experience the impact of senior managers on their integrity.

Motivation for the study: There is an increasing need in organisations for responsible leadership by senior managers, leadership with integrity and leadership towards developing the integrity of the middle manager.

Research design, approach and method: This study was conducted within the interpretive research paradigm. Sampling was directed by criterion-based sampling, focusing on middle managers currently from various industries in the private sector. In-depth interviews were conducted and the data was analysed using a grounded theory method.

Main findings: The findings indicate that senior managers should engage in two debates with middle managers in the organisation. Firstly, a manager can be differentiated from other managers when he or she leads with integrity. Secondly, the debate deals with defining integrity and linking it to personal standards and values, as well as aligning these standards and values to the organisational strategy, vision and mission.

Practical/managerial implications: This study can assist senior managers in decreasing unethical behaviour and increasing integrity in the organisation.

Contribution/value-add: This research provided a basic framework that can assist in creating a positive context within which the relationship between senior managers and middle managers can function, in order to decrease unethical employee activity and increase integrity.

Keywords: organisational psychology; responsible leadership; qualitative research; grounded theory

INTRODUCTION

Key focus of the study

With the rising number of high-profile cases of senior management failure and misconduct, such as that of Eskom and the South African Airways, there has been an increasing awareness that one of the core challenges of management is to lead responsibly and with integrity (Maak & Pless, 2006). This research focused on understanding how individual participants in middle management positions view integrity as demonstrated by their senior managers. It appears that many in the business community and others in the popular press have apparently rediscovered the importance of individual character strengths and organisational virtues as possible determinants of both individual betterment and organisational efficiency and performance (McCann & Holt, 2009; Wright & Goodstein, 2007).

Background to the study

Business environments have become increasingly competitive and complex. Balgobind (2002) emphasises the important role senior managers as leaders play towards assuring the success of an organisation in the current increasingly competitive and complex business environment. The increased pressure that comes with such an environment opens the door for challenges with regard to integrity and tests the leadership of senior managers (Cohen, 2008; Maak & Pless, 2006).

The term *integrity*, from a philosophical point of view, refers to the quality of a person's character and it can be attributed to various aspects of that person's life (Cox *et al.*, 2008). It is, however, necessary to distinguish between acting morally versus acting with integrity, as the two can very often be confused. Persons of integrity may sometimes act immorally purely because they hold essentially mistaken moral views. As integrity refers specifically to human character, a person with integrity is seen as someone who consistently adheres to a set of ethical standards (Rossouw & Van Vuuren, 2010). Becker (1998, p. 157) sees

integrity as being committed to a set of values and principles, which are morally justified, through action. Characteristics such as fairness, consistency and morality makes a person of integrity trustworthy to others, as a person of integrity will always adhere to values, a trait very important in leadership.

Cohen (2008) conducted research during the late 1990s on battle leaders, who after leaving the military, had gone on to extraordinary success in leading other organisations. Cohen's interest was specifically focused on principles these leaders had learnt during their military careers. He clustered their responses into eight categories, which he called "The Eight Universal Laws of Leadership". His first law was "Integrity First", on which famous author on leadership, Peter Drucker (Cohen, 2008, p. 187), responded as follows,

> *You are entirely right and absolutely correct in listing this as your first law. A leader can be well liked and popular and even competent, and that's all well and good, but if he lacks integrity of character he is not fit to be a leader.*

In a fast-moving, competitive global culture and marketplace, both personal character and corporate character, which includes integrity, is a company's most valuable resource and attribute (Larsen, 1999; McCann & Holt, 2009; Petrick & Quinn, 2001). Yet, most organisations today still neglect to consider integrity in personal and corporate character when mapping their strategies and developing programmes. It is therefore not surprising that the main cause in any important case involving major business failure seems to involve a senior manager with a lack of integrity.

Research purpose

Although a great deal of research has been conducted with regard to senior management integrity over the last few years, senior management integrity is still considered a challenge organisations face in managing ethical behaviour (Rossouw & Van Vuuren, 2010). In a study by White and Lean (2008), it was found that perceived leader integrity has a definite impact on the ethical intentions of team members, and therefore impacts in a major way on the ethical behaviour of the followers. Followers not only include the team

members, or middle managers, reporting directly to the leader, or senior manager, but also employees right down to the lowest post level. The purpose of this research was therefore to better understand the impact that senior manager's leadership has on middle manager's experience of integrity. This understanding will be enhanced by means of a basic illustrative framework.

Trends from the research literature

The foregoing discussion focuses our attention on two different challenges that middle managers face. The first challenge arises when one's basic values or principles seem to call for you to do something different from what the situation you face demands. Secondly, a challenge occurs when the values and characteristics of people who are successful in certain positions are at odds with their integrity. In both the above cases, one's integrity is at stake, although in different ways (Davis & Rothstein, 2006; White & Lean, 2008).

The current research adopted the definitions of management by Schermerhorn (2004) and Wagner and Hollenbeck (1992). Schermerhorn (2004, p. 6) defines management as "the process of planning, organising, leading and controlling the use of resources to accomplish performance goals". Wagner and Hollenbeck (1992, p. 24) define management as "a process of planning, organising, directing and controlling organisational behaviours in order to accomplish a mission through the division of labour".

Kotter (1990) sees management as a planning process that assists towards ensuring smooth organisational operation and leadership as a direction-setting process that produces useful change. Hunt and Ropo (cited in Antonakis *et al.*, 2004) believe that leadership goes beyond management as it can be treated as a shared influence process whereby any member of management can take up the process and carry out the leadership role. Hersey and Blanchard (1982, p. 3) are of the opinion that for organisations to be successful, organisational goals should be achieved by senior management through leadership. Leading involves inspiring and motivating employees, and nurturing commitments to work hard in order to achieve the set organisational goals and objectives (Schermerhorn, 2004; Williams, 2011). Although some view leaders and managers as

different types of people (Zaleznik, 1989), others argue that, in order to be regarded as a successful manager, the leadership role of a manager should be well developed (Antonakis *et al.*, 2004) and leadership and management can therefore be viewed as complementary to each other (Gardner & Schermerhorn, 1992).

People today are seeking to follow senior managers who not only demonstrate the necessary leadership competencies, but also exhibit character, integrity, courage and consideration (Covey, 1997; Pastoriza *et al.*, 2009; White & Lean, 2008). Maxwell (2003) defines a leader as someone who not only knows the way, but who also directs his or her followers in that direction and then heads into that direction him- or herself. In order to go in that direction, as proposed by Maxwell (2003), organisations need to promote leaders with high integrity and a deep sense of purpose who stay true to their core values (George, 2003).

Many could be called the followers in an organisation, but in this study, *the follower* refers specifically to middle managers and leadership to senior managers. Literature also seems to refer to the relationship between leader and follower or leader and management, rather than to the relationship between senior managers and middle managers. The value of a responsible leader–follower relationship becomes important and should be considered by organisations when mapping strategies and developing programmes. The environment within which people operate has a direct bearing on their moral behaviour and integrity (Rossouw & Van Vuuren, 2010). This implies that the relationship between the senior and middle manager, or leader and follower, and the way this impacts on integrity, become critical in organisations and should be an immediate concern.

In order to understand this relationship between senior and middle managers and to obtain a more balanced understanding of the multi-faceted nature of the leadership function of a manager, consideration should be given to the domains of the follower (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Kelley, 1988) and the dynamic relationship between leader and follower (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1991).

The leader–member exchange (LMX) theory focuses on the relationship between a leader and a follower (Antonakis *et al.*, 2004; Gerstner & Day, 1997), and explains how this two-way relationship develops in a unique way. Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) argue that leaders usually have special relationships with particular followers, who are often assigned high levels of responsibility and who have access to resources. This is often called the "in-group", and their position can come at a price. These followers work harder, are more committed to task objectives, and might often have to ignore their own values and beliefs and sacrifice leading with integrity (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). On the other hand, followers in the "out-group" are given low levels of choice or authority. Previously, as a human resource manager, I have been witness to the way such middle managers in the "out-group" are challenged in their leadership style as a result of the impact that senior managers have on their functioning. In many instances, this leads to discouragement and eventually middle managers may succumb to behaviour that lacks transparency and integrity and which contradicts their ethical beliefs. Peter Drucker believes 'ethics and integrity should be measured primarily by the oath of the Greek physician Hippocrates, as *primum non nocere* – first, do no harm' (Cohen, 2008, p. 120). Storr (2004, p. 423) responds by stating, 'leaders with integrity are more concerned with the welfare of the community and others than oneself, in that the wellbeing of others and the common good overrides and is more important than one's own'.

Ciulla (2004) and Storr (2004) explain leadership to be a specific type of human relationship with a distinctive set of morally unappealing behaviours such as intimidation and manipulation by which the needs and opinions of followers can be lessened in worth or ignored. Senior managers as leaders need certain capabilities and should possess good character to be responsible leaders, yet they are not born that way. Kets de Vries (1999) and Maak and Pless (2006) argue that responsible leadership is a balance of character, relationship with people and followers, roles and tasks that the leader fulfils as well as sound processes.

Maak and Pless (2006) see the roles and responsibilities of a responsible leader as that of being a servant to others, a steward and custodian of values and resources, an architect of systems and processes and moral infrastructure, a change agent as transformative leader,

a coach who supports and nurtures followers, and lastly as a storyteller, creator and communicator of moral experience who shares systems of meaning. The power of leaders is the result of their ability to form alliances and engage the talent of others in the collective enterprise (Antonakis *et al.*, 2004; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

In this leader–follower, or senior manager and middle manager relationship, leadership appears to be an influence, process or act (Storr, 2004) and emerges as the act of recognition when people interact, and credibility is gained by the senior manager, to perform as a leader (Karp & Helgø, 2009). Antonakis *et al.* (2004, p. 5) define leadership in the relationship to the follower as –

> … *the nature of the influencing process, and its resultant outcomes, that occurs between a leader and followers and how this influencing process is explained by the leader's dispositional characteristics and behaviours, follower perceptions and attributions of the leader, and the context in which the influencing process occurs.*

It is becoming increasingly important for organisations to search for ways in which unethical employee activity can be decreased and integrity increased. The literature gives ample attention to the characteristics of responsible leaders as well as the role they play. Emphasis is also placed on the responsibilities assigned to the responsible leader and the holding environment in which this responsibility should be lived out. Plenty is also said about the importance of the relationship between the leader and the follower. Yet, insufficient empirical research is available on the relationship between senior manager's leadership and how middle managers view integrity (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008; Palanski & Yammarino, 2009).

Research problem and objectives

The merit of this study is contained in providing a basic framework, as depicted in Figure 1, towards a better understanding of the impact senior managers has on the middle manager's view of integrity. Based on the leading function of senior managers, the following questions can be posed: Firstly, do senior managers realise the important role

they play in establishing such leadership? Secondly, do senior managers realise the impact such leadership can have on their relationship with middle managers and how middle managers ultimately view integrity?

The potential value-add of the study

The framework of the impact of senior managers on middle manager's experience of integrity has the potential to assist towards creating a positive context for the relationship between senior managers and middle managers and may lead to a decrease in unethical employee activity and increased integrity.

What will follow?

In the research design section, the structure followed during the research will be explained with reference to the research approach and methodology. The findings will then be grouped into four broad themes that emerged from the data, namely integrity, senior management influencing integrity, middle management and integrity, and the leader–follower relationship. These themes will be discussed with reference to sub-themes and related aspects. The article is concluded with a discussion of the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research approach

This study situates its research within the interpretive research paradigm with its emphasis on experience and interpretation, and therefore the use of qualitative data was most appropriate (Henning *et al.*, 2005; Smith, 2008). Interpretivism begins, from an epistemological point of view, with a range of theories about the mind and the way we observe and reason about and seek to explain phenomena we encounter in the world (Charmaz, 2006; Smith, 2008).

Qualitative research furthermore has a longstanding history of contributing to an understanding of social structures, behaviours and cultures (Snape & Spencer, 2003). Qualitative research gives us a detailed account of actions and representation of actions so that we can gain a better understanding of our world, hopefully in order to use it to bring about a measure of social change (Marshall & Rossman, 1999), which is in line with the aim of this study. Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that well-collected qualitative data is important as it focuses on naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings, and it helps us to get insight into what real life is like. Qualitative data is filled with richness and holism, and a strong potential for revealing complexity (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Research method

In the next section, a discussion will follow on the techniques and procedures used to conduct the empirical study.

Research strategy

In line with the interpretivist research paradigm as well as the data analysis technique of grounded theory, an in-depth interviewing technique was applied (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). As suggested by De Vos *et al.*, 2002, the selection of the unit of analysis for this study, happened almost automatically during the problem identification stage. The unit of analysis in this study was individuals employed as middle managers.

Research setting

This research situates itself within organisations in the private sector that are faced with challenges related to integrity. As a result of these integrity challenges, middle managers are increasingly faced with strain as senior managers require them to perform optimally. The study was conducted after hours in a secluded space at the homes of the participants to make sure there were no outside disturbances and no disruptions.

Entrée and establishing researcher roles

Prior to this study I qualified myself further in the various aspects related to qualitative research. Coupled with my extensive experience in conducting in-depth interviews, I was ready to conduct the research. In line with the university's ethics policy, I received permission to continue with the research project. I approached the participants individually and began a dialogue around the aims of the study. I then assessed their willingness to participate in the study and obtained their informed consent in writing as soon as they confirmed their willingness to participate (refer to Annexure B). The participants were then provided with sufficient background information and with the questions to be addressed during the interviews in advance (refer to Annexure A). I furthermore assured the participants that all information provided by them would be treated as confidential.

Sampling

For the purpose of this research study, sampling was directed by criterion-based sampling, also known as purposive sampling. This means that participants were chosen with the purpose of representing a location or type in relation to a key criterion (Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003).

As a grounded theory method was used in analysing the data, a theoretical sampling strategy was followed. Theoretical sampling is a particular kind of purposive sampling in which the researcher samples incidents, people or units on the basis of their potential contribution to the development and testing of theoretical constructs (Ritchie *et al.*, 2003). In this study, three participants employed in middle management positions were recommended by key informants on the basis of being reputable. All three participants had extensive experience on middle management level during which they reported to various senior managers. The participants were at that stage employed in the private sector in the financial, engineering and manufacturing sectors. Their experience at middle management level, however, included exposure in the public sector, i.e. manufacturing, engineering, agriculture and finance.

Data collection methods

In line with the interpretivist research paradigm as well as the data analysis technique of grounded theory, I applied in-depth interviews to obtain a detailed picture of the participants' beliefs about or experience of the topic (see De Vos *et al.*, 2002; Henning *et al.*, 2005).

As suggested by Legard *et al.* (2003), I collected the data from each participant in in-depth interviews in order to obtain a fuller understanding of the theory as it developed. I used the iterative process of theoretical sampling whereby I first selected one participant, analysed the data and then selected another participant in order to refine the themes and sub-themes. I followed this process until I believed I reached data saturation, in other words a point where sub-themes and themes were constantly repeating and adding further participants would not lead to further insights.

Recording of data

The interviews were tape recorded after permission was obtained from the participants. I transcribed the recordings verbatim and analysed the resulting texts (Legard *et al.*, 2003). I also took notes during the interviews and reflected on them during the data processing and data analysis phases (Henning *et al.*, 2005).

Data analysis

I analysed the data according to the grounded theory method (Babbie, 2001). The goal of the grounded theory method is to formulate theory based on conceptual ideas as well as to discover the participants' main concern and the way they continually try to resolve it. I therefore did not refer back to the three initial interview questions asked during the data collection step. I allowed myself to be guided by the main aim of this study, as well as where the data was working towards. Babbie (2001) states that the grounded theory

method allows the researcher to be both scientific and creative, as long as the researcher periodically steps back to review the data and follows a rigorous analytic procedure.

Theory is built by the researcher through finding comparisons between phenomena and contexts (Neuman, 2007) in order to strengthen the theory. I therefore made a distinct effort to see relationships between different themes and sub-themes in the data and to reason the positioning of certain data across the interviews. In this process I also made use of memoing (Charmaz, 2006). I asked questions about how one theme may illuminate another and how there may be explanations and clarifications of social processes and phenomena in the data. I then fitted the data logically into patterns, themes, sub-themes and related aspects (Henning *et al.*, 2005), before I conceptualised the framework based on the themes, sub-themes and related aspects.

Strategies employed to ensure quality data

Mouton and Marais (1996) conclude that the primary aim of research in the social sciences is to generate valid findings, which should be a fairly accurate account of reality. However, because humans are basically inconsistent and have biases or theoretical standpoints, which they use to support their views, reality might be grasped improperly by both the participants and myself (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003).

Henning *et al.* (2005, p. 148) argue with regard to validity in qualitative research that "the concord of methodology and methods will assist in creating coherence, but with that also comes a cohesive theoretical structure and substantial theoretical knowledge". Therefore, in this research project, theoretical knowledge was seen as a cohesive agent as it assisted in linking both the methodology and the interpretation of the data. To ensure the soundness of this research project, I aimed to continually interrogate the applied methods used with checks as suggested by Lewis and Ritchie (2003), towards sample coverage, the interview as instrument, the interviewer as instrument, interviewer bias, capturing of phenomena, identification or labelling and the interpretation and the display of the findings, to ensure the soundness of this research project. As advised by Kelly (2006b), a process of peer review was followed during the planning phase, to ensure that the methodology

and research design were sound. I also questioned myself about the transferability of the findings of the research. In other words, does the manner in which the data had been collected, analysed and interpreted, specify all that the reader needs to know (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) in order to better understand the impact senior managers have on the middle manager's experience of integrity and can this understanding be transferred to another context, i.e. the middle manager's place of work?

Within qualitative research, the reliability of the findings depends on the likely recurrence of the original data and the way such findings are interpreted (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). However, as an interpretive researcher I was aware that I was investigating an unstable and changing reality and I was therefore not expecting the same findings repeatedly (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006). Lewis and Ritchie (2003) further state that questions surrounding the appropriate design and conduct of the research are crucial and need to be asked throughout the research process. I constantly reminded myself of this throughout the research, by monitoring whether I was consistent during fieldwork when dealing with the participants and whether I allowed the participants sufficient opportunities to discuss relevant matters and to portray their experiences. I transcribed the data myself and verified the reliability of the transcriptions by reading through them while listening to the recordings (Kelly, 2006a). During the data analysis, I also regularly checked whether I conducted it systematically and comprehensively and confirmed whether the interpretations were well supported by evidence. I furthermore obtained the inputs of three experts in the field of industrial and organisational psychology as critical readers to further ensure validity and reliability. I considered these inputs and incorporated them where relevant.

Methods to ensure ethical research principles

As the researcher, I remain accountable for the ethical quality of the inquiry and thus took great care with it and, when in doubt, I asked advice as recommended by Henning *et al.* (2005). During data collection and data analysis, I regularly consulted with other researchers, experienced in the field of qualitative study and the method of grounded theory, to ensure ethical quality. I obtained informed consent from the university as well as all the participants. De Vos *et al.* (2002) state that emphasis should be placed on accurate

and complete information, so that participants will fully comprehend the exploration and as a result be able to make a voluntary, thoroughly reasoned decision about their possible participation. I therefore employed member checking by showing the participants what they had said and they agreed with the interpretation and the discussion thereof.

Participants were assured of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality. As the researcher, I protected the privacy of the participants by not disclosing their identity once the information was gathered and analysed. Their anonymity and confidentiality was further ensured by replacing their names with "Participant A", "Participant B" and "Participant C" in the transcriptions (Neuman, 2007).

Reporting

Due to the richness of the data collected during the interviews, the analysed data were grouped into sub-themes and related aspects. These were then clustered into four themes as shown in Table 1. As the organising mechanism, my aim as researcher was to tell the story as derived from the participants (Henning *et al.*, 2005). Each theme and its sub-themes and related aspects are therefore discussed in detail. At times, pertinent literature is integrated in the discussion of the themes, sub-themes and related aspects. These discussions are then followed up with verbatim evidence in the data collected. The verbatim evidence is presented to refer to the participant interviewed and to indicate the line in which the data can be found, for example C23 will refer to Participant C, line 23 of the data. The findings of this study will be utilised towards the development of a framework, which will be presented in the next section, followed by a discussion of the conclusions.

FINDINGS

The themes and sub-themes and related aspects will be discussed in this section (refer to Table 1).

Table 1: Grouping of themes into sub-themes and related aspects

THEMES	SUB-THEMES & ASPECTS
Integrity as defined by middle managers	**Moral range** **Willingness to act**
Senior managers influencing integrity	**Context at work** • Creating an enabling environment through policy, strategy, rules and boundaries **Senior manager as role model** • Modelling the way • Consistent leader behaviour **Building a relationship of trust** • Building credibility and earning the middle manager's trust
Middle manager's experience of integrity	**Authenticity** • Honest and true to oneself • Personal values and standards **Cognitive functioning** • Self-reflection • Self-awareness • Moral judgment • Defining and setting boundaries **Affective functioning** • Fear of failure • Trusting own intuition
Leader–follower exchange relationship	**Amount of integrity** **Investment required** **Perceptions as influenced by values and norms** **Empowerment of the follower**

Integrity as defined by middle managers

The two most important sub-themes that stood out under the theme of how middle managers define integrity are moral range and willingness to act.

Integrity is formed through the establishment of a morally justified set of values and principles, which become the person's moral range. These values and principles are formed from a person's early days and influenced by the way he or she is brought up.

But I think it is born from, I believe it's how you have grown up. So certain ethics you have as a principle lays the ground rules for what you perceive to be what is integrity (C3)

Participants were of the view that, in order to maintain their level of beliefs, it is necessary for them to display a willingness to act in line with their core values. This requires strength and the ability to stand firm when these values are challenged.

If you are strong-willed enough and integrity is the number one core value, you will try your utmost to keep your level of integrity... (B200)

Senior managers influencing integrity

Senior managers and the impact they have on integrity emerged as another prominent theme, with three sub-themes: context and boundaries, role modelling and trust.

The participants perceived the senior manager to be in possession of a certain range of influence that comes naturally with the position. This influence is used by the senior manager to determine the milieu within which middle managers have to execute their tasks. Through this positional authority and scope of power, the senior manager is seen by the middle manager as having an immediate impact on the context within which functioning occurs (Fields, 2007; Schminke, Ambroxe & Neubaum, 2005). Apart from designing strategy and implementing policy, rules are set and boundaries are created by

the senior manager to ensure integrity filters downwards (Thamhain, 2004; White & Lean, 2008).

… where he from the outset said these are the rules, we will only fall in that section. This is the way we are going to do it (B214–215)

… while at work you follow the rules. If your are at home or outside you follow a different set of rules, which is acceptable outside, but if you are in the work place, there are levels, there are tiers of responsibility. (C22)

So you need to say these are the rules. I believe that if you have got a structured company where the top people lead by integrity, by the values that is set by integrity, which is honesty, open communication, all these formal or informal rules that apply with the word integrity, it will filter through. (C125)

The participants were of the opinion that senior managers create boundaries and rules with regard to appropriate behaviour to protect the followers, make them feel safe and even reduce the risk of possibly being harmed.

The boundaries are there. So you feel safe because you know where the boundary is. In this big place I know that I can run to there and then I won't ever get hurt. But if I do something further than that, I can fall of a cliff. (B229)

So if you've got your boundaries set, then you've got the leeway which protects you as well. (B127)

But where does the impact of senior managers on middle managers start? Middle managers perceive integrity to be an action by senior managers. Participant A also highlighted the important role mentoring plays early on in a person's career, and referred to an old proverb "you must bend the tree while it is young". Schreuder and Coetzee (2006) concur that an employee's view of integrity and the establishment of core values

and principles are also quite extensively impacted on in such employee's career life by his or her senior manager. Senior managers as leaders are setting the standard and are modelling the way for young employees, possibly influencing the rest of their careers.

Integrity is done by leadership. (C1)

… you know they always say you must bend the tree while the tree is young, and I was fairly lucky too as a young professional, I worked under some mentors and I think the way they worked, you know integrity was always fairly high on the list, so the way you start off in your career is going to set the tone for you for the rest of your career. (A44)

Throughout the interviews, rules and boundaries were mentioned, quite often by the participants. Rules and boundaries are linked to integrity in a mechanistic way. Establishing rules and boundaries early on in the relationship seems to be critical as it sets the tone for the way forward and specifically communicates what the expected values and standards are.

… because the director said that this is the way. (B160)

So, certain ethics you have as a principle lays the ground rules for what you perceive to be what is integrity. (C4)

… where he from the outset said these are the rules, we will only fall in that section. This is the way we are going to do it. (B214)

These rules and boundaries are further enforced by senior managers in the form of a silent message. This seems to be a quality senior managers hold, yet it has a mystic element, which the participants seemed to struggle to describe. This mystic element is observed as a strength the senior manager has. However, the message is loud and clear, emphasising the rules and boundaries and demanding respect towards the senior manager. Even in years to come, new people joining the company will became aware of this message, which because of its strength, will ward them off and prevent them from interfering where the

senior manager wants no meddling. This is where the senior manager establishes a reputation for acting and leading with integrity and further enforces the boundaries he or she creates.

And there I saw, and this guy was I mean, today still, he is just absolutely a pillar of strength. … with every passing of election, there is a new DG, there is a new Minister, then everything changes. The Minister comes in and says I like this boardroom. I will make it my floor. And then you will just have to pack up and leave. Extreme change, and with that they never ever did it with our section. In eleven years, the section never had to move. Yes, I think people respected him too much. Just say things are fine there, let's not interfere (B164, B192 to B195)

In the world of work, the context within which functioning occurs is therefore often impacted on by factors such as frequent extreme change or even external governing bodies, prescribing standards and enforcing legislation (Nadler, Thies & Nadler, 2001). These are challenges that some senior managers and even middle managers sometimes fail to face directly. The middle manager observes inconsistent behaviour on the side of the senior manager in the way judgment is applied, depending on whom he or she works with. The senior manager portrays double standards, and leading with integrity seems to become mechanistic.

Judgment is always present in the audit profession. … set rules in auditing and accounting. During the last few years … there is a bit of inconsistency … with when it comes to integrity. I am aware of certain instances where I was not involved in the audit, for instances audits that I took over for the first time that was managed by the partner in the previous year, where I noted that certain sections were reviewed without looking at it in detail. Financial statements that were signed off that had certain areas in it that you would not expect if there was a proper review on the financial statements. (A7, A10, A17 to A19)

… the impression that I get is that when he works with me, the integrity seems to be in line with my integrity, but I also feel that if he works with other managers, the integrity, he seems to be a bit more slack. (A24)

The impact of the senior manager seems to occur to a large extent through the behaviour observed by the middle manager, and so he or she learns which values and principles are acceptable and dictate behaviour with integrity.

Integrity gets established by what you view. In other words the example you see. (C15)

… you tend to pick up those same kinds of principles, because that's the norm … (C17)

Another important part of the definition of integrity is the component of acting consistently (Becker, 1998; Palanski & Yammarino, 2009). Whether it is how one treats people or how you make decisions or even how you apply rules, it is all about consistency.

The participants stated that integrity equals being open and honest and acting consistently in order to gain trust.

[Acting with integrity means] there's got to [consistently] be openness, honesty. (B51)

Even down to the cleaner. Very consistent. (B148 to B149)

Also what I need to be quite frank about, the definition of integrity includes being consistent. People view in a certain aura or a certain light or a certain framework, and if you are consistent in your decision making, or fair, if I can call it that, they view not as consistent, but as fair, and your judgment calls is based on facts and not on emotions. It's like a drum; you hit the beat, doom doom doom. (C29 to C36)

I think it's one thing alone, you need to be consistently the same. (C70)

If the senior manager is seen as honest and is believed to act with integrity, it enables the middle manager to trust the senior manager, to believe in him or her. This was also suggested by Becker (1998). The senior manager has established a reputation that strengthens his or her leadership and increases effectiveness.

He could filter, and I won't be able to do that, but he could filter the mismatch and mistrust and all the stuff above, filter it and give the message through to us and manage his own section still with honesty and integrity and rules and discipline. (B165)

I think what it does, it creates a boundary of trust (C224)

Participant B believed the senior manager takes the part that would have caused the middle manager to lose focus and carries it on behalf of the middle manager, to enable them to stay strong. According to Dirks and Ferrin (2002), as well as Simons (2002), such support increases the effectiveness of senior managers and enhances the overall performance. The participants believed that, together with the boundaries, this also creates a safe environment for them as middle managers, because their leader seems to be in control and clear as to where the team is heading. Correct and relevant information that is needed to manage with a specific purpose is filtered through. This directly affects the middle manager's ability to filter this information through to his or her followers and enables them to perform optimally.

So if my senior managers don't manage with integrity, me at the top or a person at the top cannot manage. Because you are not going to get the right information. Information is going to be either past due or overdue. You are not going to make the correct decisions. So it's imperative for a person to have another person speaking to you with integrity in terms of you can take that information and take it to the bank. (C131)

The impact of senior managers also has the ability to put a great deal of strain on the middle manager. If the middle manager is not strong enough, this can confuse him or her and even make the middle manager give up all his or her values and standards in order to comply with the values and standards set by the senior manager. This was also suggested by Palanski and Yammarino (2009).

So suddenly integrity becomes a question is it right or is it wrong, because it's now leading by example. (C197)

So you are influenced by what you see in your surroundings. (C19)

If the top management or the core is, doesn't have integrity I think you have to be a really very strong person to cope with that or to change that. Otherwise you are going to change to the other side [not manage with integrity]. (B157)

Middle manager's experience of integrity

Middle managers and the way they function with integrity emerged as another theme that presented three sub-themes clustered around authenticity, cognitive functioning and affective functioning.

When considering middle managers and their stance on integrity, the concept of authenticity strongly comes to the fore. Authenticity seems to be consistent of a person's self-knowledge and holding that person's own point of view (Endrissat, Müller & Kaudela-Baum, 2007; Shamir & Eilam, 2005). One participant stated that the ultimate value of authenticity lies within the ability to be honest and true to oneself, but also to know your own point of view and to use this to strengthen and protect yourself, even if it means sacrificing something in the process. In other words, a person's ability to be true to his or her own values and standing up for it should be reflected in such person's talk and actions (Endrissat *et al.*, 2007).

If you are strong-willed enough and integrity is the number one core value, you will try your utmost to keep your level of integrity towards your people. (B200)

If you've got an incident which you know these people are saying to me that I have to lie about stuff or change figures on reports or whatever, you need to know, if I then deny that, the buck is going to stop on your head. Are you willing to take that chance or are you not. And I think luckily in the circumstance that I was for instance in that place where I only lasted 15 months, there I said no ways I am not going to do this. And in the end that cost me my job, but I knew it would cost me my life if I didn't change. Because that is not who I

am. (B204)

Right at the start of my research, I approached a participant asking if he would participate in my research. I forwarded him information explaining the background to the study, the research problem as well as the questions I would like to address during the interview. He studied the information and we even had a few very pleasant conversations regarding the topic and the aim of the study. We confirmed a date when we could meet and he requested the meeting place to be in one of the boardrooms at his offices.

On the day of the interview, I contacted the participant an hour before the scheduled time to confirm directions to his office. I arrived at the offices and as I entered the reception area, I was excited to see huge banners hanging in this double-storey space, displaying the company's values, with integrity being the first one! When he arrived, he directed me to one of the boardrooms. I could immediately sense by the way he behaved and by his tone of voice when he greeted me that something was wrong. It transpired that he found himself in a situation with his senior manager that was not in line with his own personal values and standards, and also not in line with the integrity banner I observed a few minutes before in the foyer. It seemed that, since I phoned him an hour previously, he had worked through the information that I initially had given him again, and that he had developed a serious concern with regard to his participation. To him the risk was suddenly too big to participate, fearing he would be identified and end up losing his work. No amount of assurance from my side, not even a written agreement confirming the protection of his anonymity could get him to feel at ease.

As I left the property, I was aware of the strong point of view he suddenly had with regard to his participation in this research, yet his self-knowledge took almost three weeks to surface to such a point that he could express himself in this manner to me. However, I also wondered why he did not take the same forceful and decisive position with his senior managers. My conclusion was that he was perhaps not allowed to be his own authentic self in the place of work, yet with me and the situation created by me, he felt he had the opportunity to express himself and be true to himself.

Regarding the other participants, it seemed that people do not always afford themselves the opportunity to sit down and think about their own values and standards and therefore they experience difficulty when asked what their point of view is.

It throws them completely. Some of them just keep quiet and say can I just think about this. And then I ask why do you need to think about this? (B31)

Middle managers are often also responsible for aligning integrity transversely in the organisation, but in order to be effective in this, they should have a well-developed sense of their own integrity (Palanski & Yammarino, 2009). Developing this own sense occurs through their cognitive functioning. The participants of this study seemed to be aware of the importance of being able to distinguish between right and wrong and deciding what will be acceptable or not. Having a well-developed self-awareness and being able to apply self-reflection enable them to be assertive and true to their own values and standards.

I think they realise that there is no ways that, I am no puppet. So there is no ways they are going to make me adjust something or do something that I do not believe is right. (A35)

So, if I am in a situation where I have been before, where I need to make a judgment call and I know it's not my decision to make but there is no other choice, then I quickly go and sit and see am I prepared to take the responsibility of a wrong judgment call. (B59)

So, suddenly integrity becomes a question is it right or is it wrong, because it's now leading by example. (C197)

The research participants furthermore linked their own integrity to the place of work by relating integrity to a senior manager's ability to communicate expectations, set rules and boundaries, as well as to empower the followers by allowing them space to function effectively.

… it's very important, the first meeting that you have with your staff … you have to make it very clear what you expect from them, how we are going to do it and I think you have to be

fairly stern with them as well when you set the goals and what exactly you want from them, expect from them. (A16)

So, if I was to say how I would manage with integrity, I firstly need to empower the person to be able to do what he needs to do. (C6)

In terms of the element of affection, one participant highlighted the presence of two important aspects that affect striving towards integrity, namely being fearful and relying on your own intuition. Being fearful of being seen as a failure has a negative impact on self-confidence, communication, honesty and trust. This might lead to behaviour that does not speak of integrity.

Fear. Big one. Fear of being wrong. Fear of making a mistake. Fear of being pointed out. So, it becomes then a personal related thing where you don't have the self-confidence to make a conscious decision which is beneficial to the company. You will create an environment of dishonesty, misleading … leading to conflict, miscommunication, no communication, lack of big trust. (C99 to C106)

However, it also seemed that the participants become quite aware of their own voice, start trusting their intuition and remain true to themselves. This impacts positively on behaviour with integrity.

I am not supposed to take that responsibility, even though they said I have to. Doesn't matter who says what, I am not doing this. And I was glad that I did that, and they didn't blame me in the end. They said its fine. (B69)

… if something is in contradiction with your personal values, you need to obviously say something about it. You can't keep quiet, otherwise it's going to burn your heart, if I can put it that way. (C39)

Leader–follower exchange relationship

The last theme identified in the data is the leader–follower exchange relationship, with four sub-themes, namely amount of integrity, investment required, perceptions and empowerment.

Conflict may exist between the leader and the follower if there is discrepancy between the relative amounts of integrity for the two individuals (Palanski & Yammarino, 2009). This can be solved by facilitating alignment and so ensuring that values are married or can coexist (McCann & Holt, 2009) and expectations are clear and agreed upon. This needs to be enforced through consistent action as suggested by Participant B.

You decide how we are going to keep tabs on each other in terms of our own values. (B217)

Aligning integrity may require an investment in time and effort from both the senior manager and middle manager. Both should realise that there might be differences, not only in values, but also in the personality of the other person (Palanski & Yammarino, 2009). It is therefore necessary to consider whom you are working with before you decide on a specific course of action. If the personalities of the senior manager fit with the middle manager's personality, it will enable the middle manager to be his or her best self, thus empowering him or her to grow. The extracts below provide a clear picture of the views of the participants in this regard. The participants were of the opinion that being understood by their senior manager enables them to function in a way that allows them to stay true to themselves and to manage with integrity.

It's where you grasp on or find a latch point in a person's personality, and also that grows in terms of the amount of freedom you are given or responsibility because then you grow your own values. (C27)

In a way I am very lucky that I get a lot of, how can I say, leeway so that I can do things my

way. (A29)

They have always respected my values, my core values and the fact that I do manage with integrity and they do not really interfere with that. So in a way that's always allowed me to manage with integrity. (A32)

Values and norms impact on the perception people have of each other, as well as how the follower is empowered by the leader.

I also believe that in your values and your norms is how you perceive people and of empowering people. So if I was to say how I would manage with integrity, I firstly need to empower the person to be able to do what he needs to do. (C5)

They all perceive to know, but they all don't necessarily know what will happen. (C174)

Empowerment and the senior manager allowing middle managers to do what is necessary and enabling them to be all they can be, facilitate growth and make middle managers more aware of the responsibility they should take.

That also gives them more confidence, self-assurance and makes them more aware of choices they need to make. (C7)

So, you are telling me that there is an opportunity, but you are also telling me that I need to work for it. (B239)

DISCUSSION

Main objective of this study

The objective of this research was to explore how middle managers' experience of integrity is impacted on by senior managers in order to develop a framework, to better understand this relationship and to assist in impacting on the relationship more positively. The

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interrelationships between the themes and their sub-themes were analysed and as a result, I conceptualised them into a framework, which I present in Figure 1. This framework explains how the participants view senior manager's impact on integrity by considering the context within which this impact arises, role modelling by the senior manager and the trust relationship. It also describes how middle managers relate to integrity through authenticity, cognitive and affective functioning. The framework further illustrates the importance of the leader–follower, or senior manager and middle manager relationship, by referring to the amount of integrity present, the investment required in the relationship, the presence of perceptions and the way this leads to empowerment. Filtered into the other three themes is the way middle managers view integrity specific to moral range and willingness to act.

Main contributions of this study

In order to prevent business scandals and unethical business practices, which impact on the lives of many, and to find solutions, the focus was placed on senior managers as the principal originators of corporate conscience and the persons responsible for giving substance to the moral agenda of the organised group (Goodpaster, 2007). It is important for senior managers to realise the important role they play in establishing such leadership. However, senior managers first have to understand the impact their leadership can have on the leader–follower relationship by becoming aware of how middle managers' experience of integrity is impacted on by them. Ultimately, senior managers have to realise the impact their leadership with integrity can have on the success of the organisation.

Integrity

- *Moral range* established through a morally justified set of values and principles
- *Willingness to act* towards maintaining core values

Senior management influencing integrity

- *Context* influenced by creating an enabling environment by means of policy, strategy, rules and boundaries
- *Role modelling* through consistently modelling the way
- *Trust* relationship established through building credibility.

Middle management and integrity

- *Authenticity* by means of honesty, being true to oneself and owning personal values and standards
- *Cognitive functioning* by means of self-reflection, self-awareness, moral judgment and defining and setting boundaries
- *Affective functioning,* which includes being fearful and following one's intuition.

Leader–follower relationship

- *Amount of integrity* between the leader and follower
- *Investment required* in time and effort
- *Perceptions* as influenced by values and norms
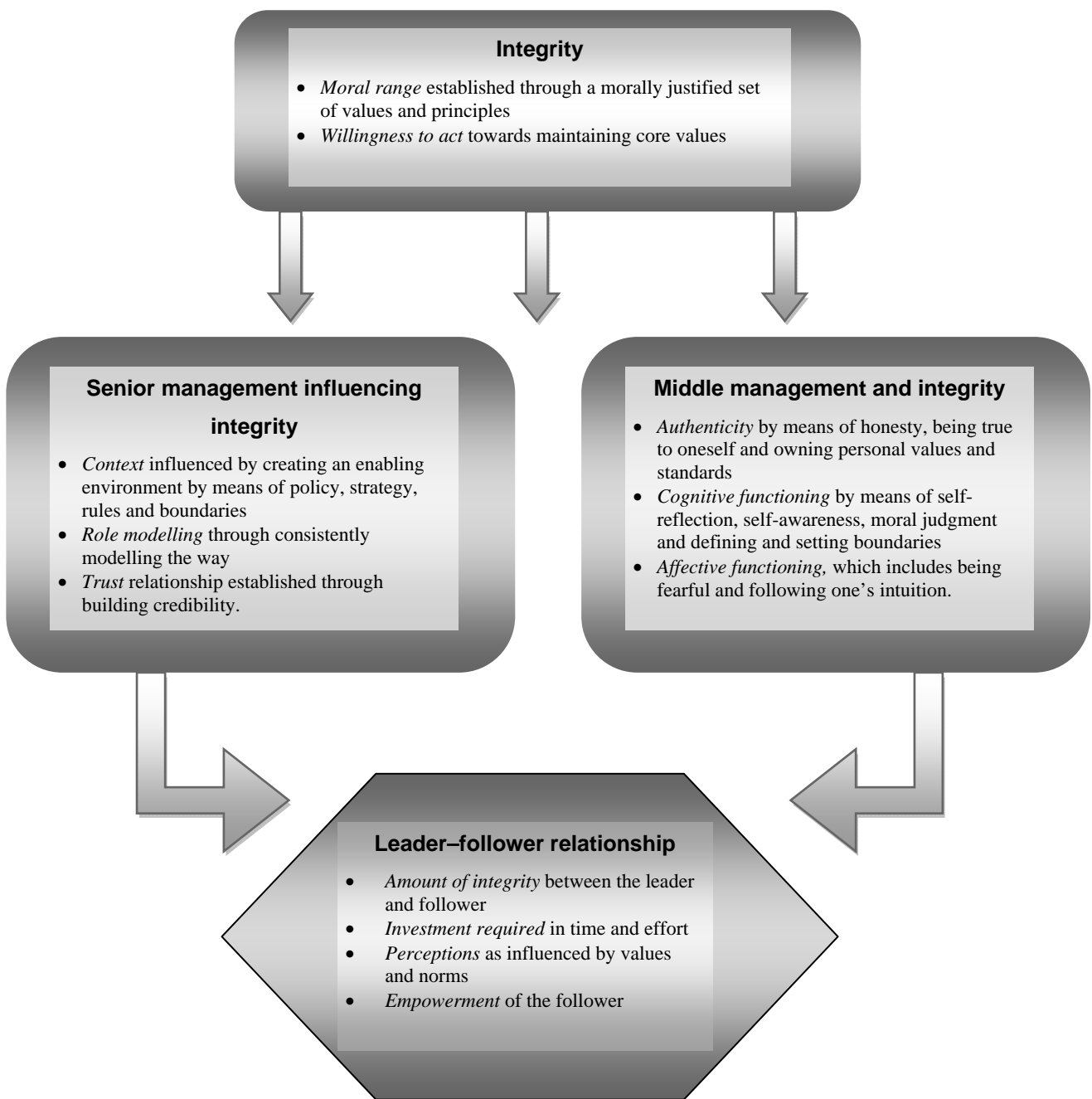- *Empowerment* of the follower

Figure 1: Middle managers' experience of integrity as impacted on by senior managers

Integration of findings with literature

The findings show that integrity is viewed by middle managers as something that progressively develops throughout life and which consists of values and principles that form moral range. Integrity is also about a person's strength and willingness to act in line with his or her core values and to maintain a level of belief in these set values and standards. This is also suggested by Barnard *et al.* (2008). According to the findings, middle managers are also responsible for supporting integrity across different levels in the organisation and are therefore often required to resolve daily conflicts across these levels. Furthermore, senior managers as leaders cannot be effective in resolving integrity conflicts if they do not have a well-developed sense of their own integrity (see Palanski & Yammarino, 2009). Middle managers are therefore responsible for supporting integrity through working with conflict, but they learn how to work with conflict in the context of what they observe from their senior managers.

The findings indicate that on account of their positional authority and scope of power, senior managers create an enabling work environment through policy and strategy. This environment is then further regulated in a mechanistic manner through rules and boundaries within which middle managers are required to function. Middle managers seem to feel secure in this environment as senior managers are viewed to be in control and also communicate to them what is acceptable or not. Senior managers also process information on behalf of middle managers and only filter through that which will enable middle managers to stay focused and perform optimally (see Antonakis *et al.*, 2004).

The findings also point to management, through the leading function, is about relationships with others. Senior managers develop relationships with each member of the middle management group that they lead, as previously discussed. Almost all transformational and charismatic leadership theories discuss role modelling as a key characteristic wherein the values and actions of followers are impacted on by the leader through the example of personal conduct and as observed by the followers (see Bandura, 1986; Palanski & Yammarino, 2009). Senior managers who display high integrity are likely to develop

middle managers who also display high integrity, as a cascading effect is found through acting as a role model (see Brown *et al.*, 2005; De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008; Palanski & Yammarino, 2009; White & Lean, 2008).

According to the findings, the middle manager's view of integrity is directly impacted on by the consistent behaviour modelled by his or her senior manager, particularly in the middle manager's early career. In other words, what the middle manager is taught as a young professional entering the world of work plays a significant role in establishing the values and principles believed to be acceptable and that leads to integrity (Treviño, Hartman & Brown, 2000).

The findings indicate that when the senior manager consistently acts within the set rules and boundaries, the middle managers perceive the senior manager to be honest and to have integrity. This builds credibility and establishes a relationship of trust between the senior manager and middle manager, which strengthens the senior manager's leadership and increases effectiveness. This is also suggested by Johnson (2009) who refers to "the leader's light or shadow" and believes managers either have the influence to elevate the level of integrity of their followers or they can channel the followers' behaviour towards an end leading to harm. However, when middle managers observe double standards and are not strong enough to face the challenge, it creates confusion in their minds resulting in distance in their relationship with the senior manager (see Palanski & Yammarino, 2009; Werbel & Henriques, 2009).

In the findings, middle managers seem to agree on the importance of authenticity, which is seen as a relationship with oneself (see Endrissat *et al.*, 2007) and involves being honest and true to oneself. Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May and Walumba (2005, p. 345) define authentic leaders as being aware of their own values, thoughts, emotions and beliefs and expressing what they really think. Authentic leaders are also aware of the context within which they need to operate (Fields, 2007). The findings clearly indicate that the environment created by the senior manager enables middle managers to develop a good sense of their own integrity and allows them to compare their personal values and standards to that which the situation requires. Being able to apply moral judgement

through the process of self-reflection and self-awareness enables middle managers (through their leading function) to define and set their own boundaries within the broader boundaries as established by the senior manager.

The findings also indicated a clear element of middle managers fearing to be identified by their senior managers as a failure, which in turn impacts on their self-confidence, communication, honesty and trust negatively. When in this situation, the self-awareness of middle managers seems to increase and coupled with the empowering environment created by senior managers, middle managers are allowed to trust their intuition, explore freely and remain true to themselves. The creation of an empowering environment by senior managers therefore has a direct and positive impact on how middle managers experience integrity (White & Lean, 2008).

The findings show that the relationship between senior and middle managers can also contain elements of conflict, especially when there is a discrepancy between the relative amounts of integrity between the two parties. In order to enhance the relationship, time and effort should be invested into aligning the values and standards of middle managers with those of senior managers. The personality of the middle manager and the senior manager should be considered in order to determine the best way in which the relationship can be managed for the middle manager to be left feeling empowered. This is also recommended by Van Eeden (2005). Special care should also be taken to consider how perceptions are impacted on by values and norms and also how such perceptions affect the manner in which senior managers empower middle managers and thus their integrity (see Palanski & Yammarino, 2009).

This research made a new contribution to the fields of management and industrial and organisational psychology as it enable me to develop the framework as illustrated in figure 1. From the themes, sub-themes and related aspects it was evident that an interrelationship exists between how middle managers defines and experiences integrity and how senior managers impacts on this experience through the leader-follower relationship. This framework illustrates the interrelationship that exists between the above variables, which is not apparent in current literature. Therefore, this framework enables a

better understanding of this interrelationship and can assist senior managers in impacting more positively on middle managers experience of integrity.

Therefore, the new hypothesis suggested by the framework, themes and sub-themes is as follows:

It appears that a lack of agreement exists between the way middle managers view integrity and the way they perceive senior managers to view integrity. Middle managers' apparent experience of the discrepancy between the way they and senior management view integrity respectively, might impact on the relationship between middle management and senior management, and subsequently on middle management's experience of integrity.

However, middle managers might not sufficiently understand the way senior managers' view of leadership with integrity and the dynamics of their relationship with senior managers impact on middle managers' experience of leadership with integrity.

Therefore, it seems that an interrelationship exists between the way middle managers define and experience integrity, the way middle managers perceive senior managers' definition and experience of integrity and the way senior managers impact on middle managers' experience of integrity through the leader–follower relationship. This interrelationship possibly results in senior managers impacting on middle managers' experience of integrity.

Consequently, the apparent lack of active debate between middle managers and senior managers with regard to the way integrity should be demonstrated, may impact negatively on the way middle managers experience integrity.

Recommendations

This research revealed a need to see integrity as a place where middle managers are mindful, yet in this study it appears that middle managers perceive integrity to be something that is demonstrated, rather than it being a quality that differentiates a manager acting with integrity from one who does not.

The findings of this article suggest that the senior manager as role model should play a bigger role by engaging in active debate with the middle manager to investigate integrity in more depth. It should be clear to both the senior manager and the middle manager what their personal standards and values are so as to ensure authenticity. This will enable them to link their standards and values to those of the organisation as contained in the organisation's strategy, vision and mission. Of even more importance is the need for a debate involving all levels of management, about leadership with integrity not only being something that is demonstrated, but rather that a leader should possess certain qualities that differentiate him/her from other leaders with regard to integrity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is important for senior managers to take cognisance of the impact they have on the integrity of middle managers and the role senior managers have to play towards responsible leadership. Being aware of how senior managers impact on the experience of middle managers with regard to integrity can lead senior managers towards successfully addressing one of their core functions, namely responsible leadership and so assist in decreasing unethical behaviour and increasing integrity in the organisation. Middle managers need to become more mindful about integrity in order to understand it better and to understand the dynamics of their relationship with senior managers, in order to better differentiate between leaders acting with integrity and those who do not.

Limitations of the study

Exploring the way in which the values of the participants developed since childhood would have provided a more comprehensive understanding of how these middle managers perceive integrity. Knowledge of the norms and values within the participants' organisations would have enhanced the information, but for an outsider to obtain this information is difficult. However, in a qualitative study, such pre-knowledge could lead to bias. Interpretive bias could be another limitation as I could have been selective and biased in how I interpreted the texts (Mouton, 2001).

Another limitation of the current study was the homogeneous nature of the sample. At the time of the study, all participants were employed as middle managers in the private sector. Two of the participants however had previous experience as middle managers in the public sector.

Future research

The findings of this research only reflect the views of middle managers. In future research, the homogeneous nature of the sample can also be addressed through including participants from both the private and public sector to ensure a more heterogeneous sample. I would also propose that future research include senior managers as participants to obtain their perception of how they impact on middle managers' experience of integrity and to add these findings to the proposed framework to ensure a more comprehensive framework.

The findings of this study can furthermore be used as a starting point for the proposed debate towards determining the key criteria to be used by middle managers when differentiating between leaders with integrity and leaders without integrity. Future research can then continue to investigate the relevance of these key criteria and test the validity thereof and again contribute towards a more comprehensive framework. Going one step further and investigating how companies take ownership of their responsibility and how

they take cognisance of integrity as their most valuable resource and attribute, together with incorporating the value of a responsible leader–follower relationship into their strategies and developing programmes (McCann & Holt, 2009; Petrick & Quinn, 2001), can result in a possible decrease of unethical behaviour and an increase in leadership with integrity.

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CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, CONTRIBUTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, the conclusions, limitations and recommendations of the study will be formulated. The conclusions of the research findings of the literature review and interpretative study will be evaluated against the research aims as discussed in Chapter 1. The findings of this research and the contribution it makes towards a better understanding of the impact of senior managers on middle manager's experience of integrity will be assessed. The limitations of both the literature review and the interpretative study will then be discussed later in this chapter. As a final point, recommendations for future research and organisational application will be made.

4.1 CONCLUSIONS

In this section, conclusions pertaining to the literature review and interpretative study will be discussed.

4.1.1 Conclusions drawn from the literature review

This research was designed to answer the following questions:

- What are management, and what are the related dimensions?
- What is integrity, and what are its dimensions?
- What is the theoretical impact of the way senior manager's impact on middle manager's experience of integrity?

In line with the above questions, the specific aims relating to the literature review were:

- to conceptualise management;
- to conceptualise integrity; and
- to explore the way senior managers impact on middle manager's experience of integrity.

These will be discussed in more detail below.

4.1.1.1   Conceptualising management

Whilst conceptualising management, it was also necessary to conceptualise the leadership function of a manager. From the literature it was determined that leadership and management can be seen as complementary to each other (Gardner & Schermerhorn, 1992; Hunt & Ropo cited in Antonakis *et al.*, 2004), yet the leadership function of a manager should be well developed.

Kotter (1990) describes management as a planning process and leadership as a direction-setting process. Recent literature believes the leadership function of a manager could be treated as a shared influence process whereby any member of management can take up the process and carry out the leadership role (Ciulla, 2004; Storr 2004). Therefore, in order to be looked upon as a successful manager, a well developed leadership function is required. This research defined management as the accomplishment of performance goals through following a process of planning, organising, leading and controlling the use of resources (Schermerhorn, 2004; Wagner & Hollenbeck, 1992). Consideration was primarily given to the relationship that exists between the leading function of especially a senior manager, the importance of fulfilling an interpersonal role and possessing human skills, in order to effectively impact on the behaviour of people, towards achieving organisational goals and objectives. In order to ensure success, a competency such as leadership consequently becomes important for a manager and hence this study focused on the leading function of the manager.

It was quite unexpected to discover that some researchers today are still of the opinion that no clear understanding exists of what the leadership function is and how it can be achieved (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Maak & Pless, 2006), even after many years of research and publications. A few definitions of leadership were explored and it seemed as if people seek to follow leaders who exhibit character, integrity, courage and consideration (Covey, 1997; Pastoriza *et al.,* 2009; White & Lean, 2008).

The current study also highlighted the fact that the interpersonal role of a manager includes having interpersonal skills that can be used by the manager towards inspiring and motivating employees, and nurturing commitments to work hard in order to achieve the set organisational goals and objectives (Mintzberg, 1973; Robbins *et al.,* 2009; Schermerhorn, 2004; Williams, 2011). According to Antonakis *et al.* (2004), in order to be regarded as a successful manager, successful leadership is required.

Ethics, integrating integrity, are considered as the heart of the leadership role of a manager, and are seen as a specific type of relationship, which consists of morally unappealing or appealing behaviours (Ciulla, 2004). The literature review for this study confirmed that the manager's leadership function, behaviour, beliefs and decisions are fundamental towards forming a mental concept of the term *leadership.* The views of Antonakis *et al.* (2004), Ciulla (2004) George (2003), Karp and Helgø (2009), Maxwell (2003), and Storr (2004) were considered. The leading function of a manager towards responsible leadership and some of its elements were also deliberated. Mention was made of the balance of a manager's character, the manager's relationship with people and followers, the leadership roles and tasks he or she fulfils, and sound processes. A manager's roles and responsibilities include responsible leadership and being a servant to others, a steward and custodian of values and resources, an architect of systems and processes and moral infrastructure, a change agent as transformative leader, a coach who supports and nurtures followers, and lastly, a storyteller, creator and communicator of moral experience and one who shares systems of meaning (Kets de Vries, 1999; Maak & Pless, 2006; Storr, 2004).

This study highlights that management consists out of a leading function and in order to perform this leading function, senior managers need to possess human skills and apply these skills towards fulfilling an interpersonal role. Central to this leading function lies the moral behaviour of the senior manager towards leadership with integrity.

4.1.1.2. Conceptualising integrity

Literature on integrity and the place it has within the leadership function of a manager was discussed. Consideration was given to how integrity is defined from both a philosophical and business point of view. It was also necessary to distinguish between acting morally versus acting with integrity as these two concepts are often confused. Persons of integrity may sometimes act immorally purely because they hold essentially mistaken moral views.

During the literature review, two different challenges were emphasised that cause one's integrity to be at stake (Davis & Rothstein, 2006; White & Lean, 2008). Firstly, a challenge may occur when one's basic values or principles seem to call for you to act in a different manner from what the situation you face demands. Secondly, a challenge occurs when the values and characteristics of people who are successful in certain positions are in conflict with their integrity.

It was concluded that integrity refers specifically to human character, consistent and committed adherence to a set of ethical standards (Becker, 1998; Rossouw & Van Vuuren, 2010). Characteristics such as fairness, consistency and morality make a person of integrity trustworthy to others, as a person of integrity will always adhere to his or her values, yet these values differ between cultures and societies, and seem not to be universal at all. A lack of personal and organisational integrity seems to be the main cause of major business failures and problems experienced by organisations (Brenkert, 2006; White & Lean, 2008).

4.1.1.3 Exploring how senior managers impact on middle manager's experience of integrity

In exploring how senior manager's impact on middle manager's experience of integrity, attention was given to three questions. Firstly, which role do organisations play in developing or breaking down people's integrity? Secondly, how do people in organisations develop each other's integrity, or break it down? Lastly, how do senior managers as

leaders impact positively or negatively on the middle manager's experience of integrity?

In answering the first question of the role organisations play in developing or breaking down people's integrity, attention was given to what business and work is all about. Literature reminded us of the fact that, because people form the basis of business and life, these two cannot be separated from each other (Ciulla 2004). These people include all stakeholders, namely employees, shareholders and clients. As they are all motivated by the need to attain monetary wealth, business practices are aligned towards economic self-interest. The place of ethical beliefs in business was then further explored and attention was also given to whether the working environment should be moral or amoral (Bowie, 2010; De George, 1999; Rossouw & Van Vuuren, 2010).

In order to determine the role organisations play in developing or breaking down people's integrity, further attention was given to literature differentiating between organisational integrity and individual integrity (Bowie, 2010; Brown, 2005). Brown (2005) proposed five dimensions of corporate integrity which includes culture, the interpersonal which centres on interactions that define the self, corporations as agents as well as being the organisation and corporate relationships with society and nature.

On the other hand, individual integrity is about individuals accepting liability for negative consequences caused by their behaviour. The work of Bowie (2010) emphasised the fact that towards achieving organisational integrity, senior managers might be required to move issues of personal responsibility to the background or even to ignore them.

Corporate integrity as a relational phenomenon was then explored. The perceptiveness of employees and their expectations were considered (Maak, 2008; Rochlin, 2004). The responsibilities of senior managers to create a context within which the integrity capacity of their middle managers can be developed were discussed (Johnson, 2007; Petrick & Quinn, 2001). The review of the literature also highlighted the importance of the concept of "walk the talk" in organisational behaviour. According to Paine (1996), values should be clearly communicated and reasonable, senior managers should be committed to and operate according to these values, organisational systems and structures should

strengthen these commitments and senior managers should have the required knowledge and skills to ensure ethical decision making.

The second question addressed in the literature review was how people in organisations develop each other's integrity, or how they can break it down. The development of personal values was briefly explored and mention was made of Kohlberg's model of cognitive moral development, which mentions the impact peers and mentors have on a person in differentiating between right and wrong (Granitz & Ward, 2001; Miller & Thomas, 2005). Research by Barker (1993) found that people working together construct their own value systems and norms. This creates an ethical relationship between people, which leads to the establishment of a trust relationship, impacts on the reactions of peers and steers people towards an inclination of succumbing to pressures from peers (Greenberger *et al.*, 1987; Johnson, 2009; Miller & Thomas, 2005; Rossouw & Van Vuuren, 2010). It was therefore concluded that, since integrity is a relational phenomenon, it is inevitable that the organisation and the people surrounding someone will have an impact on the development or breakdown of that person's integrity (Johnson, 2007).

Lastly, a theoretical integration was given of how senior managers, impact on the middle managers experience of integrity. Research by William Cohen (2008) was further explored and specific attention was give to the first of his "Eight Universal Laws of Leadership", namely "Integrity First". Consideration was also given to how Peter Drucker (Cohen, 2008, p. 187) responded to this "Integrity First" law.

The review was then directed towards the development of a relationship between leadership, or senior managers and their followers or middle managers. Role modelling was identified as a key characteristic, which seems to be most often cited in ethical leadership studies related to integrity violations of employees (Bandura, 1986; Lamboo *et al.,* 2008; Palanski & Yammarino, 2009). It was concluded that senior managers who display high integrity are likely to develop middle managers who also display high integrity, as acting as role model has a cascading effect (Brown *et al.*, 2005; De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008; Palanski & Yammarino, 2009; White & Lean, 2008).

Another two key characteristics of senior management leading with integrity identified in literature seemed to be open communication and the presence of reward or discipline systems (Kohn, 1993; Lamboo *et al.,* 2008; Mason, 2004). Rossouw and Van Vuuren (2010) proposed the importance of incorporating ethics, with the involvement of the employees, into their key performance areas. This enhances the impact of such a reward system towards determining ethical or unethical behaviour (Johnson, 2007).

In order to understand the relationship between senior and middle managers and to obtain a more balanced understanding of the multi-faceted nature of leadership situations, consideration was given to the domains of the follower and the dyadic relationship between the leader and follower (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1991; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Kelley, 1988). Detailed attention was given to the multidimensional leader–member exchange (LMX) theory as this theory focuses on the vertical dyadic relationship between the leader and a follower. It also predicts that high-quality relationships generate more positive leader outcomes than do lower-quality relationships (Antonakis *et al.,* 2004). The LMX theory was furthermore linked to the outcome of this study as it assisted in explaining the relationship between leader and follower and the impact this has on the follower's experience of integrity.

In conclusion, it is the responsibility of senior managers to lead by example in order to create a context in which organisational integrity can be improved. It is important to take cognisance of the fact that peers and other mentors also have an influence on this environment and impacts directly on the development or breakdown of the middle manager's integrity. Therefore, senior managers has the responsibility to positively impact on their relationship they have with middle managers through role modelling, open communication and an open reward system.

4.1.2   Conclusions drawn from the interpretative study

The specific aims relating to the interpretative study were:

- to gain a better understanding of how middle managers view the impact of senior managers on their experience of integrity; and
- to provide a basic framework that can assist in creating a positive context for the relationship between a senior manager and a middle manager in which to function, in order to decrease unethical employee activity and to increase integrity.

The study succeeded in achieving these two specific aims. In the process of exploring how middle managers' view the impact of senior managers on their experience of integrity a better understanding was gained of how middle managers view the impact of their relationship with senior managers on their integrity. This enabled the creation of a framework with the purpose of influencing this relationship more positively. In this framework, the interrelationship between the identified themes and their sub-themes was analysed.

4.1.2.1   Integrity

The participants of this study viewed integrity as something that progressively develops from early childhood to adulthood to form a person's moral range. For them, integrity is also about a person's inner strength and willingness to act in a manner true to his or her core values. It therefore becomes very important for a middle manager to have a well-developed sense of his or her own integrity.

4.1.2.2   Senior managers influencing integrity

The importance of an enabling work environment was emphasised. According to the participants, the creation of this work environment is the responsibility of the senior manager and should furthermore be regulated through rules and boundaries. These rules

and boundaries enhance the middle manager's feeling of security. Coupled with clear, to-the-point communication, this makes participants feel empowered and able to stay focused and to perform optimally.

As leadership is also about relationships between people, the middle managers participating in this study ranked role modelling as quite high up on their list of expectations from senior managers. Such consistent role modelling enhances the credibility of the senior manager and builds a relationship of trust. It also provides the middle managers with examples of appropriate behaviour and develops the values and principles needed by these followers to ensure they develop into managers who lead with integrity.

4.1.2.3   Middle managers and integrity

The importance of authenticity and cognitive and affective functioning was accentuated as sub-themes, developing and enhancing the integrity of middle managers. Authenticity means being honest and true to oneself and having personal values and standards that direct the way one lives. For the participants, cognitive functioning is enhanced by means of self-reflection, self-awareness, moral judgement and defining and setting boundaries. The participants also agreed that affective function is important. This includes a fear of being identified by their senior manager as a failure. As already discussed, the creation of an enabling environment, together with an increased self-awareness allows middle managers to trust their intuition, explore freely and remain true to themselves. This has a positive impact on how middle managers experience integrity.

4.1.2.4   Leader–follower relationship

The participants voiced the importance of the amount of integrity being present between the leader and follower, and that the shortage thereof can lead to conflict. The values of the senior manager and middle manager should be aligned in such a manner that they can at least coexist. This process needs to be enforced through consistent action, which requires investment in time. Senior managers should not only be mindful of the reality that

people's perceptions of others are formed by their values but should also take cognisance of the fact that they work with middle managers who have different types of personalities and therefore need to align their course of action with this in mind. This leads to an enabling environment where middle managers are empowered and encouraged to grow, to take responsibility, and where they are allowed to be all they can be.

4.1.3 Hypothesis resulting from the interpretative study

The research hypothesis suggested by this study is the following:

From the themes, sub-themes and related aspects, it was evident that a lack of agreement exists between the way middle managers view integrity and the way they perceive senior managers to view integrity. Middle managers' apparent experience of the discrepancy between the way they and senior management view integrity, impacts on the relationship between middle management and senior management and subsequently on middle management's experience of integrity.

However, middle managers might not sufficiently understand the way senior managers' view of leadership with integrity and the dynamics of their relationship with senior managers impact on the middle managers' experience of leadership with integrity.

It therefore becomes clear that an apparent interrelationship exists between the way middle managers define and experience integrity, the way middle managers perceive senior managers' definition and experience of integrity and the way senior managers impact on middle managers' experience of integrity through the leader–follower relationship. This interrelationship appears to result in senior managers impacting on middle managers' experience of integrity.

Consequently, active debate between middle managers and senior managers with regard to the way integrity should be demonstrated seems to impact positively on the way middle managers experiences integrity.

The secondary hypothesis derived from the findings of this study that seems to strengthen the key hypothesis is the following:

- An enabling environment by means of policy, strategy, rules and boundaries seems to create a milieu within which middle managers view senior manager's impact on their integrity more positively.

- It appears that senior managers' impact on middle managers' experience of integrity through consistently behaving with integrity.

- The establishment of a trust relationship with middle management by senior management, through building credibility, could positively impact on the middle manager's experience of integrity.

- Middle managers appear to relate positively to the integrity of senior managers if allowed to be authentic as this allows middle managers to strengthen and protect their own integrity.

- Middle managers seem to be aware of the importance of enhancing their cognitive functioning through self-reflection, self-awareness, moral judgement and defining and setting boundaries in order to be able to distinguish between right and wrong in terms of their decision of what will be acceptable and what not.

- The fear of being identified as a failure by senior management seems to impact on the self-confidence, communication, honesty and trust of a middle manager negatively, and might lead to behaviour that does not speak of integrity.

- Middle managers, who are aware of their own voice, seem to be able to trust their intuition and remain true to themselves, which again seems to heighten their affective functioning and increases their integrity.

- In the leader–follower relationship, the amount of integrity present, the investment of time and effort, together with the presence of perceptions impacted on by the middle manager's values and norms, and the way the middle manager is

empowered by the senior manager, appear to be all critical to the middle manager and seem to impact on his/her experience of the relationship with senior management directly.

- It seems that middle managers view integrity as a person's willingness to act in line with their personal moral range, which is established through a morally justified set of values and principles.

4.2 LIMITATIONS

A discussion pertaining to the limitations of the literature review and interpretative study will follow.

4.2.1 Limitations of the literature review

Although substantial literature is available on the relationship between leaders and followers, the availability of literature exploring the relationship between senior managers and middle managers, specifically relating to integrity, is limited.

4.2.2 Limitations of the interpretative study

The sample used in this study was quite homogeneous. Although two of the participants had had previous experience as middle managers in the public sector, all the participants were at that stage employed as middle managers in the private sector.

An exploration into the way the values of the participants developed from childhood up to the time of their participation in this study would have provided a more detailed understanding of how they perceive integrity and thus act on it and on the impact of their senior managers.

Knowledge of the norms and values within the organisations where the participants are employed would have enhanced the information, but it is difficult for an outsider to obtain

this information. In a qualitative study, such pre-knowledge could lead to bias.

Interpretive bias could be another limitation as I could have been selective and biased in the way I interpreted the texts (Mouton, 2001).

4.3 CONTRIBUTION

This section will further consider the contribution of the findings of this study towards myself, middle managers, senior managers, the organisation and society at large.

4.3.1 Contribution of the findings for the researcher

This study provided me with information towards a better understanding of how middle managers view integrity and more specifically how they experience the impact of senior managers of their experience of integrity. During this exploratory journey, I became aware of my own cognitive functioning and authenticity. This enabled me to reach a better understanding of how I view integrity and how this influenced my experience of the impact senior managers has on middle manager's experience of integrity. As a result of being more mindful of how I view integrity, I believe I am communicating this view in both a direct and indirect manner to those with whom I come into contact. This happens especially when I feel my integrity is being challenged. In doing so, I am creating my own, continuously evolving, boundaries through my verbal and non-verbal behaviour. I also believe these boundaries lead to an increase in behaviour with integrity by most people surrounding me.

4.3.2 Contribution of the findings towards middle managers

The framework presented in Chapter 3, will assist middle managers to gain a better understanding of the impact of senior managers on their experience of integrity. This enhanced understanding will assist middle managers in differentiating between leaders acting with integrity and those who do not. Middle managers will also be able to define

boundaries for themselves within the broader boundaries, as established by their senior managers. This will enable authenticity and will also provide the opportunity to be honest and true to themselves.

4.3.3   Contribution of the findings towards senior managers

The framework that was developed has the potential to assist senior managers to gain a better understanding of the impact they have on the way middle managers experience integrity. This opens the opportunity for senior managers towards responsible leadership and can assist them in decreasing unethical behaviour and increasing integrity in the organisation. Such leadership could have a valuable impact on the success of the organisation.

4.3.4   Contribution of the findings towards the organisation

This study highlighted the important role organisations play towards creating and establishing an ethical work climate that will ensure corporate integrity. This, in turn, will enable organisations to provide value to their corporate stakeholders and society at large.

4.3.5   Contribution of the findings towards society

The study emphasised the importance of having personal values and standards. However, these personal values and standards are not only displayed and contained within the boundaries of the self or the organisation, but are lived out in society. This study and the conceptualised framework could assist society in accentuating the value of authenticity, role modelling and the establishment of a trust relationship towards increased integrity.

4.4   RECOMMENDATIONS

This research was designed to answer the following interpretative question:

- Which recommendations can be formulated from the findings on how senior managers can impact on middle manager's experience of integrity more positively?

4.4.1 Application of the findings with organisational practices

Taking the findings of this study into account, the following recommendations are made with regard to future research, as well as recommendations for application in organisations:

- Senior managers should engage in active debate with middle managers to explore and investigate integrity in more depth.
- Senior and middle managers should be clear on what their personal standards and values are in order to ensure authenticity. This will enable both types of managers to link their standards and values to that of the organisation as contained in the organisation's strategy, vision and mission.
- Senior managers should encourage debate, involving all levels of management, about leadership with integrity not only being something that is demonstrated, but rather that a leader should possess certain qualities that differentiate him/her from other leaders with regard to integrity.
- Senior managers need to play a more active role in getting middle managers to become more mindful of integrity in order to understand it better and to understand the dynamics of their relationship with senior managers. This will lead to a clear differentiation between leaders acting with integrity and those who do not.

4.4.2 Recommendations for future literature reviews and interpretative studies

More research exploring the relationship is necessary, specifically the relationship between senior managers and middle managers and the way this relationship impacts on middle managers' experience of integrity.

The findings of this research only reflected the views of middle managers currently employed in the private sector. Due to this homogeneous nature of the sample, I would

propose the inclusion of participants from both the private and public sector in future research, to ensure a more heterogeneous sample.

Since the findings of this research only provide the views of middle managers, I would propose that future research include senior managers as participants to obtain their perceptions about the way they impact on middle managers' experience of integrity. These findings can possibly then be added to the proposed framework in order to develop a more comprehensive framework.

The findings of this study can furthermore be used as a starting point for the proposed debate towards determining the key criteria to be used by middle managers when differentiating between senior managers with integrity and those without integrity. Future research can then continue to investigate the relevance of these key criteria and test the validity thereof and again contribute towards a more comprehensive framework.

The way companies take ownership of their responsibility and the way they take cognisance of integrity as their most valuable resource and attribute should also be further investigated. This should be considered with incorporation of the value of a responsible leader–follower relationship into their strategies. The success of such programmes can then be measured against a definite decrease of unethical behaviour and an increase in leadership with integrity.

4.5   CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, the conclusions, limitations and recommendations of the study were formulated. The research aims as discussed in Chapter 1 were used to evaluate the conclusions of the literature review and the study. The limitations of this study were then discussed and recommendations were made for practical application and further research.

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APPENDIX A: BACKGROUND AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

This research focuses on exploring how middle managers experience their integrity being impacted on by senior managers.

BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

After the recent moral and financial collapse of numerous organisations, many leaders in the business community and popular press have apparently rediscovered the importance of individual character strengths and organisational virtues as possible determinants of both individual betterment and organisational efficiency and performance (McCann & Holt, 2009; Wright & Goodstein, 2007). With the rising amount of high-profile cases of management failure and leadership misconduct, there has been an increasing awareness that one of the core challenges of management is to lead responsibly and with integrity (Maak & Pless, 2006).

A major factor in the success of an organisation is leadership (Balgobind, 2002). Business environments have become increasingly competitive and complex and this in turn challenges integrity and makes leadership even more testing (Cohen, 2008; Maak & Pless, 2006). Although a great deal of research has been conducted into leadership and integrity during the last few years, it is still considered as one of the challenges that organisations face in managing ethical behaviour (Rossouw & Van Vuuren, 2010). Contrary to what would be expected, little empirical research is available on the relationship between leadership and integrity and, more specifically, the impact it has on the follower (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008; Palanski & Yammarino, 2009).

White and Lean (2008) found in a study that perceived leader integrity has a definite impact on the ethical intentions of team members, and therefore impacts in a major way on the ethical behaviour of the follower. The claim is further made that integrity is crucial in this leader–follower relationship (Maxwell, 2003). Although integrity has a lot to do with how one has been brought up, moral development is not only influenced by one's upbringing. Moral development is a lifelong process: it continues right through one's

career. People today are seeking to follow leaders who not only demonstrate the necessary leadership competencies, but who also exhibit character, integrity, courage and consideration (Covey, 1997; Pastoriza *et al.,* 2009; White & Lean, 2008).

In a previous role as human resource manager, I experienced it myself and have been witness to how middle managers are challenged in their leadership style due to the impact senior managers have on their functioning. In many instances this leads to discouragement and eventually middle managers succumb to behaviour that lacks transparency and integrity and that contradicts their ethical beliefs.

The modern workplace can be an extraordinarily powerful and positive character-building institution. In a fast-moving, competitive global culture and marketplace, a combination of both personal character and corporate character that includes integrity is a company's most valuable resource and attribute (Larsen, 1999; McCann & Holt, 2009; Petrick & Quinn, 2001). Yet most organisations today still neglect to consider this and the value of a responsible leader–follower relationship when mapping their strategies and developing programmes. In agreement with Rossouw and Van Vuuren (2010), during my career as human resource manager I observed and experienced how the environment in which people operate has a direct bearing on their moral behaviour and integrity and that this should therefore be given a lot of consideration. Consequently, the relationship between leader and follower, including followers in management positions, and how it impacts on integrity becomes critical and should be an immediate concern.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Moral progress in business comes about through the increase in stakeholders who regularly handle moral intricacy by demonstrating process, judgment, developmental and system integrity capacity nationally and worldwide (Petrick & Quinn, 2001). Business scandals draw the attention to the profound challenges of remediation and the importance of individual and organisational consciences as forms of prevention. One also should consider legitimacy questions such as the special duty of loyalty owed by managers and directors to stakeholders. Goodpaster (2007) questions how we are to understand the

force of this obligation in relation to the conscientious manager's duties to other stakeholders.

Goodpaster (2007) furthermore believes the leader to be the principal originator of corporate conscience and the one who manages the stimulus–response paradox. The leader is the person most responsible for giving substance to the moral agenda of the organised group and therefore also the followers. The following questions can be posed: Firstly, do organisations realise the important role they play in establishing such leadership? Secondly, do organisations realise the impact such leadership can have on leader–follower relationships?

As it is becoming more important for organisations to search for ways in which unethical employee activity can be decreased and integrity increased, White and Lean (2008) note that team leaders who are perceived by their team members as having high integrity influence the team environment and organisation towards a commitment of less unethical acts. It is therefore important to elevate leader integrity to a higher level of importance in order to develop and refine understanding of how leaders and followers come to identify, understand and impact on each other and develop integrity (Grover & Moorman, 2007).

INTEGRITY

A literature review on integrity and its place within leadership are discussed. The term *integrity*, from a philosophical viewpoint, refers to a quality of a person's character and can be attributed to various aspects of a person's life (Cox, La Caze & Levine, 2008). It is however necessary to distinguish between acting morally versus acting with integrity, as the two can very often be confused. People of integrity may sometimes act immorally purely because they hold essentially mistaken moral views. As integrity refers specifically to human character, a person with integrity is seen as someone who consistently adheres to a set of ethical standards (Rossouw & Van Vuuren, 2010). Becker (1998, p. 157) views integrity as "commitment in action to a morally justified set of principles and values". Characteristics such as fairness, consistency and morality make a person of integrity trustworthy to others, as a person of integrity will always adhere to her or his values – a

trait that is very important in leadership. However, these values differ between cultures and society, as not all are universal.

The main cause in any important case involving major business failures seems to be a lack of both personal and organisational integrity. Integrity and the direction that it provides are part of the required solution to many problems experienced by organisations (Brenkert, 2006; White & Lean, 2008). According to George (2003), organisations need to promote leadership that speaks of high integrity and a deep sense of purpose and that stays true to their core values.

The foregoing discussion focuses the attention towards two different challenges. The first challenge arises when one's basic values or principles seem to call for one to do something different from what the situation one faces demands. Secondly, a challenge occurs when the values and characteristics of people successful in certain positions are at odds with their integrity. The characteristics attributed to some leaders may make having integrity difficult or impossible for such people. In both the above cases, though in different ways, one's integrity is at stake. (Davis & Rothstein, 2006; White & Lean, 2008)

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- How do you manage with integrity?
- How does your senior manager manage with integrity?
- How does senior managers impact on your ability to manage with integrity?

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT

Letter of consent

I, _____, agree to take part in the research project conducted by Annelize van Niekerk as part of the requirements for her master's degree in Industrial and Organisational Psychology at the University of South Africa (Unisa).

This data may also be used in the analysis required for the publishing of journal articles. I understand that the information that I will supply will be confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone, and that it will only be used in summary form in the research findings. The researcher will protect my identity and hence ensure my privacy and anonymity.

The information that I provide will be held securely until the research has been completed (published), after which it will be destroyed. The information that I provide will not be used for any other purpose.

I have been informed that I may withdraw from this study at any time and that any information that I have supplied will then not be used and any records held relating to my contribution will be destroyed.

Signed on this _____ day of _____, 2010

_____   _____
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT   SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER