ETHICAL LEADERSHIP, GROUP LEARNING BEHAVIOUR AND GROUP COHESION IN THE ENERGY SECTOR: A PSYCHO-SOCIAL MODEL

by

Reneilwe Mathabo Matabologa

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SUPERVISOR: Prof A. P. Flotman

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DECLARATION

Name: Reneilwe Mathabo Matabologa

Student number: 58551050

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology (Industrial and Organisational Psychology)

Title: Ethical leadership, group learning behaviour and group cohesion in the energy sector: A psycho-social model

I declare that the above thesis is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the thesis to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

January 2023

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SIGNATURE   **DATE**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

Ethical leadership, group learning behaviour and group cohesion in the energy sector: A psycho-social model

By: Reneilwe Mathabo Matabologa
Promotor: Prof Aden-Paul Flotman
Department: Industrial and Organisational Psychology
Degree: Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology (Industrial and Organisational Psychology)

Orientation: At present, it is essential for organisations to have a sound ethical context which will enable the organisation to achieve sustainability, and to maintain a positive corporate image. For these reasons, ethical leadership has garnered increased attention from academics and practitioners alike.

Research purpose: The purpose of the present study was to describe the phenomenological experiences of employees' group learning behaviour and group cohesion as predisposed by ethical leadership, and to develop a psycho-social model that describes the influence of ethical leadership on group learning behaviour and group cohesion in the South African energy sector.

Motivation for the study: Ethical leadership is regarded as a key resource that can either reinforce or deteriorate the manifestation of ethical behaviour within organisations. A learning organisation is one that is continuously increasing its capacity to create its future. Thus, groups have become the basis that enables organisations to adapt to the emerging pressures in today's world of work.

Research design: The study applied a qualitative approach within an interpretive framework. The research strategy led to an inquiry into the lived experiences of employees' group learning behaviour and group cohesion as predisposed by ethical leadership. Purposive sampling, of eight individuals enabled a research method of face-to-face interviews and two focus group sessions to be conducted. Data was analysed by means of the content analysis technique.

Main findings: The general perception held by individuals may be that an ethical leader will yield an efficient and productive group or team, while an unethical leader will yield the opposite. This is not always the case, as was demonstrated by the findings in present research

study. The study found that leaders who were perceived as unethical displayed the same personal characteristics and showed only slightly deviated behavioural characteristics from those who were regarded as ethical. With regard to leaders influencing groups or teams, although ethical leadership demonstrated a higher likelihood of influence, the study found that other mediating factors play a role in this link as well.

Contribution/value added: The projected practical contribution of the study involves an understanding of development of, and the potential application of the psycho-social model which will be able to accentuate the importance of leadership within group dynamics. An additional contribution pertains to the practical application of the findings which may also be used as a coaching or consulting tool within organisations to assist leaders in their leadership roles.

KEY TERMS: Ethical leadership, group learning behaviour, group cohesion, psycho-social, phenomenology, social learning theory, social exchange theory

TSHOBOKANYO

Boeteledipele jo bo tsamaisiwang ka maitsholo a a siameng, maitsholo a go ithuta ka setlhopha le tirisanommogo ya setlhopha mo lephateng la motlakase: sekao sa tlhaloganyo-loago

Ka: Reneilwe Mathabo Matabologa
Moetleetsi: Mop Aden-Paul Flotman
Lefapha: Industrial and Organisational Psychology
Dikirii: Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology (Industrial and Organisational Psychology)

Tlwaetsomafulo: Ga jaana go botlhokwa gore ditheo di nne le maitsholo a a siameng go di kgontsha go fitlhelela tsweletsego le go tsweletsa selebo se se siameng sa setheo. Ka ntlha ya seno, boeteledipele jo bo tsamaisiwang ka maitsholo a a siameng bo gapile leitlho la barutegi le baeteledipele.

Maikemisetso a patlisiso: Maikemisetso a thutopatlisiso ya ga jaana e ne e le go tlhalosa maitemogelo a tiragatso a badiri ka maitsholo a go ithuta ka setlhopha le tirisanommogo ya setlhopha jaaka e tlhagisiwa ke boeteledipele jo bo tsamaisiwang ka maitsholo a a siameng, le go tlhama sekao sa tlhaloganyo-loago se se tlhalosang tlhotlheletso ya boeteledipele jo bo tsamaisiwang ka maitsholo a a siameng mo maitsholong a go ithuta ka setlhopha le tirisanommogo ya setlhopha mo lephateng la maatla la Aforikaborwa.

Tlhotlheletso ya thutopatlisiso: Boeteledipele jo bo tsamaisiwang ka maitsholo a a siameng bo tsewa e le tlamelo ya botlhokwa e e ka tiisang gongwe ya koafatsa tiragatso ya maitsholo a a siameng mo ditheong. Setheo se se ithutang ke se se tswelelang go oketsa bokgoni jwa sona go aga isago ya sona. Ka jalo, ditlhopha ke ona motheo o o kgontshang ditheo go itlwaetsa dikgatelelo tse di tlhagelelang tsa tikologo ya tiro ya gompieno.

Thadiso ya patlisiso: Thutopatlisiso e dirisitse molebo wa khwalitatifi mo letlhomesong la thanolo. Togamaano ya patlisiso e lebisitse kwa tlhotlhomisong ya maitemogelo a nnete a badiri a maitsholo a go ithuta ka setlhopha le tirisanommogo ya setlhopha jaaka di tlhagisiwa ke boeteledipele jo bo tsamaisiwang ka maitsholo a a siameng. Go tlhophilwe sampole go ya ka maikemisetso a patlisiso mme ga tlhophiwa batho ba le robedi mme seno sa kgontsha gore go dirwe mmeo wa patlisiso wa dipotsotherisano tsa namana le ditlhophapuisano tse pedi. Data e lokolotswe ka thekeniki ya tokololo ya diteng.

Diphitlhelelodikgolo: Ka kakaretso batho ba ka bona e kete moeteledipele yo o nang le maitsholo a a siameng o tlaa tlhagisa setlhopha se se nonofileng e bile se tlhagisa bontle, fa moeteledipele yo o se nang maitsholo a a siameng a tlaa tlhagisa se se fapaaneng le seo. Ga go jalo ka metlha jaaka go bontshitswe ke diphitlhelelo mo thutopatlisisong ya ga jaana. Thutopatlisiso e fitlhetse gore baeteledipele ba ba tsewang ba se na maitsholo a a siameng ba bontshitse dintlhatheo tsa sebele tse di tshwanang le tsa ba ba tsewang ba na le maitsholo a a siameng fela ba bontshitse dintlhatheo tse di farologaneng go se kae tsa maitsholo. Malebana le gore baeteledipele ba tlhotlheletsa ditlhopha, le fa boeteledipele jo bo tsamaisiwang ka maitsholo a a siameng bo bontshitse kgonagalo e e kwa godingwana ya tlhotlheletso, thutopatlisiso e fitlhetse gore go na le dintlha tse dingwe tsa tsereganyo tse di nang le seabe mo ntlheng eno.

Kakgelo/boleng jo bo okeditsweng: Kakgelo e e bonelwang pele ya thutopatlisiso e akaretsa go tlhaloganya go tlhamiwa le tiriso ya sekao sa tlhaloganyo-loago go bontsha botlhokwa jwa boeteledipele mo setlhopheng. Kakgelo ya tlaleletso e ka ga tiriso ya nnete ya diphitlhelelo e le yona e ka dirisiwang jaaka sediriswa sa go katisa gongwe go gakolola mo ditheong go thusa baeteledipele mo ditirong tsa bona tsa boeteledipele.

MAREO A BOTLHOKWA: Boeteledipele jo bo tsamaisiwang ka maitsholo a a siameng, maitsholo a go ithuta ka setlhopha, tirisanommogo ya setlhopha, tlhaloganyo-loago, fenomenoloji, tiori ya ithuto mo loagong, tiori ya thefosanyo ya mo loagong

OPSOMMING

Etiese leierskap, groepsleergedrag en groepskohesie in die energiesektor: 'n psigososiale model

Deur: Reneilwe Mathabo Matabologa
Promotor: Prof Aden-Paul Flotman
Departement: Bedryfs- en Organisasiesielkunde
Graad: Doktor van Filosofie in Sielkunde (Bedryfs- en Organisasiesielkunde)

Oriëntering: Dit is deesdae noodsaaklik vir organisasies om 'n gesonde etiese konteks te hê om die organisasie in staat te stel om volhoubaarheid te bereik en 'n positiewe korporatiewe beeld te handhaaf. As gevolg hiervan het etiese leierskap toenemend belangstelling van akademici sowel as praktisyns ontlok.

Navorsingsdoel: Die doel van die studie was om die fenomenologiese ervarings van werknemers se groepsleergedrag en groepskohesie soos deur etiese leierskap bepaal te beskryf, en om 'n psigososiale model te ontwikkel wat die invloed van etiese leierskap op groepsleergedrag en groepskohesie in die Suid-Afrikaanse energiesektor beskryf.

Motivering vir die studie: Etiese leierskap word beskou as 'n sleutelhulpbron wat die manifestasie van etiese gedrag in organisasies hetsy kan versterk of verswak. 'n Leerorganisasie is 'n organisasie wat sy kapasiteit om sy toekoms te skep deurlopend verbeter. Groepe het dus die grondslag geword wat organisasies in staat stel om by die toenemende druk in die hedendaagse wêreld van werk aan te pas.

Navorsingsontwerp: Die studie het 'n kwalitatiewe benadering binne 'n interpretatiewe raamwerk toegepas. Die navorsingstrategie het gelei tot 'n ondersoek na die geleefde ervarings van werknemers se groepsleergedrag en groepskohesie soos deur etiese leierskap bepaal. Doelgerigte steekproefneming van agt individue het 'n navorsingsmetode van persoonlike onderhoude en twee fokusgroepsessies moontlik gemaak. Data is deur middel van die inhoudsontledingstegniek ontleed.

Hoofbevindings: Die algemene persepsie van individue is dat 'n etiese leier tot 'n doeltreffende en produktiewe groep of span sal lei, terwyl 'n onetiese leier die teenoorgestelde resultaat sal lewer. Dit is egter nie altyd die geval nie, soos deur die bevindings in hierdie navorsingstudie gedemonstreer is. Die studie het bevind dat leiers wat as onetiese beskou word, dieselfde karaktereienskappe getoon het en dat hulle gedragskenmerke slegs in 'n geringe mate verskil van diegene wat as eties beskou is. Met betrekking tot die invloed wat leiers op groepe en spanne het, het die studie bevind dat ofskoon etiese leierskap 'n hoër waarskynlikheid van invloed getoon het, ander bemiddelende faktore ook hier 'n rol gespeel het.

Bydrae/waarde toegevoeg: Die beoogde praktiese bydrae van die studie behels 'n begrip van die ontwikkeling en potensiële toepassing van die psigososiale model ten einde die belangrikheid van leierskap in groepsdinamiek te beklemtoon. 'n Bykomende bydrae het betrekking op die praktiese toepassing van die bevindings, wat ook as 'n afrigtings- of konsultasie-instrument in organisasies gebruik kan word om leiers in hul leierskaprolle te help.

SLEUTELTERME: Etiese leierskap, groepsleergedrag, groepskohesie, psigososiaal, fenomenologie, sosiale leerteorie, sosiale uitruilingsteorie

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CHAPTER 1:SCIENTIFIC ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a scientific grounding and context for this study. The chapter commences with the background to and motivation for the research. Thereafter, the researcher provides a critical reflection on her evolving interest in the topic. This is followed by the problem statement, aims, anticipated contribution of the study, paradigm perspective, literature review, research design, research strategy, findings, conclusion, limitations and recommendations, ethical considerations, and finally, the chapter layout of the thesis.

1.1 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION TO THE RESEARCH

In today's changing work conditions, organisations are commonly faced with the duty of establishing a culture that supports and encourages ethical behaviour (Brown, Trevino, & Harrison, 2005; Lindebaum, Geddes, & Gabriel, 2017). It is essential for an organisation to have a sound ethical context which will enable the organisation to achieve sustainability and to maintain a positive corporate image (Lindebaum *et al.*, 2017; Sovacool, 2021). Corruption levels in South Africa, particularly within the public energy sector, are increasing despite the robust judiciary, anti-corruption legislation and national governance frameworks that have been implemented (Lloyd et al., 2014; Sovacool, 2021). Due to the nature and size of the public energy sector, the current climate-business environment is prone to corruption risks (Sovacool, 2021). However, such corruption risks are infrequently studied within the research community. Much of the extant literature on energy and corruption focuses on fossil fuels, especially oil, coal, and natural gas. However, evidence is emerging that corruption risks also feature in renewable energy markets (Buchner, 2019). For this reason, ethical leadership has garnered increased attention among academics and practitioners alike, as organisations aim to attenuate the liabilities associated with unethical conduct (Hartnell, et al., 2023; Walumbwa, Hartnell, & Misati, 2017). As stated by Adetunji & Alers (2022) an organisation cannot function ethically if it is not led by an ethical leader. Moreso, leaders or managers are the first to come under scrutiny when organisational and ethical scandals occur within corporations (Gao & Hall, 2017; McCarthy et al., 2021). This is because some ethical scandals that have occurred may be attributed directly to the decisions made by leaders or managers (Gao & Hall, 2017; McCarthy et al., 2021).

Leadership literature is increasingly emphasising the necessity for an increased focus on integrity, positive moral perspectives, and ethical conduct. This is evident from the stream of research on positive organisational scholarship (Cameron et al., 2003) and authentic leadership (Gardener et al., 2005). Ethical leaders are essential for the shaping of the moral

context in an organisation (Christensen et al., 2022; Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015; Grojean et al., 2004). Mayer et al. (2012) suggested that the presence of ethical leadership in top management enhances the ethical behaviour of first-line managers, which in turn heightens group-level citizenship behaviour, and decreases group-level deviance.

Moreover, collective employee efforts under the supervision of ethical leadership may result in a competitive advantage for the organisation that leads to improved fiscal and social performance (Wang, Feng, & Lawton, 2017). This means that employees perceiving their workplace as possessing high levels of fairness, will form a strong group identity that enhances employee engagement collectively, and consequently positively impacts the performance of the organisation (Wang et al., 2017).

Ethical leaders have also been shown to assist in developing group norms which regulate how followers treat each other, that is, group learning behaviour, and ultimately group relations, or group cohesion (Mayer et al., 2012). Group cohesion refers to the extent to which group members identify as a unit and share a common culture (Franz et al., 2016). The creation of a unique identity is essential for teams to achieve integration (Baiden & Price, 2011).

With reference to the discussion above, the aim of this study was to describe the influence of ethical practice on group learning behaviour and group cohesion by examining empirically whether ethical leadership practices contribute to group learning and group cohesion within an organisation. The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) also requires employees, both individually and collectively, to learn, unlearn and relearn new competencies in order to thrive in this new economy (Bawany, 2019). Collaborative learning is a significant precondition for success in the new world of work governed by the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), as diversity within teams prompts varied ideas and solutions to issues (Schuster et al., 2016). It is envisaged that ethical leadership would play a critical role in this regard.

1.2   PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the current changing conditions, organisations are obligated to establish a culture that supports and encourages ethical behaviour to enable them to achieve sustainable growth and a positive corporate image (Brown, 2005; Lindebaum et al., 2017). This is because leaders have been identified as a revitalising source for an organisation (Van Creveld, 2017). Numerous organisations have become the target of public scrutiny, and the ever-expanding list of organisational ethical scandals provides organisations with a compelling reminder that monetary success is futile if it has not been gained ethically (Almeida et al., 2022; De Hoogh

& Den Hartog, 2008). To this end, researchers are progressively directing their attention at the ethical and unethical behaviour of leaders within organisations (Hansen, Jensen, & Nguyen, 2013). Although the interest in ethical leadership is increasing, the empirical study of this phenomenon is still in an emerging stage (Brown & Mitchell, 2010; Dang, Umphress, & Mitchell, 2017; Dang et al., 2023).

Ethical leadership research has thus far been aimed mainly at the individual (Dust et al., 2018; Gardener et al., 2011) and organisational level (Tahernejad et al., 2015). Thus, the group-level outcomes and how ethical leaders can leverage aspects of teams have been neglected (Yammarino et al., 2008). Limited research has examined the impact of ethical leadership on group learning behaviour (Hartnell, et al., 2023; Walumbwa et al., 2017). This is an issue that needs to be addressed, as research has shown that ethical leaders can assist in developing group norms that regulate group cohesion (Mayer et al., 2012).

A separate issue which has come to the fore within organisations stems from the fact that managers and leaders have been shown to neglect their leadership roles and responsibilities (Attah et al., 2017). As mentioned previously, this is problematic, as appropriate leadership intervention is essential to establish the moral context of the organisation, as it can act as a benchmark and guideline for the expected conduct of employees (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015; Van Creveld, 2017). Based on the problem statement above, the research question for the present study was formulated as follows:

"How do participants experience group learning behaviour and group cohesion, as predisposed by ethical and unethical leadership?"

1.3   AIMS

This section presents the aims of the current research study in terms of the general and the specific aims of the study.

1.3.1   General aims

● To describe the phenomenological experiences of employees' group learning behaviour and group cohesion as predisposed by ethical leadership.

● To develop a psycho-social model that describes the influence of ethical leadership on group learning behaviour and group cohesion in the energy sector.

1.3.2 Specific aims

The specific aims pertaining to the literature review are:

- To conceptualise the construct of ethical leadership in the literature;

- To conceptualise the construct of group learning behaviour in the literature;

- To conceptualise the construct of group cohesion in the literature; and

- To explore the theoretical relationship between ethical leadership, group learning behaviour and group cohesion in the literature.

The specific aims pertaining to the empirical study are:

- To describe the lived phenomenological experiences of ethical leadership, group learning behaviour and group cohesion of employees in the energy sector.

- To develop a psycho-social model based on the findings obtained with regard to ethical leadership, group learning behaviour and group cohesion of employees in the energy sector.

- To make recommendations for the enhancement of group learning behaviour and group cohesion in an organisational context, and for future research based on the findings of the study.

1.4 ANTICIPATED CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The theoretical, pragmatic and personal contributions of the study are discussed in the below section.

1.4.1 Theoretical contribution

The study is expected to add to the scant extant intersectional body of literature on ethical leadership, group learning behaviour and group cohesion within the energy sector.

1.4.2 Pragmatic contribution

The projected practical contribution involves an understanding and development of the potential application of the model developed by the study, namely, the psycho-social model, which will be able to accentuate the importance of leadership within group dynamics, and ultimately, the organisation holistically. The research findings would be meaningful in that they

would aid and highlight the importance of organisations investing in leaders and encouraging leaders to realise and apply their leadership roles and responsibilities, given the requirements of the 4IR.

An additional contribution pertains to the practical application of the findings which may also be used as a coaching or consulting tool within organisations to assist leaders in their leadership roles.

1.4.3 Personal contribution

The study may contribute to the development of the researcher related to the study's knowledge and skills related to ethical leadership, group learning behaviour and group cohesion. These newly acquired skills, knowledge and personal intellectual growth may be transferable and applied practically for the researcher's personal benefit and for the benefit of an organisation in the world of work.

1.5 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVES AND DISCIPLINARY BOUNDARIES

This section firstly presents a discussion of the research paradigm of the study. This is followed by a discussion of the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions applicable to the study.

1.5.1 Research paradigm: phenomenological research paradigm

A research paradigm is comprised of different assumptions about the nature of truth, knowledge and reality (Thomson & Abbey, 2017). In an attempt to establish the boundaries of the study, the research paradigm relevant to the study is discussed below.

The study adopted the phenomenological approach. The phenomenological research paradigm aims to describe the common meaning of individuals' lived experiences concerning a concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). Phenomenology not only provides a description of the individuals' lived experiences, but it is also an interpretive process where the researcher makes an interpretation of the meaning of the lived experiences (Alase, 2017). These features, particularly, when highlighting the meaning of individuals' lived experiences, is the reason why the phenomenological research paradigm was deemed appropriate for the current research study.

The scientific inquiry that investigates a phenomenon needs to address the following three assumptions: ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions, as discussed below.

1.5.2　Ontological assumptions

The ontological and epistemological stance that was adopted for the purpose of the study is the interpretivism assumption, due to the existence of different leadership realities or perceptions. This approach allowed for the essence of the research participants' experiences to be captured (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011).

Ontological and epistemological stances determine the methodological and analytic choices made during the interpretation phases (Vogl, Schmidt, & Zartler, 2019; Willig, 2019). These assumptions yield different forms of knowledge. Ontology relates to the understanding of that which exists, how the things that exist are categorised, and the essence of reality (O'Leary, 2017). In other words, ontology is concerned with what the nature of reality is (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). Ontology is concerned with the theory of being and attempts to explain and clarify what it means for something to exist (Willig, 2019). Ontology enquires on what exists and what constitutes or makes up the world (Willig, 2019).

1.5.3　Epistemological assumptions

Epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge its possibility, its restrictions and the processes which it can be acquired (Pritchard, 2018 ;Willig, 2019). Epistemology addresses questions about what describes or illustrates knowledge. Epistemology also outlines what can be known, how we can come to acquire this knowledge and the certainty about the knowledges validity or truth (Pritchard, 2018 ;Willig, 2019).

Qualitative research commonly adopts the constructivism philosophy, which is also known as interpretivism or the relativistic assumption (Krauss, 2005). Interpretivism is a synthesis of multiple theories diffused into one (Amineh & Asl, 2015). The interpretivism theory asserts that understanding, significance and meaning are developed in collaboration with other individuals (Amineh & Asl, 2015).

1.5.4　Methodological assumptions

As proposed by Mertens and Wilson (2012), methodology is concerned with the process of research. Lincoln et al. (2011) and Coy (2019) stated that methodological assumptions are

concerned with the way a researcher discovers what may be known. A research methodology includes the overall strategy that was applied in executing the research.

1.6   DISCIPLINARY BOUNDARY

In order to demarcate the disciplinary boundaries of the study, it is necessary to outline the primary discipline and the sub-disciplines in which the study was conducted. To that end, this section discusses the subject of industrial and organisational psychology (IOP) as the primary discipline in which the study was conducted. This is then followed by a discussion of the sub-disciplines of organisational psychology and individual and organisational well-being.

1.6.1   Primary discipline: Industrial and organisational psychology

Industrial and organisational psychology is an accomplished discipline and profession across the world (Veldsman, 2001). Within the South African context, IOP has grown exponentially since the 1980s, and has continued to develop in recent years (De Kock, 2018). Professionally qualified IOPs bring psychological and research expertise which contributes towards the understanding, amendment and optimisation of individual, group and organisational behaviour, performance and well-being (Veldsman & Coetzee, 2022). IOP commonly focuses on the design and facilitation of psychological-based strategies, systems, theories and methodologies. These focus areas are carried out with the intent to enhance individual, team, leader and organisational performance and well-being (Van Zyl et al., 2016). Therefore, it is evident that IOP does not merely contribute to the bottom-line success of organisations, but also to the well-being of employees (Van Zyl et al., 2016).

1.6.2   Sub-disciplines: organisational psychology

Organisational psychology is the area of psychology that concerns itself with human behaviour and the interactions between people in the work environment (Organisational psychology degrees, 2023). The 1960s saw the rapid emergence and growth of organisational psychology (Latham, 2019). Organisational psychology places the emphasis on leadership, motivation, decision-making and organisational design (Latham, 2019).

Organisational psychology scholars have made strides toward obtaining an understanding of the social forces behind work motivation (Latham, 2019; Grant & Shandell, 2022). This progress has proven to be beneficial for the modern-day workplace, as the nature of work has become increasingly social. That is, due to technological advancements, the world of work is

presently characterised by containing wider networks, more service jobs, more teams or groups, is more cross-functional, or there are departmental collaborations, and more meetings. Moreover, organisations are becoming more diverse, and interactions within the working environment have become virtual (Grant & Shandell, 2022).

1.7 BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW AND CORE CONSTRUCTS

Ethical leadership refers to the demonstration of behaviours that are consistent with appropriate norms portrayed through the leader's personal actions and interpersonal relationships (Brown et al., 2005; Neubert, Wu, & Roberts, 2009). A leader that is regarded as ethical, should engage in moral conduct, or behaviours which are beneficial for the parties involved, and should refrain from immoral conduct or behaviours that may cause harm to others (Budur & Demir, 2019; Kanungo, 2001; Lasakova & Remisova, 2015).

Unethical leaders are typically regarded as manipulative and exploitative in nature (Blair, Helland, & Walton, 2017). Consistent with the work of Kanungo and Mendonca (1996), leaders are considered as unethical when they have a conceited demeanour, utilise control as opposed to empowerment, and fail to abstain from corrupt activities. Traditionally, leaders conducting themselves in an unethical manner have been attributed to a narcissistic personality (Blair et al., 2017; House & Howell, 1992). Recent literature in this area is congruent with this notion, postulating that an understanding of narcissism is key to understanding unethical leadership (Blair et al., 2017; Campbell et al., 2010).

Leaders are the shapers and developers of teams, and leaders facilitate activities that encourage and promote collaborative learning within teams and groups (in other words, group learning behaviour). Group learning behaviour may be viewed as the degree to which group members seek opportunities to develop new skills and knowledge, welcome challenging assignments, and are willing to take risks on new ideas (London et al., 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2017). To this end, leaders monitor the team or group and execute the necessary action to deal with the internal and external challenges that may hinder the group's task or the social functioning of the group (Kozlowski & Bell, 2008; Kozlowski & Bell, 2019).

Ethical leadership is essential to ensure that the interactions among team member are based on trust, fairness and empowering behaviour (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008). When team members display trust in their leaders, the team members become more likely to follow ethical procedures (Hoyt, Price, & Poatsy, 2013). Ethical leadership engenders a positive relational context that promotes the followers' trust in the leader (Ng & Feldman, 2015), enhances

perceptions of psychological safety, and empowers group members' promotive voice behaviours (Walumbwa et al., 2017). These mechanisms encourage followers' proactive involvement in decision-making and their propensity for risk-taking; behaviours that are instrumental to group learning behaviour. Surprisingly, scant research has investigated the link between ethical leadership and group learning behaviour.

The modern-day world of work has diversified, for example, work tasks can now be carried out anytime, anywhere (Sedrine, Bouderbala, & Nasraoui, 2020). Moreover, individuals in the workplace are expected to function in an environment that is characterised by individuals who possess different traits, backgrounds and cultures (Mousa, Massoud, & Ayoubi, 2020). Therefore, it is critical for organisations to understand leadership functioning, as organisations are increasingly using diverse work groups or teams (Liao, 2017). This has made the importance of group collaboration and behaviours that are in support of effective interactions with group members and their respective leaders or managers to become more prominent (Sedrine et al., 2020). Leadership underlines the crucial role of the behaviour generated by leaders in motivating members of a group and group performance (Sedrine et al., 2020).

Ethical leadership can create a sense of involvement within a work group. Additionally, the group cohesion facilitated within work groups or teams by leadership also enhances the level of commitment within a group or team.

Leaders are a source of guidance within the work environment, as employees may follow their good attitudes, values and behaviour. Ethical leaders inculcate acceptable behaviour among employees through group learning behaviour which leads to a conducive working environment (Walumbwa et al., 2017). Group cohesion is a precondition for learning behaviour, as it creates a working environment where group members are not reluctant to challenge the status quo to explore new and productive ways of functioning. Moreover, according to Anderson (2016), a lack of group cohesion can inhibit the group learning process.

1.8 META-THEORETICAL THEORIES

This study was guided by the social learning theory and social exchange theory. The social learning theory posits that employees tend to emulate the behaviour of role models within the work environment (Bandura, 1977). In support of this theory, Johnson (2015) stated that the social learning theory is based on the notion that positive or adaptive interpersonal behaviours are reinforced, thereby enhancing the quality of relationships; while negative or dysfunctional behaviours are ignored or punished, and the quality of relationships deteriorate. However, the

social exchange theory maintains that individuals develop relationships on the premise of interpersonal transactions and the norm of reciprocity (Blau, 1964). This theory was reinforced by Birtch, Chiang and Van Esh (2016), who concurred by stating that through human interaction, individuals develop the need to reciprocate support and assistance.

Social learning theory and the social exchange theory both provide a theoretical rationale as to why ethical leadership is negatively related to group deviance, that is, the loss of group cohesion (Mayer et al., 2009). Both theories operate at the group level and affect the perceived norms of a group (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Prouska et al., 2023; Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1998). The social exchange theory has, however, primarily been examined at the individual level (Mayer et al., 2009). With regard to the social exchange theory, subordinates are often constrained in the ways in which they can address (reciprocate) perceived unjust behaviour with their relative supervisor for fear of being fired (Mayer et al., 2009). Thus, subordinates may demonstrate deviant behaviour within their work units or work groups resulting in the group losing its cohesiveness.

The proposed model, which is displayed in Figure 1.1 below, was adapted from the social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), and which was later reinforced by Johnson (2015). The social learning theory posits that employees emulate the behaviour of their respective leaders. This means that should leaders portray ethical and positive behaviour, followers will reciprocate, thereby enhancing the quality of relationships amongst employees.

However, for the purpose of the study, group cohesion was added to the construct of group learning behaviour.

Figure 1.1
Model representation of the relationship of ethical leadership, group learning behaviour and group cohesion
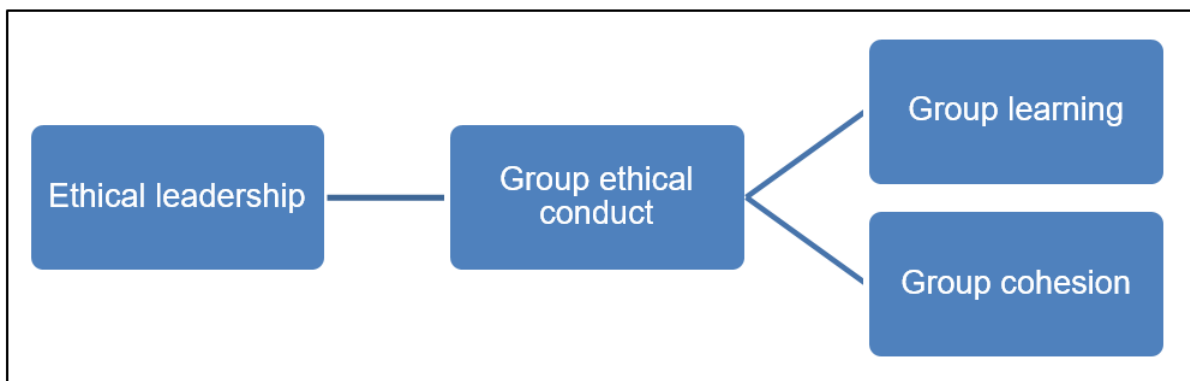
Figure 1.1, above, proposes that ethical leaders create ethical followers, which in turn promotes ethical behaviour amongst employees and improves group dynamics (group cohesion).

1.9   RESEARCH DESIGN

As suggested by De Vaus (2014) and Eriksson and Konvalainen (2016), a research design pertains to the structure of an enquiry or study. The selection of a research design is one of the most critical phases in the research methodology (Rezigalla, 2020). The primary objective of a research design involves ensuring that the collected data or evidence allows the fulfilment of the research question or questions (Rezigalla, 2020).

In an attempt to address the research objectives of the current research study, the research design discussed below was followed during the research process.

1.10   RESEARCH APPROACH

The current research study followed a qualitative research approach which was directed by an interpretive research paradigm (Creswell, 2013). The qualitative research approach was selected as it provides the opportunity to address the research questions relating to the 'how' and 'why' within qualitative research (Cleland, 2017). Answering the 'how' and 'why' questions are essential and practical as these answers build and add on to current knowledge, enhance existing literature, and further develop an understanding of a specific phenomenon or experience (Cleland, 2017; Islam & Aldaihani, 2022). The qualitative research approach also allows and facilitates for an in depth understanding of the context, phenomena, and experiences to be obtained (Islam & Aldaihani, 2022).

As a qualitative research approach, phenomenology was first conceptualised and theorised by Husserl (1931). Husserl (1931) posited phenomenology to be a manner of understanding the context of the 'lived experiences' of individuals and the meaning of their experiences. Many other theorists have expanded on this theory in efforts to align it with the qualitative research methodology of the present day (Cilesiz, 2011; Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990; Wilson, 2015).

This approach was selected for the study because the objective of phenomenology is aimed at understanding the human experience (Van Manen, 1997). Van Manen (1997) explained that executing phenomenological research encompasses studying the manner in which an individual experiences or comprehends their world as being real or meaningful. There is an

overarching idea that meaning is embedded in human existence within phenomenology. This means that individuals are naturally inclined to experience their world as meaningful. An interpretive approach towards the lived experience accepts that an individual is inseparable from their world (Wilson, 2015).

1.11   RESEARCH STRATEGY

The multiple case study research strategy was employed as part of the research strategy. Case study research is a strategy for conducting a methodological exploration of a topic (Flyvbjerg, 2011). The multiple case study strategy similarly explores real-life bounded systems through the undertaking of detailed and in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (Creswell, 2013). A multiple case study research strategy allows the researcher to derive a more holistic and reliable view of a topic. A multiple case study research strategy also allows for the analysis of each case derived from each setting, and permits the analysis to be executed across each setting (Creswell, 2013).

A multiple case study research strategy was selected for the study as four homogenous organisations in the energy sector were studied to allows the study to gain a broader picture of the phenomenon at hand (Creswell, 2014; Flyvbjerg, 2011). A case study or multiple case study research strategy should be considered when the motivation for a study is to answer 'how' and 'why' questions (Hussein, 2019; Yin, 2014). The close collaboration between the researcher and the participants, when using the multiple case study approach, allows participants to tell their stories (Hussein, 2019).

Collaboration between the researcher and the participants was crucial in the study, as through their stories, the participants were able to provide a description of their views of reality. This enabled the researcher to obtain a better understanding of the participants' actions (Hussein, 2019). The phenomenological, exploratory and descriptive nature of the study was also deemed important elements of the research strategy. A more comprehensive description of the research strategy is provided in Chapter 4.

1.12   RESEARCH METHOD

The section below outlines the research setting, entrée and researcher roles, sampling, data-collection method, recording of data and data-analysis procedures.

1.12.1 Research setting

For the purpose of this study, data was collected off site from employees working within four of the top energy organisations in South Africa. The product manufactured by the organisations include electricity, low carbon electricity, renewable wind energy and renewable solar energy. The energy sector is characterised by a robust natural resource base and a well-developed energy, transport and grid infrastructure (Nkomo, 2005). However, this sector is currently under severe pressure and is characterised by unethical practices, poor governance and poor infrastructure (Bauer et al., 2017).

1.12.2 Entrée and researcher roles

Participants employed within the energy sector were approached for the purpose of this study. This was done to obtain insight into employee experiences and their perceptions of ethical leadership and how it affects group learning behaviour and group cohesion.

The researcher began gathering participants by contacting potential participants (electronically) who work within the energy sector and who are within the researcher's network, that is, the researcher is an acquaintance of the potential participants. Once the potential participants known to the researcher confirmed their participation in the research study, they were asked to refer additional individuals who meet the criteria of the study to partake in the research. The energy organisations were not approached formally, as potential participants participated in the research study in their personal capacity. Although, participants who took part in this research study work in the energy sector, the participants participated in their own personal capacity, therefore, permission from the respective organisations did not have to be obtained as no research study activities were conducted on their premises and no information regarding the organisations was collected.

Extensive care was taken to ensure that potential participants who were contacted did not feel pressured to participate in the study. That is, potential participants were informed beforehand that participation in the study was entirely voluntary. The context and purpose of the study were clearly outlined, voluntary participation was requested, and participants were informed that withdrawal from the research study was permitted at any point that the participant wished to do so. Lastly, the confidentiality and privacy of the participants was maintained. The focus groups and interviews were set at a convenient place and time for all parties involved.

1.12.3 Sampling

Sampling is a technique used by researchers to systematically select a sub-set from a pre-determined population (Sharma, 2017). This is executed with the aim of carrying out an experiment or observation of interest. The study employed purposive sampling, with the possibility of further snowball sampling, should more referrals be required to obtain additional participants. Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016) explained that purposive sampling is the deliberate selection of participants in accordance with the qualities possessed by the participants. Sharma (2017) also stated that purposive sampling is a sampling technique that relies on the judgement of the researcher when selecting the units.

Participants were selected according to the following criteria:

● They must work within the energy sector;

● They must have worked within the organisation and energy sector for three or more years;

● They must hold the perception/subjective experience that the leader is ethical or unethical in his\her leadership practices;

● They must be available;

● They must be easily accessible; and

● They must be willing to participate in the study (Farrokhi, 2012).

Purposive sampling implies that sampling participants are selected based on the specific purpose of a study (Etikan et al., 2016). This is done with the expectation that each participant will be able to provide unique and rich information related to the phenomenon under scrutiny.

The study selected the purposive sampling technique, as it allows for saturation. That is, purposive sampling allows for the comprehensive understanding of a specific phenomenon being investigated (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

There are no precise rules when determining a sample size in qualitative research (Saunders et al., 2018). The sample size is determined by the point when data saturation occurs (Zhi, 2014). Thus, for this research study, eight one-on-one (individual) interviews were conducted (Boddy, 2016), and subsequently, two focus group interviews with four participants in each were conducted (Guesta et al., 2017). The one-on-one interviews also help to refine the research questions and to ensure that there is access to participants who had been exposed to both ethical and unethical leadership practices.

The participants in the one-on-one interviews and the focus groups included employees of different genders, job titles and hierarchical levels. This number of participants was selected because, according to the literature on phenomenological research, it should present a large enough sample to allow the researcher to obtain sufficient data from the participants (Boddy, 2016).

1.12.4 Data-collection methods

The study collected primary data through the use of individual in-depth interviews, and focus group interviews that are used to corroborate the findings of the one-on-one interviews. Individual interviews were conducted with eight participants, and two focus group interviews were conducted with four participants in each (Guesta et al., 2017).

Individual interviews were selected as one of the data-collection methods for the study because they allow for a certain amount of flexibility which enables the participants to freely express their opinions about a particular issue (Edley & Litosseliti, 2019). Additionally, focus groups were selected for this study as they offer a unique and important interviewing method. Focus groups provide the researcher with the potential of obtaining insight into the perceptions of participants' motivations and behaviour which may come solely from dynamic and interactive discussions (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015).

The size of a focus group can range from four or five to as many as twelve participants. According to Newcomer, Hatry and Wholey (2010), the size of a focus group depends on the background of the participants, the complexity of the topic, and the expertise of the researcher or moderator. Groups of five to eight are recommended for topics that might be regarded as delicate, personal or when the participants have substantial expertise or experience with the topic (Newcomer et al., 2010).

Both the individual in-depth interviews and focus group interviews were semi-structured and were guided by the research objectives to allow for flexibility and to make provision for dialogue between the participants (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

1.12.5 Recording of data

There are numerous ways of recording and storing data in qualitative research, for example, video and audio recordings (Eriksson & Konvalainen, 2016). For the purpose of this study, auditory recording were used. Detailed descriptions of the researchers' engagements with the participants were maintained throughout the research study through the use of field notes.

The data obtained from the focus group interviews and individual interviews, namely, recordings and field notes, were safely stored and locked in a secure office. Electronic files were encrypted with passwords to ensure the safety and confidentiality of the data.

1.12.6 Data analysis

Content analysis (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010) was implemented for the purpose of this study. Content analysis as a research method, represents a systematic and objective means of describing and quantifying phenomena which was a required for the study (Elo et al., 2014; Schreier, 2012).

Content analysis is a technique used to analyse textual data and reveal themes within data (Forman & Damschroder, 2008). The key characteristic of content analysis involves its methodical process of coding, examining for meaning, and the provision of a description of a social reality through the formation of themes (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). A 'theme' refers to the main product of data analysis which has yielded practical results for the phenomenon under scrutiny (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). That is, a theme may be used as an attribute, descriptor, element or concept.

Content analysis was utilised for the purpose of the current research study because of its flexibility (Javadi & Zarea, 2016). In addition, content analysis can assist in both reflecting and clarifying the realities obtained from participants (Javadi & Zarea, 2016).

1.12.7 Strategies employed to ensure quality data

Numerous strategies have been proposed to ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative findings (Hadi & Closs, 2016). As suggested by Creswell (2014), a minimum of two strategies should be used in any given qualitative study. The strategies that were used for the purpose of this research study to ensure quality data are discussed below.

Triangulation was implemented in the study to ensure the credibility, dependability and conformability of the findings (Flick, Hirseland, & Hans, 2019). Triangulation refers to the use of at least two related data sources, data-collection methods or researchers (Flick et al., 2019). The reason for triangulation is to reduce the inherent bias associated with the use of a single source, method or researcher (Lawlor, Tilling, & Davey Smith, 2016).

The current research study utilised two data-collection methods. These included individual interviews and focus group interviews that were used to corroborate the results of the individual interviews.

Credibility pertains to the level to which the findings of research are congruent with reality (Connelly, 2016; Hadi & Closs, 2016); conversely, confirmability is the researcher's comparable concern about objectivity (Amankwaa, 2016). Credibility was ensured by providing a detailed description of the research methods used in the present research. To demonstrate confirmability, an audit trail of the research was provided which would allow any observer to trace the progress of the research (Shenton, 2004).

Transferability refers to the extent to which the results of a study can be applied to other similar settings (Connelly, 2016; Hadi & Closs, 2016). To ensure transferability in the study, an audit trail was provided by the researcher. This means that a detailed description of sources and techniques of data collection and analysis, interpretations made, decisions taken, and influences on the researcher was made and is available (Connelly, 2016).

1.13 FINDINGS

Findings were be made in accordance with the themes obtained from the study, and are discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

1.14 ENSURING QUALITATIVE RIGOUR: WRITING STYLE AND REFLEXIVITY

With a qualitative study, writing is perceived as being central to ensuring good quality qualitative research (Jonsen et al., 2018). Using a qualitative enquiry, continuous mindfulness of being academically and scientifically rigorous must be ensured and maintained. Furthermore, a writing style that brings the reader into the researcher's world should be applied (Jonsen et al., 2018).

Through the application of self-reflexivity, the quality and rigour of the research was maintained. This is the gold standard in determining trustworthiness in qualitative research (Palaganas et al., 2017; Lek & Teh, 2018). The quality of the data was confirmed by means of triangulation (Williams & Morrow, 2009), and rigour in how the text is presented as believable and plausible (Koch & Harrington, 1998). Furthermore, in striving towards trustworthiness of the research study, the trustworthiness criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability were applied, as discussed in the previous section (Lincoln & Guba; 1985; Shenton, 2004).

1.15 CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions, limitations and recommendations, as applicable to the research findings, are based on the literature review and the empirical study, and are presented in Chapter 7.

1.16 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is important that the principles of ethical research are applied during the research process (Chenneville & Schwartz-Mette, 2020). Being cognisant of ethical behaviours, the researcher took care to safeguard the integrity of all the collected data by recording all the interviews, and ensuring an accurate and unbiased record of everything that was said during the interviews.

The researcher also guaranteed the anonymity of participants by using pseudonyms (Al-Amer, et al., 2022). The information sheet explicitly stated that participation is voluntary in nature and that participants can withdraw at any stage without suffering any penalty. The researcher also desisted from using any tactics to influence participants to unduly participate in the study, but instead explained the benefits to be obtained from the study.

The researcher did not take sides and avoided academic dishonesty. The researcher also avoided disclosing information that would harm participants (Ibbett & Brittain, 2020). However, in cases where the participants were not concerned about confidentiality, the researcher permitted the participants to retain ownership of their voices and exert their independence in making decisions. Furthermore, they were informed about the consequences of non-confidentiality because some information may be sensitive, thus encroaching on the rights of others who may want their identities concealed (Creswell, 2014). The chosen participants were deemed legally and psychologically competent to give consent, and they were made aware that they are at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time (Salkind, 2014).

Ethical clearance was be applied for, in accordance to the requirements of the University of South Africa (UNISA). A letter informing the participants that participation in the research study was voluntary, and that the information was used for the purposes of completing a PhD degree was sent to and signed by the participants.

The researcher refrained from falsifying evidence, sources of information or data, findings and conclusions. An accurate account of all the information was provided. The participants were debriefed, and the accuracy of the data was validated with the participants, or across different data sources.

The researcher also guarded against plagiarism. The researcher gave credit for the work of others and quotations marks indicated the exact words claimed from others.

Raw data and other materials will be kept for a reasonable period of five years for publications. Thereafter, the researcher will shred the hard copies, while the soft copies will be permanently deleted to ensure that it does not fall into the hands of other researchers who might misappropriate it.

1.17   CHAPTER LAYOUT

Chapter 1: Scientific orientation of the research

Chapter 2: Literature review: Ethical leadership

Chapter 3: Literature review: Group learning behaviour and group cohesion

Chapter 4: Research methodology

Chapter 5: Research findings

Chapter 6: Composite description: integration and presentation of Psycho-social Model

Chapter 7: Conclusions, limitations and recommendations

1.18   CHAPTER SUMMARY

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a scientific grounding and context for this study. The chapter firstly provided the background and motivation to the research. Thereafter, followed a discussion of the problem statement, aims, anticipated contribution of the study, paradigm perspective, literature review, research design, research strategy, findings, conclusion, limitations and recommendations, and ethical considerations. Lastly, the chapter layout for subsequent chapters was outlined.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW: ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

The previous chapter provided a holistic orientation and overview of the study. The present chapters' efforts are on the construct of ethical. This chapter offers a literature review of the key concepts relevant to the study. Firstly, this chapter discusses the rationale for the study of ethical leadership. This is followed by the conceptualisation of ethical leadership. Thirdly, the models of ethical leadership are presented and discussed, and lastly, the factors which have an influence on ethical leadership are explored.

2.1 RATIONALE FOR STUDYING ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

In the present times, organisations operate in a dynamic and competitive environment where they need to undergo continuous change (Metwally et al., 2019). Furthermore, leaders' behaviour is currently under scrutiny following the numerous financial scandals that have been recorded internationally (Den Hartog, 2015; Gottschalk & Benson, 2020). The ever-lengthening list of organisational ethics scandals provides organisations with a compelling reminder that financial success is meaningless if it is not gained ethically (Hansen et al., 2013).

Organisations today are faced with a quandary where a balance has to be obtained between financial success and ethics to ensure sustainability. This quest requires organisations to refocus and assess themselves. Recent expansions in the leadership development field have heightened the need to look at the leadership pillars within organisations. This implies that an organisation with feeble or weakening leadership requires an analysis of how the image and reputation of the organisation may be enhanced (Kunene, 2018).

Whenever issues concerning ethics arise in discussions, the focus is on the ethical behaviour of leaders. Similarly, the primary attention of scholars and practitioners is on the ethical behaviour of leaders (Gao & Hall, 2017; McCarthy et al., 2021). Leaders or managers are the first to come under fire when it comes to organisational scandals, as some of the worst ethical debacles that have occurred may be attributed directly to the decisions made by leaders or managers (Gao & Hall, 2017; Hansen et al., 2013). According to Schoeman (2014) and Adetunji and Alers (2022), an organisation cannot be ethical if its leaders are not.

Ethical leadership is regarded as a key resource that can either reinforce or deteriorate the manifestation of ethical behaviour within organisations (Lian et al., 2022). Furthermore, ethical leadership is also essential in achieving sustainable organisational success, and in enhancing the competitive advantage of an organisation (Ul-Aabdeen et al., 2016). Thus, the ethical

dimension of leadership has been and continues to be a pivotal issue of interest for researchers (Lawton & Paez, 2015).

Although individuals should be held accountable for their own ethical behaviour, there is increasing awareness pertaining to the significant role that the ethical infrastructure of organisations play (Treviño, Den Nieuwenboer, & Kish-Gephart, 2014). Apart from these organisational infrastructures, at the same time, the role of leaders is seen to actively shape an organisation in becoming ethically oriented (Schaubroeck et al., 2012). Furthermore, ethical leadership is essential, as without it, it has been noticed that individuals can experience a psycho-social breakdown as a result of bad governance and corrupt leadership (Ugwanyi & Aloysius, 2020).

The term 'psycho-social' may be used to describe the influences of social factors on an individual's mental health and behaviour. In other words, psycho-social pertains to the influence of social factors on an individual's mind or behaviour. It also refers to the link between behavioural and social factors (Vizzotto et al., 2013). The psycho-social approach to human behaviour encompasses the relationship between intrapersonal psychological and environmental aspects.

To date, qualitative literature on ethical leadership is relatively scant, and has primarily focused on theoretical studies (Copeland, 2016). Furthermore, the limited knowledge relating to the application and longitudinal development of ethical leadership in authentic, real-life contexts is insufficient. There is a need for further in-depth and rigorous qualitative studies to extend the knowledge related to the practical and dynamic characteristics of ethical leadership (Ma et al., 2017). In addition, the wide field of business ethics has placed a particular emphasis on the central role of ethical leadership in organisations (Palmer & Hedberg, 2013).

2.2   CONCEPTUALISATION OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

The term 'ethics' refers to a set of standards that govern human behaviour (Anshari, Syafrudin, & Fitriyani, 2022; Racelis, 2010). The term stems from the Greek word 'ethos' which means conduct, character or custom (Pietersen, 2018). The concept of ethics has been an enduring topic under scrutiny within numerous management disciplines and in organisational studies (Pietersen, 2018). Ethics is characterised by a comprehensive body of literature that reflects the use of heterogeneous theoretical and methodological approaches. According to Jones (2015), there has been increasing interest in ethics within various business contexts. Conversely, unethical behaviour is an action which falls outside of what is regarded as being

morally right or proper (Ishak, Haron, & Ismail, 2019). Unethical behaviour involves any voluntary conduct that disregards organisational norms and consequently threatens the well-being of both the organisation and its members (Koodamara et al., 2021).

When applied to leadership, ethics is concerned with the character of leaders or managers and their actions and behaviours (Pietersen, 2018). Conversely, unethical leadership can be viewed as dishonesty, unfairness and the engagement of leaders or managers in corrupt and other criminal behaviours. Unethical leaders are characterised as having low empathy, lack of responsibility, follow the self-centred pursuit of own interest, and manipulate and misuse others (Brown & Mitchell, 2010). This is relevant to the study, because ethics provides individuals and groups with a system of rules that serve as guidelines when faced with ethical dilemmas regarding what is right or what is wrong within a given situation (Northhouse, 2010).

Brown et al. (2005) and more recently Rabie and Malek (2020) conceptualised ethical leadership as the influence that leaders may have on followers' behaviours. Ethical leadership may also be viewed as the demonstration of appropriate conduct that can be observed through leaders' personal actions and interpersonal relationships (Brown et al., 2005; Rabie & Malek, 2020). This is similar to the findings of Zappala and Toscano (2020) who stated that ethical leaders promote their behaviour to followers through communication, reinforcement, and decision-making. In this conceptualisation, the leader is viewed as a moral individual, and this is based on the leaders' personal characteristics and philanthropic motivation (Brown & Trevino, 2006; Budur and Demir, 2019).

After reviewing the available literature on ethical leadership, Brown and Treviño (2006) and Budur and Demir (2019) linked the concept more broadly with the notions of spiritual, authentic and transformational leadership. In the presence of these leadership qualities, the leader's effectiveness and abilities to mould follower behaviour are enhanced (Copeland, 2016). Brown and Treviño (2006) also discussed the influence of individual behavioural aspects, such as personality and motivation on the outcomes of ethical leadership, such as employee pro-social behaviour, ethical decision-making by followers, follower work attitudes, and employee counterproductive behaviour.

Similar to the above, Trevino, Brown, and Hartman (2003, 2014) postulated that ethical leadership must contain the characteristics of both the 'moral person' and 'moral manager' (Brown & Trevino, 2006; Trevino et al., 2003). The moral person pertains to the qualities and/or character of a leader. These qualities include honesty, integrity, transparency, respect and empathy (Trevino et al., 2003). The moral manager is concerned with how leaders use their

managerial power to encourage ethical standards and ethical behaviours within the work environment (Ahmad et al., 2017). An ethical leader should be both a moral manager and a moral person (Brown & Mitchell, 2010). This means that morality must be an integral aspect of an ethical leader's self-concept. Additionally, morality should be the guiding principle for a leader's choice of conduct (Giessner et al., 2015).

A leader is considered to be ethical when he/she has no intention to harm others and always respects all the rights of all stakeholders (Gini, 1997; Lee et al., 2023). More so, ethical leaders are regarded as being honest, fair and righteous decision-makers and upright citizens. Ethical leaders are characterised as possessing care, acting with integrity, treating their followers with respect and dignity, are perceived as being trustworthy and fair, and this consequently, creates constructive employee outcomes (Brown et al., 2005). Similarly, Mitonga-Monga, Flotman and Moerane (2019) stated that ethical leaders show concern for their followers, and behave in an ethical manner in both their professional and personal life. Kanungo (2001) and Budur & Demir (2019) maintained that an ethical leader needs to engage in acts that are considered to be righteous, and should avoid acts which may be detrimental to others. Furthermore, leaders' actions must be based on philanthropic motives rather than on self-centred ones (Budur & Demir, 2019; Kanungo, 2001).

De Hoogh and Den Hartog (2008) supported the notion proposed by Trevino, Brown and Hartman (2003; 2014) by suggesting that ethical leadership is a process in which a leader influences group activities to achieve organisational goals in a socially responsible manner. This means that a leaders' conduct should be moral and should be beneficial for followers, the organisation and for society alike (Hartog, 2015). In the definitions above, the concept of ethical leadership is viewed in a general term in which ethical leadership considers both the intentions and purpose of the leadership behaviour, as opposed to normative appropriateness (Ahmad et al., 2017).

The dimensions of ethical leadership remain a conflictual one. Resick et al., (2006) and Gollagari et al., 2022) explored ethical leadership by advocating that it comprises six heterogeneous dimensions. These dimensions include 1) character and integrity; 2) ethical awareness; 3) community or people orientation; 4) motivating; 5) encouraging and empowering; and 6) managing ethical accountability.

Character and integrity refer to the pattern of intentions, and virtues which make the moral or ethical foundation for behaviour (Al Halbusi et al., 2021). Ethical awareness involves an individual being capable to recognise and be sensitive to moral issues that require thought

and deliberation in making decisions Gollagari et al., 2022. Community or people orientation involves an individual being interested and committed in serving the benefit of all. Motivating concerns being able to put the interest of the whole before ones needs (Al Halbusi et al., 2021; Gollagari et al., 2022). Encouraging and empowering facilitating an environment that allows individuals to become self-sufficient. Lastly, managing ethical accountability means setting standards and expectations that become the benchmark for ethical conduct (Gollagari et al., 2022; Resick et al., 2006).

However, Kalshoven, Den Hartog, and De Hoogh (2011) argued that ethical leadership contains the following seven dimensions: 1) fairness; 2) power sharing; 3) role clarification; 4) people-oriented behaviour; 5) integrity; 6) ethical guidance; and 7) concern for sustainability.

Fairness involves conducting oneself in a manner which is viewed as being trustworthy and honest. Power sharing means allowing individuals to share and participate in decision making. Role clarification pertains to making responsibilities, expectations, and performance goals explicitly clear to employees (Kalshoven et al., 2011; Vullinghs et al., 2020). People-oriented behaviour means showing concern for others. Integrity refers to an individual demonstrating honesty in their conduct. Ethical guidance entails providing and being a role model in setting a standard for good ethical conduct (Vullinghs et al., 2020). Lastly, concern for sustainability involves having concern for one's actions on those around them and for the environment in which one functions (Vullinghs et al., 2020).

The concept of ethical leadership has received some criticism as a result of these theoretical disagreements, and also because it bears conceptual similarities with other leadership styles (Chughtai, Byrne, & Flood, 2015). These leadership styles include transformational leadership and authentic leadership (Novitasari et al., 2020). The leadership styles are similar, since they are characterised by demonstrating concern for others, honesty and trustworthiness (Walumbwa et al., 2017). Ethical, transformational and authentic leaders are not only concerned with motivating employees but also show efforts in creating a positive atmosphere within the working environment in an attempt to gain credibility and trust from their respective followers or employees (Novitasari et al., 2020). These leaders serve as role models for others, make ethical decisions, and refrain from engaging in unethical behaviour or malpractices.

While the above studies identified the overlapping constructs and concepts underlying ethical leadership, the definitions provided by Brown, Treviño and Harrison (2005), Pietersen (2018), and Zappala and Toscano (2020) are deemed acceptable, as all the constructs and concepts

identified are analogous, and although the definitions were provided in different time periods (from 2005 to 2020), the concepts contain similar characteristics that have withstood the test of time. These definitions were used throughout the study.

Overall, it is evident that the literature on ethical leadership has significantly increased over the years, and that increasing attention is being aimed at the various antecedents and consequences. Since the context and conceptualisation of the construct of ethical leadership has been provided, the next section of this research study aims to discuss the models of ethical leadership, followed by the factors that influence ethical leadership.

2.3   MODELS OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

This section presents a discussion of the models of ethical leadership. To begin with, the trickle-down model is highlighted. This is followed by the social learning theory, and lastly, the social exchange theory.

2.3.1   The trickle-down model of ethical leadership

The premise of the trickle-down model is based on the notion that the perceptions, attitudes or behaviours of leaders affect the perceptions, attitudes or behaviours of their followers or employees (Wo et al., 2015). The trickle-down model of ethical leadership postulates that top management influences the ethical leadership of supervisors, which consequently influences the behaviour of the followers or employees that the supervisors or leaders oversee (Aryee et al., 2007).

The trickle-down model draws from the social learning theory that was developed by Bandura (1977) and the social exchange that was established by Blau (1964). These are theories and research regarding the surging effects of leadership (Bass et al., 1987). This suggests that through role modelling and reward and punishment systems, ethical leadership is likely to have an effect on followers or employees. In a leadership context, role modelling involves followers or employees idealising or perceiving their leader as a symbol or benchmark for the types of traits, values, beliefs, or behaviours are considered as being good and legitimate to portray in the working environment (Stollberger et al., 2019). Leaders provide an ideal or point of reference for followers to emulate and learn (Stollberger et al., 2019).

Studies that have attempted to explain ethical leadership and how it alters follower behaviour have largely drawn on the abovementioned two theories, namely, the social learning theory developed by Bandura (1977) and the social exchange theory established by Blau (1964) and

(Homans, 1974). The study used the social learning theory and social exchange theory as its underpinning theory. Based on the above, the selected theories are suitable for the study, as their premise is the underlying focus of the present study and these theories assisted in determining or evaluating this relationship. Additionally, scholars who have examined why leaders exhibiting ethical behaviour encourage ethical behaviour among their followers, have similarly reverted to the social learning and social exchange theories or models (Zappalà & Toscano, 2020). The social learning and social exchange theories are discussed below.

2.3.2 Social learning theory

As proposed by Bandura (1969), in this model, human behaviour may be better understood through the comprehension of the interaction of cognitive factors, biological factors, and environmental or social influences. Figure 2.1 below provides an illustration of Bandura's (1969) social learning theory model.

Cherry (2017) concurred with Bandura's (1969) theory, as Cherry postulated the importance of social interactions, and proposed that individuals may acquire new behaviours through the observation of other individuals. The inference of the social learning theory maintains that individuals play an important role in altering each other's behaviour. This is executed when an individual observes the behaviour of another individual, and then witnesses the consequence or benefit of the behaviour (Bandura, 1969). Consequently, when an individual is uncertain of which behaviour to depict in a given situation, he/she may revert to what was previously observed to direct their current and future actions (Johnson, 2015).

Figure 2.1
Social learning theory model
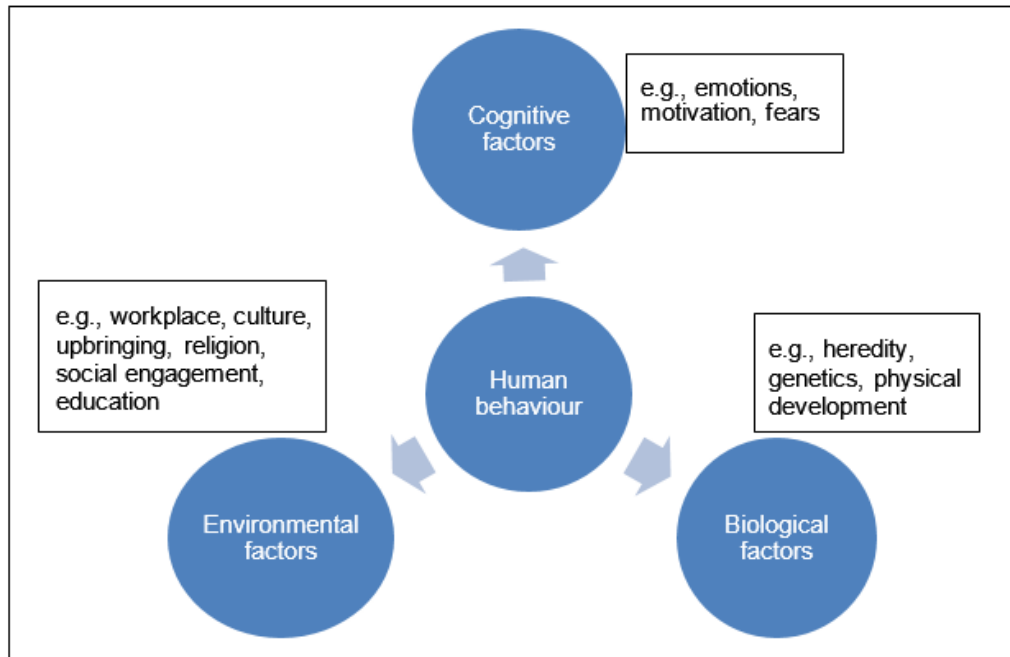
Source: Bandura (1969)

Figure 2.1 provides an illustration of Bandura's (1969) social learning theory model. The figure demonstrates Bandura's (1969) social learning theory which postulates that human development is continuous and is affected and influenced by other factors such as the cognitive, biological, and environmental (Ahn, Hu, & Vega, 2020). The social learning theory describes human behaviour in relation to a continuous reciprocal interaction between these factors (Ahn et al., 2020; Hadi et al., 2023). The premise of this theory demonstrates the notion that an individual's personality or conduct does not merely consist of observable behaviour, as traditionally believed, but that cognitive processes, biological makeup and environmental influences play a crucial role in the (Ahn et al., 2020; Hadi et al., 2023).

The social learning theory is employed by researchers to describe how ethical leaders act as role models. Leaders attract their followers' attention to their ethical practices and decision-making norms, thus, spreading ethical behaviour throughout the organisation, as followers emulate their leader (Bandura, 1977). The social learning theory postulates that almost anything can be learned indirectly. This means that when an individual acts as a role model and uses rewards and punishments, the followers observing this behaviour of their respective leader or manager learn which behaviours their leaders expect from them (Zappalà & Toscano, 2020).

The social learning theory emphasises the importance of an individual's cognition in the regulation of human conduct (Wang, Xu, & Liu, 2018). Additionally, the social learning theory hypothesises that the majority of external factors affect human conduct through intermediate cognitive processes (Bandura, 1977; Wang et al., 2018). An inquiry by Hanna, Crittenden and Crittenden (2013) corresponded with the aforementioned theory, as the researchers claimed that an individual and the environment do not function independently but rather influence each other mutually. The fundamental premise of the social learning theory is that behaviour is the outcome of both the individual and the situation (Hanna et al., 2013). Within the context of ethics, the social learning theory offers substantial guidance related to how future leaders learn to make business decisions.

The social learning theory is comprised of two components, namely, social modelling and social learning, as discussed below.

- Social modelling refers to a person observing a behaviour, and thereafter, altering their own behaviour similarly (Cherry, 2017). There are three social modelling forms (Cherry, 2017). These include direct, symbolic and synthesised modelling. Direct modelling refers to the observation of a live person exhibiting specific behaviour (Decuypere & Schaufeli, 2020). Symbolic modelling refers to the observation of behaviour represented in movies, verbal descriptions, commercials, books, emails, brochures, music lyrics, and videos. Lastly, synthesised modelling pertains to the implementation of both the direct and symbolic types of modelling. For instance, a marriage coach (direct modelling) describing (symbolic modelling) a behaviour (Futris et al., 2011).

- Social learning refers to the acquisition of knowledge or information through the observation of other people's behaviours (Cherry, 2017).

2.3.3 Social exchange theory

The social exchange theory is a broad theoretical paradigm that extends throughout several social scientific disciplines. These disciplines include management, social psychology and anthropology (Cropanzano et al., 2017). The social exchange theory was formally advanced in the late 1950s and mid 1960s by sociologists George Homans in 1961, and Peter Blau in 1964. The social therapists, John Thibaut and Harold Kelley, initially crafted this theory in 1959. The hypothetical model of the social exchange theory was developed by Homans, (1958) and postulates that human relationships are framed by the utilisation of money-saving advantage investigations and correlations of choices.

According to the view of the social exchange theory, ethical leaders exhibit fairness and caring for their followers (Blau, 1964). The followers, consequently, develop the desire to reciprocate and act according to the ethical leader's expectations (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Brown et al., 2005; Budur and Demir 2019). The social exchange theory outlines that the ethical leadership behaviours implemented by leaders or managers create a feeling of personal obligation in their employees (Ma et al., 2017). Employees then feel inclined to reciprocate the fair and caring treatment received from the leaders or managers (Zappalà & Toscano, 2020).

In accordance with the above, Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) stated that the social exchange theory is comprised of several conceptual models. This means that all social exchange theories share numerous comparable features. Numerous social exchange theorists view social life as involving a series of sequential transactions between two or more parties (Cropanzano et al., 2017). With the social exchange theory, resources are exchanged through a process of reciprocity, where one party or parties tends to repay the good or bad conduct of another party (Gergen, 1969; Gouldner, 1960). The quality of these exchanges is sometimes subjective to the relationship between the actor and the target (Blau, 1964).

Cropanzano et al. (2017) argued that with the social exchange theory followers may respond positively by reciprocating responses and may demonstrate fewer negative responses in reaction to the positive initiating actions as depicted by a leader or manager. These responses can be broadly organised into two categories. These include the relational responses, and behavioural responses.

Figure 2.2 below demonstrates possible follower responses to the positive and negative behaviour depicted by a leader or manager.

Figure 2.2
Generic model of social exchange theory

Positive hedonic value	Negative hedonic value
Leader/manager provides benefit to followers	Leader/manager does harm to followers
High quality social exchange relationship	Low quality economic exchange relationship
Leader/manager provides benefit to followers	Leader/manager does harm to followers
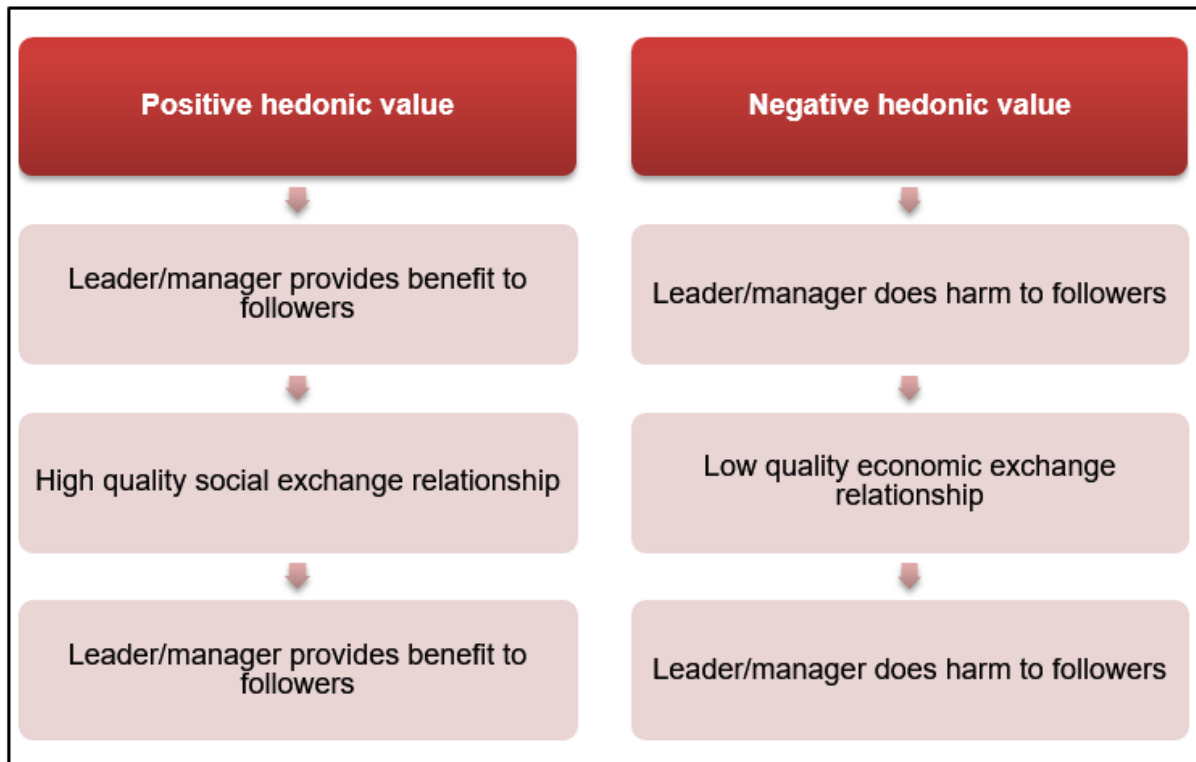
Source: Blau (1964)

Figure 2.2 demonstrates possible follower responses to the positive and negative behaviour depicted by a leader or manager. That is, a depiction is provided of an exchange activity's hedonic value or desirable set against undesirable interaction between an employee or follower with their corresponding leader (Liborius & Kiewitz, 2022). Thereafter, possible reactions from both the follower or employee and the leader is provided within the given situation and context.

As proposed by the social exchange theory, the fair and ethical treatment displayed by a leader or manager is likely to stimulate the feelings of indebtedness or compulsion within employees, and will cause them to reciprocate and engage in the behaviours that are required in their work environment (Blau, 1964; Garba, Babalola, & Guo, 2018). Since ethical leadership behaviours demonstrate consideration, fairness, and ethicality, ethical leaders should stimulate employees' felt obligation (Garba et al., 2018; Mossholder, Setton, & Henagaan, 2005).

2.4   PSYCHO-SOCIAL FACTORS INFLUENCING ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

According to Ma et al. (2017), the factors that influence ethical leadership include follower characteristics, leader characteristics, the leader–follower relationship, organisational characteristics, and the environmental situation. These concepts are summarised in the table below and a further discussion of the concepts is provided below.

Table 2.1
Influencers of ethical leadership

Factor	Sub-factor
Follower characteristics	Mindfulness and moral emotion; Moral attentiveness; Entity morality beliefs; Conscientiousness and core self-evaluation; Self-esteem
Leader characteristics	Machiavellianism; Interactional justice; Ethical ideology; Leader position
Leader-follower relationship	Leader–member exchange (LMX) Value congruence; Identification
Organisational characteristics	Internal audit function; Co-workers' ethical behaviour; Perceptions of organisational politics; Firm size
Environmental situations	Magnitude of consequences; Organisational change

Source: Adapted from Ma et al. (2017)

2.4.1   Follower characteristics

The term 'follower characteristics', as listed in Table 2.1 above, refers to individual variances among followers' influence, and the manner in which ethical leadership affects the respective employees' behaviours and performance. A leader's comprehension of their followers' dispositions may assist in increasing the efficiency of ethical leadership and how it may influence the follower behaviour (Caniëls & Hatak, 2022).

The follower characteristics (as listed in Table 2.1) which have been shown to regulate ethical leadership include mindfulness and moral emotion; moral attentiveness; entity morality beliefs; conscientiousness and core self-evaluation and self-esteem. These characteristics are briefly discussed below.

Mindfulness and moral emotion

Mindfulness is a process of openly attending with consciousness, to one's current momentary experience (Creswell, 2017). Additionally, moral emotions are sentiments which are related to the interests or welfare, either of society as a whole, or at least of individuals other than a judge (Cova, Deonna, & Sander, 2015; Haidt, 2003).

Followers, or employees who possess mindfulness and moral emotion, demonstrate increased compassion and the ability to recognise and perceive ethical leadership. Mindfulness and moral emotion also increase the degree to which followers or employees display extra effort and helping behaviours in response to their leader (Eisenbeiss & Van Knippenberg, 2015).

Moral attentiveness

Moral attentiveness is the degree to which an individual habitually perceives and deliberates on morality and the moral elements within their experiences (Afsar et al., 2019). When followers or employees exhibit high levels of moral attentiveness, they are likely to assess and interpret the behaviour of their leader, and information as expressed through morality. That is, followers or employees with the moral attentiveness characteristics are more inclined to perceive their leadership as being ethical and are more likely to be influenced by their ethical leaders (Van Gils et al., 2015).

Entity morality beliefs

This term refers to the beliefs that individuals may have with regard to ethics, ethical people and ethical structures (Zhu et al., 2015). Individuals with stronger entity morality beliefs may be disposed to view an ethical leader as their role model because they regard the leader's moral values and behaviour as being consistent and credible. Therefore, followers or employees with entity morality beliefs may respond to ethical leadership (He, Chao, & Zhu, 2019; Zhu et al., 2015).

Conscientiousness and core self-evaluation

Followers or employees with the characteristic of conscientiousness and core self-evaluation may view their respective leadership as being ethical, and they are less likely to engage in incivility or discourteousness (Taylor & Pattie, 2014). Conscientious individuals are concerned about their moral duties and responsibility (Ko et al., 2018). This means that when an ethical leader provides clear ethical standards, conscientious followers or employees take heed of their leader's guidance and will not deviate. However, followers or employees who possess the core self-evaluation characteristic have more confidence in their personal judgment, thus they are not likely to imitate others (Taylor & Pattie, 2014).

Self-esteem

Self-esteem describes an individual's perception of themselves (Borchet et al., 2020; Rosenberg, 1965). Individuals that lack self-esteem may react to situational factors and other people, such as their leader, as they may not be confident in their own attitudes and behaviour. However, those individuals with high self-esteem are confident in their own attitudes and behaviours, and are unlikely to be influenced by their leaders (Eisenbeiss & Van Knippenberg, 2015).

2.4.2   Leader characteristics

Followers or employees assess their leader, in accordance to their leaders' personal characteristics. If leaders do not pursue ethical values, employees may pick up on this and may lose confidence in their leader (Koo & Park, 2018). When leaders pretend to care about ethical values but display unethical behaviours in practice, followers or employees will perceive them as hypocritical leaders. Therefore, to promote ethical leadership effectiveness, leaders and managers need to develop both "morally good leadership" and "technically good leadership" (Ciulla, 2004, p. 116).

The leader characteristics which have been shown to regulate ethical leadership include Machiavellianism; interactional justice perception; ethical ideology and leader position, as discussed below.

Machiavellianism

Machiavellianism refers to the deceitful manipulation that an individual may undertake in an attempt to promote their own interests (Ko et al., 2018). For instance, a leader may pretend to be prioritising ethicality in their conduct, when in actual fact, they are aiming to obtain benefits

for themselves. Ultimately, followers will see through this facade and come to see the actual motives and moral values of their leaders. Therefore, leaders who exhibit Machiavellianism may deter followers from engaging in ethical practice, as followers may mimic the example set by their respective leader or manager (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012).

Interactional justice

Interactional justice appears when managers' treatment of their followers or employees, focuses on interpersonal communication and behaviours during the implementation of procedures (Yangin & Elma, 2017). Interactional justice is based on the interpersonal communication within an organisation. The concept focuses on the communication between the leader or manager and the follower or employees. Interactional justice is recognised as the social dimension of organisational justice (Yangin & Elma, 2017).

Ethical leaders who are perceived as exercising interactional justice, aim to establish an ethical climate amongst employees, as these leaders are perceived to have moral authority (Neubert et al., 2009). Thus, followers may have a sense of attachment towards the organisation.

Ethical ideology

Ethical ideology is a system of ethics which is used to make moral judgements (Zou & Chan, 2019). Ethical ideology offers guidelines for judging and resolving behaviour that may be ethically questionable (Henle et al., 2005; Ismail & Rasheed, 2019). Idealistic leaders are concerned with the welfare of others (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015). Leaders who demonstrate ideology promote perceptions of organisational justice amongst followers.

Reputation for performance

A leader's reputation for performance increases followers' trust in the leader (Neves & Story, 2015).

Leader position

Higher leader status or hierarchical position increases the control that the leader may have regarding the ethical regulation of followers (Wu et al., 2014).

2.4.3   Leader-follower relationship

The relationship between the leader and follower is another factor that is closely related to ethical leadership (Ko et al., 2018). When leaders foster a good quality relationship with their followers, the followers view this as an emotional bond and share values with their leader. Followers or employees will then integrate the leaders' values and beliefs into their own identities. Therefore, in order to endorse their leadership effectiveness, ethical leaders need to actively build and nurture their relationships with followers. The leader-follower relationships that have been shown to regulate ethical leadership include the leader-member exchange (LMX), value congruence and identification (Ko et al., 2018), as discussed below.

Leader Member Exchange (LMX)

Leader–member exchange (LMX) is a prominent example of the relational aspect of supportive leadership. Leader–member exchange assists in the facilitation which causes followers or employees to perform creatively (Qu et al., 2015). A quality relationship between a leader and follower enables a mutual interaction that is characterised by trust. Relationships that are characterised by trust allow and facilitate for the leader to have a greater influence on their respective followers (Breevaart & Zacher, 2019; Neubert et al., 2013).

Value congruence

When a relationship between a leader and followers is characterised by value, this fosters a climate that facilitates shared similarity in information processing, and this will result in follower decisions being similar to those of their respective leader. This is due to the fact that when followers observe the ethical behaviours of their leaders, with whom they share congruent values, they are more likely to emulate their leader. Thus, an environment of increased moral efficacy will be created within the organisation (Lee et al., 2017).

Identification

When followers or employees identify with their ethical leaders, they emulate their leader's behaviour and conduct. Consequently, leaders who demonstrate ethical attitudes and behaviours will result in followers emulating these attitudes and behaviours. This means that the effect of ethical leadership on followers' behaviours varies, and is dependent on the degree to which followers identify with their leaders (Liden et al., 2014).

2.4.4 Organisational characteristics

Organisational characteristics include firm size, organisational structure, nature of work carried out and the organisation's procurement methods (Abdullahi et al., 2017). The organisational climate or policy interacts with ethical leadership in an attempt to regulate follower ethical behaviour, performance and firm performance. When an organisational system assesses members based on ethical criteria and organisational culture, followers or employees are encouraged to make ethical decisions that are consistent with the ethical leadership within their organisation. Ethical leadership, even within an unethical organisational culture, increases leadership effectiveness and leader authenticity (Miao et al., 2020).

Internal audit function

The organisational ethical climate or control systems affect how followers or employees react to ethical leadership (Brown & Trevino, 2006; Budur and Demir, 2019). An internal audit function acts as a control system and provides an ethical environment that supports ethical leadership (Ko et al., 2018). In cases where an internal audit function is in place and functions in conjunction with feeble ethical leadership, followers or employees may question their leaders' guidance, and consequently, become less likely to perform a questionable task, such as book a questionable entry (Arel, Beaudoin, & Cianci, 2012).

Co-workers' ethical behaviour

When employees are faced with uncertainty in a given situation, they may consider the information and guidance provided from their leaders and co-workers. When consistent information and guidance is provided by both leaders and co-workers, it has a higher probability of persuading the employee (Mayer et al., 2012).

Perceptions of organisational politics

Perceptions of organisational politics may have a negative connotation on followers. Therefore, when leaders oppose internal politics, the perception of the leader is strengthened in the eyes of the followers, and followers may view their leadership as being ethical and authentic (Li et al., 2015).

Firm size

Another organisational level influence is firm size. Larger organisations have greater organisational inertia, and this takes the form of established routines and structures. As a result, it is more difficult to effect change in larger organisations. Therefore, the effect of ethical

leadership is more difficult in shaping the organisational ethical culture for larger firms than it is for smaller firms (Wu et al., 2014).

2.4.5 Environmental situations

Situations in which followers have to function and which they face within an organisation can be dynamic and uncertain. However, in case of uncertainty, it can be alleviated by ethical leadership, through the ethical leader furnishing behavioural guidance and demonstrating concern and support for followers (Ko et al., 2018).

Magnitude of consequences

Magnitude of consequences refers to an indicator of moral intensity, which influences moral judgment (Ko et al., 2018). The existence of a magnitude of consequences may consequently motivate followers to report problems within an organisation. Where high levels of magnitude of consequences are present, followers may feel pressure to act ethically and to match the ethical leader's behaviour. Thus, ethical leadership is likely to facilitate whistleblowing among the followers, where consequences of unethical behaviour within an organisation are high (Bhal & Dadhich, 2011).

Organisational change

Considering that organisational change may be a factor causing stress and confusion among employees, the role of leadership becomes pivotal during situations of change (Schell, 2019). Throughout organisational change, ethical leaders provide encouragement for followers to support the organisational change and to actively participate in the process of change. When followers experience organisational change, leadership motivating them to perform better, engage in more organisational citizenship behaviours, and to enjoy higher job satisfaction become more appealing to followers (Sharif & Scandura, 2014).

2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The significance of this chapter was to draw inferences from the literature on the concept of ethical leadership. The construct of ethical leadership was discussed. The chapter commenced by discussing the rationale for studying ethical leadership. This discussion was followed by the conceptualisation of ethical leadership. Subsequent to this, the relevant models were outlined, and lastly, the psycho-social factors which influence ethical leadership concluded this chapter. The next chapter presents the constructs of group learning behaviour and group cohesion

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW: GROUP LEARNING BEHAVIOUR AND GROUP COHESION

The previous chapter presented a framework related to the concept of ethical leadership. The present chapter aims to provide context to the concepts of group learning behaviour and group cohesion. Firstly, this chapter discusses the rationale for the study of group learning behaviour and group cohesion. This is followed by the conceptualisation of group learning behaviour and group cohesion. Thereafter, the models of group learning behaviour and group cohesion are presented and discussed, and lastly, the factors which have an influence on group learning behaviour and group cohesion are explored.

3.1   RATIONALE FOR STUDYING GROUP LEARNING BEHAVIOUR AND GROUP COHESION

Organisations today increasingly depend on the efforts of groups to enhance the organisations' ability to learn in an environment that is characterised by competitiveness, globalisation and constant change (Rebelo, Lourenço, & Dimas, 2019; Senge, 1990). Groups have become the basis that enables organisations to adapt to the emerging pressures in today's world of work (Morais & De Moura, 2018). During the process of working or learning together, group members supplement and complement each other's efforts and gains. The power of group work and group learning differs from that of an individual's, and more scholars are diverting their attention to this research (Yin, Law, & Chuah, 2007). A learning organisation is one that is continuously increasing its capacity to create its future (Hansen, Jensen, & Nguyen, 2020; Senge, 1990). Organisational work structures have shifted from being individual to predominantly group based (Morais & De Moura, 2018).

Groups, in the modern workplace of today, have become crucial units across social and work settings. This is a result of the fact that accomplishing tasks in groups has numerous advantages as opposed to working individually (Guerrero & Bradley, 2013; Tulin, Pollet, & Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2018). For instance, Wittenbaum, Hollingshead and Botero (2004) and Wittenbaum, Yoon and Hollingshead (2021) found that groups will surmount individuals in numerous tasks, such as decision-making. More so, from a theoretical perspective, groups, and more specifically, learning activities amongst group members, are expected to enhance innovation. This is because more individuals are involved in the creative process, and thus, more knowledge, information and experiences are incorporated into this creative process (Stevens, 2018).

Organisations increasingly rely on groups for the fundamental element of learning (Sujin, 2018). However, these advantages only arise in groups that are cohesive (Chiocchio & Essiembre, 2009; Tulin et al., 2018). Teamwork has become an undisputable aspect of work in organisations (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006; Kozlowski & Bell, 2019). Furthermore, teams develop a shared conception of tasks and the manner in which these tasks should be executed, which is vital for group performance through group learning (Antoni & Hertel, 2009; Bron et al., 2018; Van den Bossche et al., 2011). Although group learning and cohesion are considered as being a central group property across both social psychology and sociology, the link between these concepts, as predisposed by the structural properties of groups has not been fully explored (Friedkin, 2004; Tulin et al., 2018).

Thye, Lawler, and Yoon (2019) demonstrated that certain structures within networks endorse cohesion through positive social exchanges. In addition to this, Bianchi (2020) established the importance of network structure in forming networks or relationships which are characterised by reciprocity and trusting bonds. Group structural conditions and processes may determine and regulate whether and how social interactions generate affective group bonds, that is, group cohesion, and more resilient social orders, that is, group learning behaviours, in groups within organisations (Thye et al., 2019). The term 'group structure' refers to the quality and patterns of a relationship existing among group members (Argote et al., 1989). That is, group structure pertains to the rules which define the group norms, roles and status of a particular group (Stangor, 2016).

Since leaders are a source of guidance, and employees pay attention and follow their admirable attitudes, values and behaviour, ethical leaders may be able to inculcate acceptable behaviour among employees through group learning behaviour, which may lead to a conducive working environment (Walumbwa et al., 2017). If employees understand the group norms regarding which attitudes, values and behaviours are deemed as appropriate, employees are less likely to display or act unethically (Ishak et al., 2019). Additionally, Hülsheger, Anderson and Salgado (2009) contended that group cohesiveness is a vital precondition for learning behaviour as it creates a working environment where group members feel free to challenge the status quo, and explore new ways of functioning. Thus, it is vital for leaders to create a working environment that is conducive for group learning behaviour and group cohesion so that employees can carry out their duties efficiently (Ishak et al., 2019). As demonstrated by Hendry, Ryan and Harris (2003) and Hendry, Wiggins and Anderson (2016), a lack of group cohesion can inhibit the group learning process.

Learning is crucial for organisations to remain successful in today's business landscape. The pressure to change and evolve at a moment's notice is higher than ever before. This pressure often falls on the shoulders of organisational groups (Wiese & Burke, 2019). If groups fail to learn, it is likely that this will ultimately affect the organisation. Hence, it has become crucial in both practice and academia to enhance the understanding of group learning, while attempting to enhance efficiency throughout the entire organisation (Wiese & Burke, 2019).

Within the field of social psychology research, the study of group cohesion is typically limited to experimentally induced groups who interact for a limited period. Although some studies have attempted to manipulate the size of such task groups (Carron & Spink, 1995; Kent & Cukurova, 2020), these studies were unable to credibly induce the complex networks of social relationships that are often found in people's real-life social networks.

In an attempt to capture a holistic understanding and representation of group learning behaviour, group cohesion, as predisposed by ethical leadership in long standing work groups, the study investigated a group-level antecedent of group learning behaviour, group cohesion and ethical leadership.

3.2 CONCEPTUALISATION OF GROUP LEARNING BEHAVIOUR AND GROUP COHESION

Group learning behaviours refer to actions that build the process of group learning in a team (Paananen, Häyhä, & Hedlund, 2020). Group learning emphasises the abilities of a group to work together. It involves the collective effort of group members to achieve a common goal, and refers to the process by which members continuously and supportively learn together and from their group members (Sojayapan & Khlaisang, 2018). Group learning highlights teamwork in each phase of the learning process, and takes place through the transfer of skills, such as through the observation of other members, collective problem-solving, and reviewing outcomes as a group (Sojayapan & Khlaisang, 2018).

During the process of learning, each member must bear in mind the notions of collaboration, work delegation, and mutual responsibilities. This means that the association between group success and the social skills of the individuals in groups should be optimal to enable the group to achieve group efficiency (Freeman, 2012; Sojayapan & Khlaisang, 2018). Thus, group cohesion and group learning behaviour can be viewed as interlinked concepts, as a lack of group cohesion has been demonstrated to impede the group learning process (Khlaisang, 2018).

Group learning behaviours can be categorised into the following three forms of behaviour: intra-group, inter-group, and fundamental learning behaviours (Wiese & Burke, 2019). Intra-group learning pertains to the interaction and learning of group members that function within the same group. Conversely, inter-group learning refers to differing groups within an organisation that interact, learn and compete with each other (Shastri & Kulkarni, 2018). This means that group members learn from both members within a particular group and members from outside their respective group while still functioning in the same organisation.

Fundamental learning behaviours include the encouragement of independent learning, intrinsic engagement and the acquisition of life-long learning skills (Storti, 2018). With intra-group learning, the attitudes, values and behaviours are selected by each group member in accordance with other members within the group. With inter-group learning, the attitudes, values and behaviours are selected from within a pool of the best attitudes, values and behaviours associated with every group that functions within an organisation (Shastri & Kulkarni, 2018).

As observed by Cronin, Weingart and Todorova (2011), group learning is a phenomenon that takes place over time and there is a critical need to understand groups within the context of time. The process of group learning does not happen in a single moment, but rather within a series of interactions which unfold over time. Considered holistically, the concept of group learning consists of varying combinations of different types of processes. These processes lead to certain outcomes, which in turn, influence these processes. Group learning differs from individual learning in that the ability to acquire knowledge and skills is collectively shared by group members, and the group learning outcome is collectively available and used (Ellis et al., 2003; Wiese & Burke, 2019).

In order to understand the dynamic nature of group cohesion, it is important to firstly describe teams or groups. Hackman (1987) and more recently Levitt and Rothbard (2022) described a work group as an integral social system that is comprised of interdependent members who each have a distinguished role in the group. Cohen and Bailey (1997) concurred with this notion, as they stated that a group is a collection of interdependent individuals who share responsibility for task outcomes and are viewed as an integral social entity embedded in one or more larger social systems, that is, a business unit or a corporation. More recent work also mirrors this notion, as Salas et al. (2015) explained that a group is comprised of two or more divergent individuals who interact both interdependently and adaptively towards the attainment of a common goal.

There have been abundant debates surrounding the definition of cohesion (Friedkin, 2004; Mudrack, 1989). Initially, scholars investigating group cohesion presented a unidimensional perspective of cohesion (Manata, 2016). The definitive description that referred to cohesion as a field of forces that cause group members to remain together (Festinger, 1950) has been considered as being general and vague. This made it difficult to convert the concept into a concrete and measurable notion (Craig & Kelly, 1999). More recently, a multidimensional view of cohesion has emerged (Chiocchio & Essiembre, 2009; Manata, 2016). This view describes how multiple factors prompt groups to remain united (Carron & Brawley, 2000). In their meta-analysis, Mullen and Copper (1994) used a three-dimensional categorisation of cohesion. These categories include social cohesion, which refers to interpersonal attraction, task cohesion that pertains to task commitment, and group pride, which refers to the attributes of progress or success of group efforts. However, the latter dimension has received scant attention in literature, and studies focusing on it seem predominantly limited to sports teams (Chiocchio & Essiembre, 2009; Manata, 2016).

In accordance with the above discussion, Salas et al. (2015) differentiated group cohesion into two concepts. These concepts include the task dimension and social dimension of group cohesion. The task dimension of cohesion pertains to the degree to which group members demonstrate a level of commitment to working well together in an attempt to achieve group goals (Carron et al., 1985; Valentina & Daniel, 2018). The social dimension of cohesion refers to the attractiveness of a group, and is based on the members' social relationships (Lott & Lott, 1965; Seashore, 1954). The significant distinction between the task and social cohesion that stems from various scholars and approaches constitutes a milestone in the study of cohesion (Dion & Evans, 1992; Manata, 2016).

Cohesion, therefore, refers to the 'glue' that holds a group together, and to the extent to which group members are motivated to preserve the group's continuity and welfare (Salas et al., 2015; Tulin et al., 2018). Correspondingly, Casey-Campbell and Martens (2009) as well as Vrtiprah and Vrselja (2023) described group cohesion as the bond between members of a groups which prompts a desire to remain and work together within the group. Cohesion can also be described as the level of resistance that a group has in response to forces that may be disruptive (Chiocchio & Essiembre, 2009; Friedkin, 2004; Manata, 2016).

Learning behaviour and group cohesion are flexible concepts and are context-dependent (Smyth, Mavor, & Platow, 2017). In other words, if a working environment that fosters learning and cohesion is not created by leaders, then group learning and group cohesion within organisations may be hampered. Consequently, it is pivotal that leaders and organisations

bear in mind that it is not only the strength of identification within a group that influences learning behaviour, but also what that group membership means in terms of norms for desirable group behaviour, and that is group cohesion (Stevens, 2018).

The study adopted Paananen et al.'s (2020) demarcation of group learning behaviour. The study also utilised Wiese and Burke's (2019) perspective of the three group learning behaviours. Moreover, cohesion is viewed from a bidimensional perspective, that is, social cohesion and task cohesion, given its increased recognition and stronger theoretical basis. Considering that group cohesion can be viewed as a multidimensional construct, the study applied the notion, as this is most relevant to achieving the aims of the study.

The application of both the social and task dimensions of cohesion assisted in gaining an understanding of the social groups that tend to be held together by the social bonds between group members, and to assess the group members' degree of task commitment and level of commitment to working well together in an attempt to achieve group goals. This coincides with the study's research question which attempts to describe how participants experience group learning behaviour and group cohesion, as predisposed by ethical and unethical leadership.

With the context and conceptualisation of the constructs of group learning behaviour and group cohesion provided, the next section of this research study aims to provide the models of group learning behaviour and group cohesion. The factors that influence both group learning behaviour and group cohesion follow.

3.3   MODELS OF GROUP LEARNING BEHAVIOUR AND GROUP COHESION

The selection of models to be discussed in this section was based on conceptual and context similarities. The criteria used for selecting the models for the purpose of this study and for this discussion, included the factors that affect learning behaviour, and the extension of group learning to group effectiveness and group cohesion as predisposed by group structural conditions. These models are discussed in the below section.

3.3.1   Group learning behaviour models

The section below discusses the models of group learning behaviour. These models are the learning behaviours in work teams model and the integrative model for group learning.

3.3.1.1   Learning behaviours in work teams model

The first models of group learning behaviour primarily centred on the learning processes within the groups (Edmondson 1999; Taylor, Collins, & Ashford, 2022). Another theoretical model of group learning behaviour stressed the external environments in which the groups operate (Decuyper, Dochy, & Van den Bossche, 2010). A summary of the learning behaviours in work teams and integrative model for group learning are presented in Table 3.1 below.

The learning behaviours in work teams model is based on the antecedents to learning as input, team learning as process, and team performance as output (Edmondson, 1999; Taylor, Collins, & Ashford, 2022). Edmondson (1999) proposed a model of group learning where supportive team structures were found to enable psychological safety that resulted in group learning behaviours and team performance. This linear approach indicates performance as an outcome, but poses limitations on its application to groups that are considered to be complex, adaptive systems that learn in a nonlinear, cyclical process. The learning behaviours in work teams model of group learning behaviour was intended to be broadly applicable to many types of work groups within different contexts. This model is, however, limited by the non-random sampling of a single organisation. Edmondson (1999) suggested that developing and testing a model in specific team contexts would be necessary for future improvements.

Table 3.1
Synopsis of group learning behaviour models

Author(s)	Conceptualisation of collective learning	Key findings
Edmondson, 1999	Group learning is a process of reflection and adaptation influenced by psychological safety.	Engaging in learning behaviour in groups is highly dependent on group psychological safety.
Decuyper et al., 2010	Teams are complex, dynamic, and adaptive systems which exist in a context and perform across time.	Team learning processes may occur differently in different stages of a team's existence.

Source: Researcher's own compilation

With the assessment of different group structures, Edmondson (1999) found that group design was a pivotal aspect of group learning. The learning behaviours in work teams model is represented in Figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1
Learning behaviours in work teams model
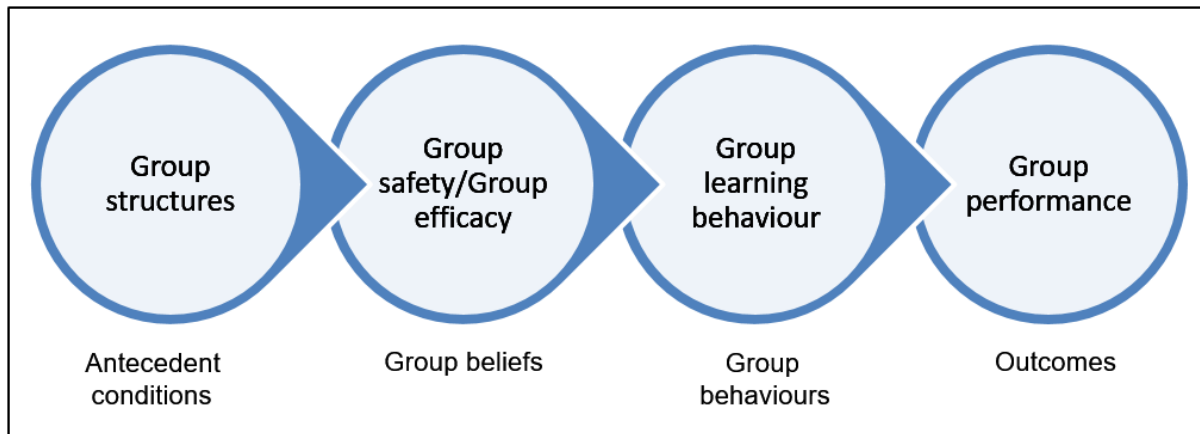
Source: Edmondson (1999)

The learning behaviours in work teams model, represented in figure 3.1, demonstrates the antecedents and consequences of team psychological safety (Ruokonen, 2019). A group or teams shared beliefs of team psychological safety are influenced by the organisational conditions. These shared beliefs, consequently influence a group or teams' learning behaviours (Ruokonen, 2019).

3.3.1.2   *Integrative model for group learning*

The integrative model for group learning includes the processes of learning, their antecedents and outcomes (Decuyper et al., 2010).

Decuyper et al. (2010) reviewed various studies related to group learning in varying disciplines. These studies were conducted with different group types and settings. This interdisciplinary integration of research findings is invaluable, as the consequent diversity in the study of group learning outlined the extent to which scientific research is being conducted that truly builds the body of knowledge with regard to group learning behaviour.

Based on Decuyper et al's. (2010) review of group learning studies, it was found that the importance of time and the developmental stage of groups had been neglected in group learning research to date. The group learning process operates differently in diverse stages of the group's existence. The time pressures that a group experiences may also affect the appearance of group learning. Decuyper et al. (2010) postulated that in order to fully comprehend the phenomenon of group learning, future research needs to adapt context-specific models which recognise the differences in group processes and team outcomes (Decuyper et al., 2010; Edmondson et al., 2007; Wilson et al., 2007). In other words, studies

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should evaluate the relationship between group learning and team type, including the structural elements of the team composition, such as team size, team autonomy, team tenure, and team diversity.

The integrative model for group learning is depicted in Figure 3.2 below.

Figure 3.2
Integrative model for group learning
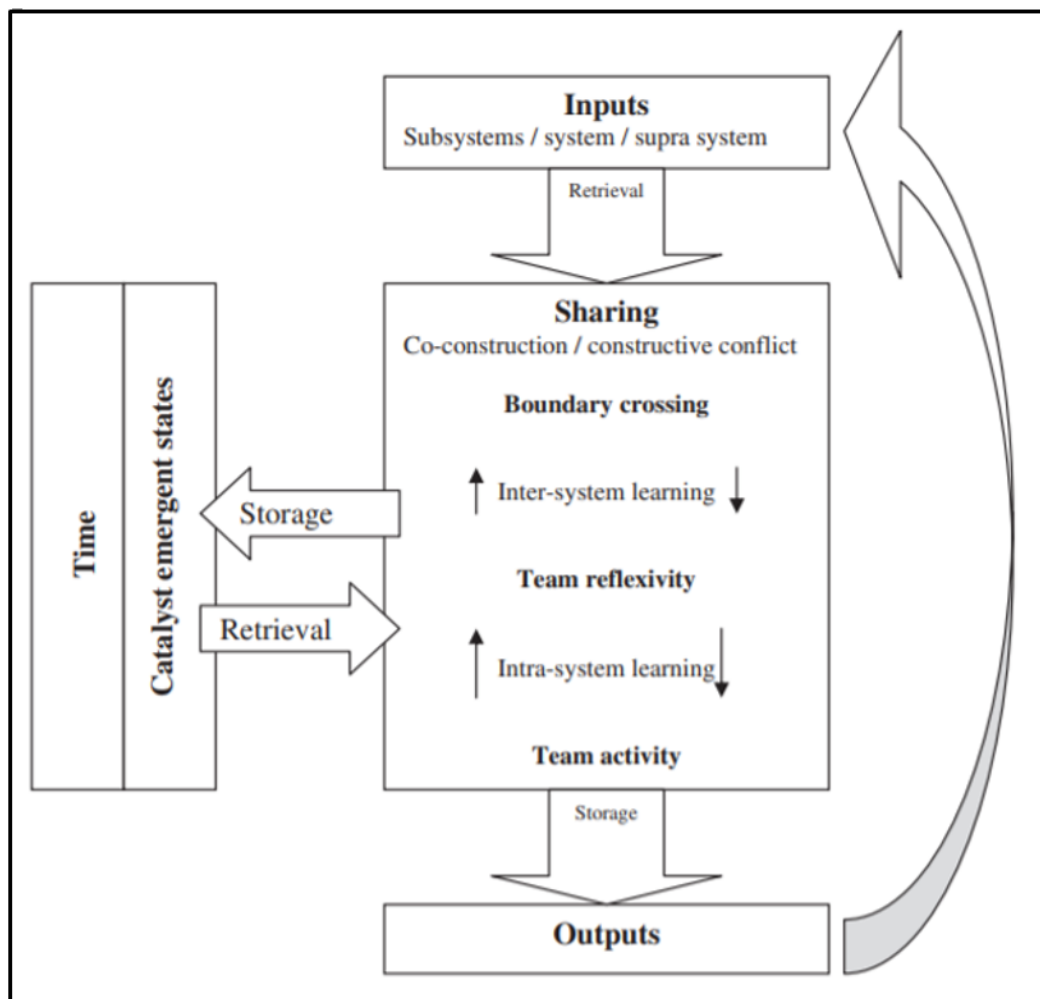
Source: Decuyper et al. (2010)

The integrative model for group learning depicts how motivational processes link to course outcomes, including perceived knowledge transferability (Levesque-Bristol et al., 2022). That is, the process of making connections between concepts and experiences in an attempt to apply information and skills to different and complex issues or challenges.

3.3.2 Group cohesion models

Numerous models of group cohesion exist, however, research with regard to these models is largely confined to the field of psychology or the subfield of sports psychology (Carron 1982; Kenny & LaVoie, 1985; Bandura, 1986). Originally, the models of group cohesion were unidimensional. These models advocated that group cohesion would have the same consequences, regardless of its operationalisation. More recently, research found that group cohesion can be multidimensional in nature (Chiocchio & Essiembre, 2009; Manata, 2016;

Rios & Mackey, 2020). The section below discusses a model of group cohesion. This model is the theoretical model of sport group cohesion.

3.3.2.1   *The theoretical model of sport group cohesion*

The group cohesion model that was developed by Carron (1982) and revised by Carron and Hausenblas in 1998, progressed from three major assumptions. The first assumption asserted that the perceptions of individual members can be used to evaluate the group (Kenny & LaVoie, 1985; Bandura, 1986). This assumption is based on research on social cognitions.

The second assumption is based on the notion that everyone within a group has their own perspective on the cohesiveness of a respective group. This assumption is related to the group as a whole, and is based on the way the group satisfies the individual needs and objectives of respective group members (Carron et al., 2002). The second assumption came forth because scholars in the group dynamic field emphasised the need to distinguish between groups and individuals (Cattell, 1948; Van Bergen & Koekebakker, 1959).

The third assumption is based on the notion that there are two fundamental focuses to a group member's perception of a group's objectives and motivation for preserving social relationships (Carron et al., 2002), namely, task and social orientation.

Based on the three assumptions, a model of factors was developed by Carron et al. (2002), as illustrated in Figure 3.3 below.

Figure 3.3
Theoretical model of sport group cohesion
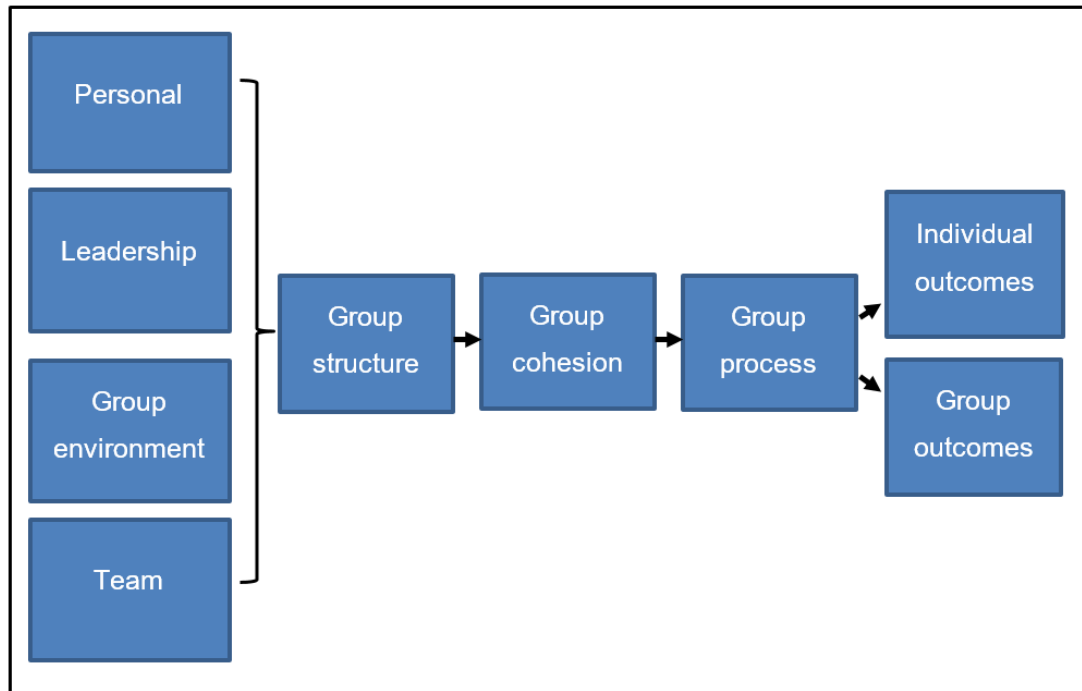
Source: Carron et al. (2002)

The theoretical model of sport group cohesion above demonstrates how input variables (personal, leadership, environment and team variables) have an effect on process variables, which in turn influence the output variables

The inputs, which include personal; leadership; group environment and team are alleged to impact on the throughputs, which are comprised of the group structure; group cohesion and group processes. Lastly, the throughputs result in the outputs which are characterised into either individual or group outcomes (Carron et al., 2005).

Based on the above discussions, the models that have been discussed in this section are relevant to the study which attempts to understand group learning behaviour and group cohesion, as predisposed by ethical and unethical leadership. Thus, the selected models supported and facilitated in the execution of the study.

3.4 FACTORS INFLUENCING GROUP LEARNING BEHAVIOUR AND GROUP COHESION

The section below highlights and discusses the factors that influence group learning behaviour and group cohesion.

3.4.1 Factors influencing group learning behaviour

A series of possible factors affecting group learning behaviour, as proposed by Yin (2007), are depicted and summarised in Table 3.2, and subsequently discussed below.

Table 3.2
Factors affecting group learning behaviour

Intrinsic	Extrinsic
(Focus on human dimensions)	(Focus on environmental dimensions)
Attitude	Challenging work
Challenging goal	Competition
Clear goal vision	Reward
	Punishment
	Group pressure

3.4.1.1   Attitude

Attitude pertains to the individual's inclination to organise their thoughts, emotions and behaviours towards a psychological object. An attitude is not a characteristic that an individual is born with but rather is a learnt characteristic (Guido, 2018). A pivotal predictor of successful learning involves an individual's attitude towards (Getie, 2020). An attitude can distort the perception of information and affect the degree to which an individual retains information (Getie, 2020). When an individual sees the importance of learning within a group setting and acts accordingly, this demonstrates their attitude towards group learning (Getie, 2020). Some attitudes are based on an individual's personal experiences and knowledge, while some attitudes are gained from other sources. An individual's motivation to learn is affected by their attitude towards learning the particular subject (Guido, 2018).

3.4.1.2   Challenging goal

A goal is a standard for evaluating employees (Teo & Low, 2016). Goal setting is a formal program of setting specific measurable and assessable performance goals for employees to achieve common targets, and to enhance employee satisfaction and performance (Teo & Low, 2016). Adequate goal setting enhances both individual and organisational performance and efficiency (Terpstra & Rozell, 1994). According to Latham (2004), people's performances can

be improved through the provision of challenging goals. Employees who are committed to attaining high goals may become high performers.

3.4.1.3 Clear objectives

It is vital for employees to outline what is expected in terms of performance and results through goal setting (Teo & Low, 2016). When employees see the connection between their personal goals and those of the organisation, the employees are more likely to strive to achieve those goals (Mills, 2002). Furthermore, manager and employee effectiveness can improve through the implementation of clear communications and feedback to clarify the expectations, roles and responsibilities of employees (Xavier, 2002).

3.4.1.4 Reward

Reward is a form of appreciation with the attempt to direct the actions of a workforce in accordance with the demands and goals of an organisation (Dairi & Azwar, 2020). According to Hamzah (2011), rewards can come in the form of incentives, promotions, and education, training, and development.

3.4.1.5 Punishment

Punishment is an act where a leader, manager or organisation imposes unpleasant or undesirable penalties on an employee as a result of certain behaviours (Dairi & Azwar, 2020). Punishment is suffering that is provided or intentionally caused by someone after an offence, crime, or error has occurred. Several indicators of punishment include efforts to minimise errors; heavier penalties if the same mistake is made; punishment is given with an explanation, and immediate punishment given after indiscretions are proven.

3.4.1.6 Challenging work

Challenging work is an extremely important factor that contributes towards employee job satisfaction (Mamatha, 2015). The challenging nature of work provides employees with work motivation. This is a result of employees feeling and possessing a greater scope for personal achievement through more challenging and responsible work (Dwivedula, Bredillet, & Müller, 2017).

3.4.1.7 Competition

Competition among employees plays an important role in organisations (Cowgill, 2015), and is usually implemented for its motivating effects (Chowdhury et al., 2023; Chan, 1996; Lazear

& Rosen, 1981). However, the motivating effects of competition are arguable. A meta-analysis conducted by Murayama and Elliot (2012) suggested that competition elicits approach and avoidance goals, where approach goals are associated with enhanced performance and avoidance goals are associated with performance reduction. Studies by Charness, Masclet and Villeval (2014), and Hannan et al. (2012) concurred with the aforementioned, and the scholars added that competition encourages enhanced efforts and improves performance, even in the absence of material gains. However, scholars have found growing evidence pointing to the substantial disadvantages of competition (Berger et al., 2013; Giumetti, Schroeder, & Switzer, 2015). These disadvantages include increased sabotage among the competing employees or increased legal risks for the organisation.

3.4.1.8 *Group pressure*

Group pressure has been identified as a key reason for individual demotivation and negative attitudes towards learning (O'Reilly-Cavani & Birks, 1997). This is a result of the learning environment becoming constrained, and the various contextual factors that may become overwhelming for group members. These may include group members' apprehension regarding the negative opinions of their respective team members (Kalnitskaya, 2018).

3.4.2 Factors influencing group cohesion

Past research, such as that of Lott and Lott (1965), pointed to proximity as an influencer in group cohesion. Lott and Lott (1965) further emphasised the critical role of the voluntary, cooperative interaction among individuals who possess similar personal characteristics. Lott and Lott (1965) also suggested that group cohesion grows when there is shared responsibility amongst group members. Similarly, Gal (1983), Marlowe (1985) and Manning (1991 all argued that the shared experience of stressful events serves to build cohesion within groups.

The most recent and comprehensive version of the theoretical model of sport group cohesion, which was first developed in 1982, was published by Carron and Hausenblas (1998). The model echoes the works of the abovementioned theories. The model provides an overall framework that identifies, describes and examines the correlates of cohesion in sport teams. The model is based on the assumption that there are numerous factors that are related to and/or influence group cohesion. These factors are divided into four categories that include environmental, personal, leadership, and group factors. The four factors identified and discussed below lead to, or directly affect, the degree to which individual members of a group perceive cohesiveness among their group (Carron & Hausenblaus, 1998). This level of cohesion can be reflected in both task cohesion and social cohesion.

3.4.2.1   Environmental factors

Environmental (or situational) factors can further be divided into two categories, namely, cultural and organisational considerations, and geographical considerations. Cultural and organisational considerations are comprised of contractual responsibility, organisational orientation, normative pressures and level of competition. Cultural and organisational considerations refer to the different goals, achievement processes, and demographics of the members within a given group (Spink & Carron, 1992). Geographical considerations include the physical and functional proximity, a group's permeability, and the size of the group.

3.4.2.2   Personal factors

Personal factors include demographic attributes, cognition and motives, and behaviour. Demographic attributes refer to individual differences amongst group members. These differences include the age, sex, race, and personality of group members, to name a few (Bui et al., 2019). These factors are relevant to the cohesiveness of the group, as similarities in the personal attributes of group members encourage greater cohesiveness within the group. A group's cohesiveness operates in a reciprocal manner, where the perceptions of attitudes and motives within a given group form due to similar personal factors, and consequently, group cohesion increases (Bui et al., 2019).

3.4.2.3   Leadership factors

The leadership factor pertains to the leader's behaviour, decision-making style, the leader-employee personal relationship, and the leader-group relationship. This antecedent factor demonstrates that leader behaviours influence and predict cohesion within a group. Leadership factor characteristics involve the type and frequency of feedback that is provided to employees, training and instruction, social support, type of leadership, and how the leader reacts to workplace pressures.

3.4.2.4   Team factors

Team factors include the group size, status, role clarity, group norms, and collective efficacy (Carron & Hausenblaus, 1998). With reference to group size, as the size of a group or team increases, the unity or cohesion of the group is affected. Another factor is role clarity, or the extent to which employees understand their role. Group norms represent the guidelines that dictate what behaviour is desirable or undesirable within a group (Aldewereld, Dignum, & Vasconcelos, 2016). Lastly, collective efficacy refers to the beliefs and attitudes about the group's competence.

3.5   CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter discussed and provided a framework for the constructs of group learning behaviour and group cohesion. The chapter began with a discussion of the rationale for studying group learning behaviour and group cohesion. This discussion was followed by the conceptualisation of group learning behaviour and group cohesion. Subsequently, a discussion on the relevant models for group learning behaviour and group cohesion were outlined. Lastly the factors which influence group learning behaviour and group cohesion concluded this chapter.

The next chapter highlights and discusses the research methodology that was followed for the study.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The previous chapters presented with the contextualisation and theoretical objectives of the study. Chapter 4 presents a discussion of the research design and methodology adopted for the study. The features that fall under the topic of the research design, namely, the research approach and paradigm perspective are discussed. The research strategy is then highlighted subsequent to the research design. Thereafter, the subset features to the research methodology which include the research setting, entrée and researcher roles, population and sampling, data-collection methods, recording of data, data analysis, the strategies employed to ensure quality data, and lastly, the study's ethical considerations are outlined. These discussions follow below.

4.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

As suggested by De Vaus (2014) and Eriksson and Konvalainen (2016), a research design pertains to the structure of an enquiry or study. That is, a research design may be viewed as a guide or a strategic framework that assists in the execution of a research study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The research design also determines the orientation of the study, and the data-collection and data-analysis methods to be used in the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). A research design is determined by the type of study that the researcher aims to undertake (Babbie & Mouton, 2012). Collis and Hussey (2009) further explained that the research design is the foundation of determining one's research paradigm.

In an attempt to address the research objectives of the current research study, the research design discussed below was followed during the research process.

4.1.1 Research approach

The research study followed a qualitative research approach that was directed by an interpretive research paradigm (Creswell, 2013). The qualitative research approach was selected for the study, as its objective is to produce in-depth and illustrative information in an attempt to understand the various dimensions of the phenomenon under study (Queirós et al., 2017). Furthermore, the qualitative research approach fitted the interpretivist, epistemological framework of the research study where reality is subjective (Goldkuhl, 2012), and this aligned with the purpose of the study.

Qualitative research pertains to the systematic inquiry into social phenomena within its natural setting (Teherani et al., 2015). The researcher acts as the main data-collection tool in

qualitative research (Teherani et al., 2015). Qualitative research relies on the declarations provided by participants and the analyses conducted by the researcher (Morrow & Smith, 2000). The present study aimed to obtain and examine an understanding of participants' work experience, thus a qualitative approach was useful in this regard.

Qualitative research perceives the individuals participating in the study as experts regarding that which is central within their lives, situations, stories and feelings (Corbin & Strauss, 2014; Holloway & Galvin, 2016). Berger (2015) and Creswell (2007) also stated that within qualitative research, constructed realities exist and the route of inquiry is a matter of translating individuals' meanings from respective situations to extract meaning for the particular phenomenon under scrutiny.

The qualitative research approach typically presents findings using the words and body language of participants, as opposed to the numeric values that are of interest to quantitative research (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999; Chibambo, 2021). Qualitative research begins from a primarily different set of beliefs than those of quantitative research. Quantitative research is based on the belief that a singular reality exists, and this reality can be discovered through the use of experimental methods. As suggested by Wisker (2008), and also corroborated by Blumberg, Cooper, and Schindler (2011), the three basic characteristics of qualitative research within the interpretivist tradition include:

● Reality and meaning are subjectively formed by individuals;

● The researcher forms part of the phenomenon under scrutiny; and

● Inquiry is driven by interest in a particular phenomenon.

Corbin and Strauss (2014) also provided a summary of the qualities of the qualitative researcher. These qualities include:

● Being inquisitive, innovative and imaginative;

● Possessing the ability to work through problems in the field;

● Being able to recognise trends and variations within the data; and

● Being capable of accepting themselves (the researcher) as research instruments.

These characteristics were relevant for this study, as through the inquisitive inquiry and collection of data from participants, concepts and theories could be developed that may benefit in understanding group learning behaviour and group cohesion as predisposed by ethical leadership.

According to Jamali (2018), qualitative research methods include grounded theory, ethnography, and phenomenology. The current research study followed the phenomenological research approach. As a qualitative research approach, phenomenology was first conceptualised and theorised by Husserl (1931) who posited phenomenology to be a manner of understanding the context of the 'lived experiences' of individuals and the meaning of their experiences. Many other theorists have expanded on this theory in efforts to align it with the qualitative research methodology of the present day (Van Manen, 1990; Moustakas, 1994; Cilesiz, 2011; Wilson, 2015).

The objective of phenomenology is aimed at understanding the human experience (Van Manen, 1997). Van Manen (1997) explains that executing phenomenological research encompasses studying the manner in which an individual experience or comprehends their world as being real or meaningful. There is an overarching idea that meaning is embedded in human existence within phenomenology. This means that individuals are naturally inclined to experience their world as meaningful. An interpretive approach towards lived experience accepts that an individual and their world are inseparable (Wilson, 2015).

Thus, a qualitative research approach with a phenomenological perspective was deemed appropriate for the study, as the focus of the study was on understanding the phenomenon of ethical leadership within a given context. Furthermore, the qualitative research approach was deemed to be suitable for the study as it is personalised and detailed (Blume et al., 2010). This means that the participants of the study are perceived as being experts with regard to what is central within their lived experiences as declarations provided by participants provide a greater understanding of a given phenomenon (Corbin & Strauss, 2014; Holloway & Galvin, 2016).

4.1.2   Paradigm perspectives

The phenomenological theoretical paradigm was adopted for the purpose of the study. A theoretical framework pertains to the use of a theory or theories in a study that expresses the values of the researcher and provides a view of how the study processed new knowledge (Collins & Stockton, 2018). Phenomenology not only provides a description of the individuals' lived experiences, but it is also an interpretive process where the researcher makes an interpretation of the meaning of the lived experiences (Alase, 2017). These features, particularly, when highlighting the meaning of individuals' lived experiences, is the reason why the phenomenological research paradigm was appropriate for the current research study.

The scientific inquiry that investigates a phenomenon needs to address three assumptions: the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions (Ataro, 2020), as discussed below.

4.1.2.1   Ontological Assumption

My ontological and epistemological assumptions and an initial review of the literature (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Terre Blanche et al., 2006) provided evidence that an interpretivism assumption would be a best fit for this research. The ontological and epistemological stance that was adopted for the purpose of the study is the interpretivism assumption, due to the existence of different leadership realities or perceptions. This approach allowed for the essence of the research participants' experiences to be captured (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). The interpretivism assumption reflected the ontological and epistemological assumptions that the researcher viewed the world and had an impact on the paradigm chosen and the organisation of a research study (Tulin et al., 2018).

Ontology relates to the understanding of what exists, how the things that exist are categorised, and the essence of reality (O'Leary, 2017). In other words, ontology is concerned with the nature of reality (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). This is similar to the view expressed by Krauss (2005) and more recently Ugwu, Ekere, and Onoh, (2021) that ontology is involved with the philosophy and viewpoint of reality. Gorra (2010) also stated that ontology is the study of being, as it expresses what individuals perceive and their respective frame of reference regarding reality. According to Butler-Kisber (2018), a solitary view of the world does not exist, but there are rather sets of interconnecting assessments of the world that are informed by various realities and standpoints, which is consistent with the individual's worldview. An individual's ontology impacts the research paradigm that they adopt as a framework for interpretation (Schurink & Auriacombe, 2010).

4.1.2.2   Epistemological assumption

Epistemology refers to the manner in which individuals come to obtain authentic knowledge of the world (O'Leary, 2017). Pritchard (2018) stated that epistemology is a systematic science that provides answers to what constitutes knowledge, how knowledge is acquired and where it stems from. The core of epistemology is the suitability of the researcher's subjectivity in their search to extract an understanding about a phenomenon, since individuals learn through identifying with objects (Holloway, 2018).

The ontological and epistemological stance that was adopted for the purpose of the study was the interpretivism assumption, due to the existence of different leadership realities or perceptions. This approach allowed for the essence of the research participants' experiences to be captured (Lincoln et al., 2011).

Qualitative research commonly adopts the constructivism philosophy, which is also known as interpretivism or the relativistic assumption (Krauss, 2005; Ugwu, Ekere, and Onoh, 2021). Interpretivism is a synthesis of multiple theories diffused into one (Amineh & Asl, 2015). The interpretivism theory asserts that understanding, significance and meaning are developed in collaboration with other individuals (Amineh & Asl, 2015), which is also congruent with the researcher's view in the study.

4.1.2.3 *Methodological assumptions*

As proposed by Mertens and Wilson (2012), methodology is concerned with the process of research. Lincoln et al. (2011), Leedy and Ormrod (2007) and Coy (2019) maintained that methodological assumptions are concerned with the way a researcher discovers what may be known. Methodology includes the overall strategy of executing the research. These principles are discussed during subsequent sections of this chapter.

4.1.3 Research strategy

A research strategy refers to the paradigms and methodological practices that are suitable for a particular design (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The multiple case study research strategy was employed as part of the research strategy. Case study research is a strategy for conducting a methodological exploration of a topic (Flyvbjerg, 2011). The multiple case study strategy similarly explores real-life bounded systems through detailed and in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (Creswell, 2013). The multiple case study research strategy was selected because it allows for a more holistic and reliable view of a topic to be derived. The multiple case study research strategy also allows for the analysis of each case derived from each setting, and permits the analysis to be executed across each setting (Creswell, 2013).

The study selected a multiple case study research strategy, as four homogenous organisations in the energy sector were studied to gain a broader understanding of the phenomenon at hand (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Creswell, 2014). A case study or multiple case study research strategy should be considered when the motivation for a study is to answer 'how' and 'why' questions (Hussein, 2019; Yin, 2014). The close collaboration between the

researcher and the participants, when using the multiple case study approach, allows participants to tell their stories (Hussein, 2019). Collaboration between the researcher and the participants was crucial in the study, as through their stories, the participants were able to provide a description of their views of reality. This enabled the researcher to obtain a better understanding of the participants' actions and life experiences (Hussein, 2019).

The following characteristics were identified in selecting a good case study, and which the researcher attempted to adhere to:

- Should be complete;

- Must be stimulating;

- Must display adequate evidence;

- Must be presented in an interactive manner;

- Alternative perspectives should be considered; and

- Must contribute to knowledge (reference).

4.2   RESEARCH METHOD

The section below outlines the research setting, entrée and researcher roles, sampling, data-collection method, recording of data and data-analysis procedures as applied to the study.

4.2.1   Research setting

For the purpose of the study, data was collected off site from employees working within four of the top energy organisations in South Africa. The energy produced by the organisations include electricity, low carbon electricity, renewable wind energy and renewable solar energy. The energy sector is characterised by a robust natural resource base and a well-developed energy, transport and grid infrastructure (Nkomo, 2005). However, this sector is currently under severe pressure and is characterised by unethical practices, poor governance and poor infrastructure (Bauer et al., 2017).

4.2.2   Entrée and researcher roles

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Department of Industrial and Organisational psychology at the University of South Africa with reference number: 2020_CEMS_IOP_036 (Appendix A). Participants employed within the energy sector were approached for the

purpose of this study. This was done to obtain employee experiences and their perceptions of ethical leadership and how it affects group learning behaviour and group cohesion. The researcher gathered participants by contacting potential participants (electronically) who work within the energy sector and who are within the network of the researcher, that is, the researcher is an acquaintance of the potential participants.

Thereafter, once the potential participants confirmed their participation in the research study, the participants were asked to refer additional individuals meeting the criteria of the study to partake in the research. This is a form of snowball sampling (Ghaljaie, Naderifar, & Goli, 2014). The energy organisations were not approached formally, as the potential participants participated in the research study in their personal capacity. Although the participants who took part in this research study were those that work in the energy sector, they did so in their own personal capacity. Therefore, the study did not have to obtain permission from the respective organisations, as no research study activities were conducted on their premises and no information regarding the organisations was collected. The participants were only required to provide their respective work-related experience.

Extensive care was taken to ensure that potential participants who were contacted did not feel pressured to participate in the study. That is, potential participants were informed that they were not compelled and were not obligated to take part in the research study as participation was voluntary. The context and purpose of the study was clearly outlined (Appendix B), voluntary participation was requested, and participants were informed that withdrawal from the research study was permitted at any point that the participant wanted to do so. Lastly, the confidentiality and privacy of the participants was maintained. The focus groups and interviews were set at a convenient place and time for all parties involved.

The roles of a researcher may be split into two divisions, namely, the role as an outside observer, and as an involved researcher (Walsham, 2006). For the purpose of the study, the researcher took on the role of an observer. That is, observation and engagement (thus, to some extent, an involved researcher) were used to examine participants' lived experiences and elements related to leadership within the energy sector.

4.2.3 Sampling

Sampling is a technique used by researchers to systematically select a sub-set from a pre-determined population (Sharma, 2017). This is executed with the aim of carrying out an experiment or observation of interest. The study employed purposive sampling (Etikan et al.,

2016), with the possibility of further snowball sampling (Ghaljaie et al., 2014), should referrals be required to obtain additional participants. Etikan et al. (2016) postulated that purposive sampling is the deliberate selection of participants in accordance with the qualities possessed by the participants. Sharma (2017), similarly, stated that purposive sampling is a sampling technique that relies on the judgement of the researcher when selecting the units.

Participants were selected according to the following criteria:

- They must work within the energy sector;

- They must have worked within the organisation and energy sector for three or more years to ensure context-rich, relevant experience;

- They must hold the perception/subjective experience that the leader is ethical or unethical in his\her leadership practices;

- They must be available;

- They must be easily accessible; and

- They must be willing to participate in the study (Farrokhi, 2012).

The sampling participants, using the purposive sampling method, were selected based on the specific purpose of the study (Etikan *et al.*, 2016). This was done with the expectation that each participant would provide unique and rich information related to the phenomenon under scrutiny. In addition, the purposive sampling technique was selected for the study, as it allows for data saturation. Data saturation is reached when enough information has been collected to replicate a study, and when the ability to obtain new information is no longer feasible (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012; Walker, 2012).

There are no precise rules when determining a sample size in qualitative research (Saunders et al., 2018). Tuckett (2004) and Thomson (2010) concurred with this notion and stated that no rules exist with regard to sample size in qualitative research. The sample size in qualitative research is dependent on theoretical and practical considerations (Robinson, 2014). The sample size can be determined by the point when data saturation occurs (Zhi, 2014).

Thus, for the purpose of the research study, eight one-on-one (individual) interviews were conducted (Boddy, 2016), and subsequently, two focus group interviews with four participants in each were conducted (Guesta et al., 2017). The participants who took part in the one-on-one interviews also took part in the focus group sessions. This was done in order to allow

participants to speak freely and openly in the one-on-one interviews and then to thereafter corroborate these findings in the focus group sessions.

The initial one-on-one interviews helped to refine the research questions and to ensure that there was access to participants who had been exposed to both ethical and unethical leadership practices. Section 4.2.4 presents a detailed discussion of the data-collection method.

Table 4.1 below presents the biographical details of the research participants of the study who participated in the one-on-one interviews.

Table 4.1
Biographical details of the interview participants

Code	Race	Gender	Designation
AMJC-ENG	African	Male	Junior civil engineer
AMJ-ENG	African	Male	Junior engineer
AMS-SUP	African	Male	Senior Supervisor
AMS-TECH	African	Male	Senior technician
WMS-SUP	White	Male	Senior supervisor
AF-TECH	African	Female	Technician
AM-TECH	African	Male	Technician
AME-TECH	African	Male	Technician

Table 4.2 below presents the biographical details of the research participants who participated in the focus group sessions.

Table 4.2
Biographical details and structure of the focus group participants

Code	Race	Gender	Designation
Group A (Ethical leadership perception)			
AMJ-ENG	African	Male	Junior engineer
AMS-SUP	African	Male	Senior Supervisor
AMS-TECH	African	Male	Senior technician
WMS-SUP	White	Male	Senior supervisor
Group B (Unethical leadership perception)			
AF-TECH	African	Female	Technician
AM-TECH	African	Male	Technician
AME-TECH	African	Male	Technician
AMJC-ENG	African	Male	Junior civil engineer

Participant coding represented in Table 4.1 and Table 4.2 consists of the race, gender, and designation (biographical details) of the research participants. These biographical details were

used to create codes in order to identify different participants who contributed and partook in the study.

4.2.4   Data-collection methods

Once written permission was obtained from the participants, the data collection for the study began. The study collected primary data using individual interviews and focus group interviews to corroborate the findings of the one-on-one interviews. The interviews took place electronically, that is via zoom or the telephone, in order to comply with Covid-19 regulations. Both the interviews and the focus group interviews lasted for approximately 30 to 45 minutes each. The researcher took notes throughout the progression of the interviews.

Probing questions were asked if the responses provided by the participants did not provide sufficient reflection of the phenomenon under study. Individual interviews were conducted with eight participants. The focus group interviews contained four participants each, and these participants had previously participated in the individual interview sessions (Guesta et al., 2017).

According to Newcomer et al. (2010), the size of a focus group depends on the background of the participants, the complexity of the topic, and the expertise of the researcher or moderator. Groups of five to eight are recommended for topics that might be regarded as delicate, personal, or when the participants have substantial expertise or experience with the topic (Newcomer et al., 2010).

Both the individual interviews and focus group interviews were semi-structured (McIntosh & Morse, 2015), and were guided by the research objectives to allow for flexibility and to make provision for dialogue between the participants (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Semi-structured interviews are intended to obtain subjective responses from participants with regard to a particular phenomenon. The participants responded to open-ended questions, and the researcher probed these responses if more information was required (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). The flexibility of participant responses represents the semi-structured aspect of this method (McIntosh & Morse, 2015).

Individual one-on-one interviews were selected as one of the data-collection methods for the study because they allow for a certain amount of flexibility which would enable the participants to freely express their opinions about a particular issue (Edley & Litosseliti, 2019). Additionally, interviews, as stated by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and again by Charmaz (2014) can also be used to:

- Ask for more detail;

- Confirm accuracy of what was mentioned;

- Further the conversation with reflection; and

- Obtain new perceptions on past and present manifestations.

Focus group interview were selected for the study as they offer a unique and important interviewing method. Focus groups provide the researcher with the potential of obtaining insight into the perceptions of participants' motivations and behaviour, which may come solely from dynamic and interactive discussions (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015).

The use of one-one interviews followed by focus group interviews was done to ensure that the information provided by the participants in the one-on-one interviews was reliable by checking the consistency of answers provided in the focus group interview sessions. That is, the focus group interviews were used as a means of quality assurance and a means to corroborate the information provided by participants in the one-on-one interviews. The researcher ensured that participants were able to express themselves freely with minimal interruptions. The researcher played the role of ensuring that participants stayed with the topic at hand.

4.2.5　Recording of data

There are numerous ways of recording and storing data in qualitative research, for example, video and audio recordings (Eriksson & Konvalainen, 2016). The study used audio recordings of the interview. The researcher obtained permission from the participants prior to making the recordings. Additionally, the recording of data was systematically planned prior to its execution to create a setting that was appropriate and that considered the sensitivities of participants (Schurink, 2003).

The researcher made detailed descriptions of the engagements with the participants throughout the research study through the use of field notes, and interviews were also recorded digitally using Microsoft Office OneNote 2010. The collection of quality data was ensured by assuming an impartial role to maintain an environment that was comfortable, so participants felt free to express their experiences. Non-verbal expressions, such as sighs, laughs or silence were also transcribed by the researcher. This was executed to ensure that a holistic picture of the participants was captured.

The data obtained from the focus group interviews and individual interviews, namely, recordings and field notes, were safely stored and locked in a secure office. Electronic files were encrypted with passwords to ensure the safety and confidentiality of the data.

4.2.6 Data analysis

Content analysis (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010) was implemented for the purpose of this study. As mentioned by Holsti (1969), content analysis is a method that makes inferences through the methodical and impartial identification of particular characteristics in text and other meaningful material. This is again echoed by the works of Elo et al. (2014) and Schreier (2012) who stated that content analysis as a research method, represents a systematic and objective means of describing and quantifying phenomena. Content analysis allows for similarities and variances within textual data to be identified through its inductive and repetitive process (Nieuwenhuis, 2010). Cole (1988) also highlighted that content analysis is not just used to analyse written text but can similarly be applied in analysing verbal and visual material.

Content analysis is a technique used to analyse textual data and to reveal themes within the data (Forman & Damschroder, 2008). A 'theme' refers to the main product of data analysis which yields practical results for the phenomenon under scrutiny (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). That is, a theme may be used as an attribute, descriptor, element or concept.

As proposed by Creswell (2013), content analysis involves the following phases or process for data analysis:

- Preparing and transcribing data;
- Exploring and coding data;
- Coding data to build themes;
- Presenting and reporting data;
- Conducting interpretations of findings; and
- Validating accuracy of findings.

The study used content analysis because of its flexibility (Javadi & Zarea, 2016). The key characteristic of content analysis involves its methodical process of coding, examining for meaning, and the provision of a description of a social reality through the formation of themes (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). This served as primary reason for its selection to analyse the research data. Furthermore, content analysis can assist in both reflecting and clarifying the

realities obtained from participants (Javadi & Zarea, 2016). Therefore, content analysis was utilised to analyse and interpret the data, as this data analysis method is suitable in describing experiences through the reduction of textual data into themes or categories (Muchinsky et al., 2009). The software program, ATLAS.ti was used as a conceptual map to best present the data (Bower et al., 2021), and to map the codes. That is the software program was used as a interview repository and codes were then highlighted.

4.2.7 Strategies employed to ensure quality data

The outcomes of quantitative research are commonly evaluated on the basis of criteria such as objectivity, validity and reliability. However, within qualitative research this criterion is not addressed as such. Instead different terminologies are utilised to evaluate the quality of qualitative research. For instance, the term 'trustworthiness', that was proposed by Babbie and Mouton (2012) and Lincoln et al. (2011) is used instead as evaluation criterion for qualitative research.

Numerous strategies have been proposed to ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative findings (Hadi & Closs, 2016). Shenton (2004) proposed that four criteria should be addressed by researchers to achieve trustworthiness within a qualitative study. These criteria include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. More so, Creswell (2014) suggested that a minimum of two strategies should be used in any given qualitative study. The strategies that were used for the purpose of this research study to ensure quality data are discussed below.

Triangulation was implemented in the study to ensure the credibility, dependability and conformability of the findings (Flick et al., 2019). Triangulation refers to the use of at least two related data sources, data-collection methods or researchers (Flick et al., 2019). This is conducted to reduce the inherent bias associated with the use of a single source, method or researcher (Lawlor et al., 2016). For the purpose of the current research study, two data-collection methods were utilised. These include individual interviews and focus group interviews to corroborate the results collected from the individual interviews.

Credibility pertains to the level to which the findings of research are congruent with reality (Connelly, 2016; Hadi & Closs, 2016). Credibility answers the question of how the research findings coincide and match with reality. As suggested by Schurink (2009) and Shenton (2004), to ensure credibility, the following provisions were ensured:

● The adoption of well-established research methods; and

Congruence of the research findings to past studies.

Dependability relates to the consistency of the findings (Stenfors, Kajamaa, & Bennett, 2020). Dependability addresses the notion of whether the findings of a research study would be similar should the inquiry be replicated (Guba, 1981; Krefting, 1991; Thomas, 2006). Conversely, confirmability is the researcher's comparable concern about objectivity (Amankwaa, 2016). It is pivotal that the findings of the research study are a reflection of participants' experiences and expressions, and not the preferences of the researcher (Shenton, 2004). Dependability was ensured by outlining and describing the processes that were followed within the research study to allow for replication of the study for future researchers. Alternatively, confirmability was maintained through the acknowledgement of beliefs underpinning decisions made (Shenton, 2004).

Transferability refers to the extent to which the results of a study can be applied to other similar settings (Connelly, 2016; Hadi & Closs, 2016). To ensure transferability in the study, an audit trail was provided by the researcher. This means that the researcher provided a detailed description of sources and techniques of data collection and analysis, interpretations made, decisions taken, and influences that affected the researcher (Connelly, 2016). Furthermore, to facilitate transferability, the following criteria were outlined in the study:

● The number of participants involved in the research study;

● The duration of both interviews and focus group interviews; and

● The time that data was collected.

4.2.8   Ethical considerations

Ethical principles, such as informed consent, confidentiality, transparency and authenticity were accounted for in the present research study. Moreover, the rights, privacy, dignity and sensitivities of the participants were a priority when executing the research study (Chenneville & Schwartz-Mette, 2020; Ibbett & Brittain, 2020). Written permission for the study was obtained from the Industrial and Organisational Psychology (IOP) departmental Research Ethics Review Committee at the University of South Africa (UNISA) (Appendix A).

The researcher ensured that participants had an understanding of the purpose and methods of the research study to ensure informed consent. Additionally, informed consent forms were issued to participants to ensure that ethical principles were adhered too. To ensure

confidentiality, participants were assured that their names or any other identifiable or personal information would be dealt with in strict confidence.

Participants were all made aware of the purpose and nature of the study to ensure transparency within the research study. The university's logo was utilised to confirm the authenticity of the study. The authenticity of the study was a significant aspect to reassure participants of the legitimacy of the study. Participants were advised that they had no obligation to participate in the research study, as participation in the study was voluntary. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the research study at any given point.

In an attempt to mitigate any researcher qualities which may influence the research process, such as bias, positionality was implemented. Positionality refers to an activity where the researcher identifies, examines, and owns their backgrounds, perceptions, experiences, and biases in an effort to strengthen research quality (Charmaz, 2014; Berger, 2015).

In order to comply with the University of South Africa (UNISA) Covid-19 guidelines and regulations, electronic interviews were conducted.

4.3   CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter addressed the research design and methodology that was used in the execution of the research study.

Within the topic of the research design a discussion of the research approach and paradigm perspective were provided. The research strategy was highlighted subsequent to the research design. A subset to the research methodology discussion included a discussion of the research setting, entrée and researcher roles, population and sampling, data-collection methods, recording of data, data analysis, the strategies employed to ensure quality data, and lastly, the study's ethical considerations.

The next chapter focuses on presenting the findings of the study that are presented in the form of a particular contextual theory. The contextual theory presents ethical leadership, group learning behaviour and group cohesion. The context is presented and discussed as a particular quality in a specific sequence to present a unique pattern of leadership enacted in a particular organisation at a specific moment in time. This discussion is not intended to have universal value; instead, it should perhaps be valued for its unique particularity.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter reports on the findings that were obtained from the data provided by participants with regard to the effects that ethical leadership has on group learning behaviour and group cohesion. The identified themes and sub-themes for the study will be discussed thereafter, followed by an integration of the findings which will include the psycho-social model of this study.

As stated previously, the first specific empirical aim of this study was to describe the phenomenological experiences of employees' group learning behaviour and group cohesion, as predisposed by ethical leadership within the workplace.

The tables below (Tables 5.1 to 5.3) present descriptions of the themes and sub-themes that were generated in the research analysis stage. The tables are followed by a description of the relevant themes and sub-themes, evidence provided from participants and a discussion of the theme and sub-theme. Some of the evidence provided by participants was edited to some extent to ensure better clarity and for confidentiality purposes, which is acceptable practice in qualitative research (Noroozi et al., 2018; Vorhölter, 2021).

5.1 FINDINGS: THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

During the initial coding stage of the study, 21 themes were identified. An evaluation that was performed while conducting the data analysis of the initial coding phase highlighted that certain themes could be combined into one theme, for example, 'honesty' and 'trustworthiness', as they had similar meanings and connotations. Additionally, some themes were divided (for example, 'co-construction' and 'constructive conflict') to highlight specific concepts. After the initial coding stage, 18 themes remained.

The results were obtained from data collected from eight participants, where half reported the leader as possessing ethical leadership qualities and the other half reported the opposite.

5.1.1 Phenomenological experiences of ethical leadership

The section below presents the findings related to ethical leadership. Organisational climate or policy interacts with ethical leadership in an attempt to regulate follower ethical behaviour, performance and firm performance (Abdullahi et al., 2017). When an organisational system assesses members based on ethical criteria and organisational culture, the followers or

employees are encouraged to make ethical decisions that are consistent with the ethical leadership within their organisation (Abdullahi et al., 2017).

Figure 5.1 below provides an overview of the themes which were identified with regard to ethical leadership and consequently unethical leadership. A discussion of each of the themes follows below the overview presented in Figure 5.1. Refer to Table 4.1 in Section 4.2.3 for the complete participant coding table.

Figure 5.1
Themes of ethical and unethical leadership

Ethical leadership		Unethical leadership	
Personal traits	**Behavioural traits**	**Personal traits**	**Behavioural traits**
☐ Honesty orientaion	☐ Ethical awareness	☐ Honesty aversness	☐ Ethical awareness
☐ Trust inclination	☐ Ethical guidance	☐ Trust inclination	☐ Ethical guidance
☐ People orientation	☐ Manage ethical accountability	☐ People orientation	☐ Disregard ethical accountability
	☐ Promote dignity and respect		☐ Demote dignity and respect
	☐ Fairness promotion		☐ Fairness promotion
	☐ Power sharing		☐ Power sharing
	☐ Role clarification		☐ Role clarification

The section below presents a brief discussion of each of the themes, as listed in the overview in Figure 5.1.

Ethical leadership consists of two dimensions, namely, the moral person and moral manager dimensions (Brown & Trevino, 2006; Özbağ, 2016; Belschak, Den Hartog, & De Hoogh, 2018). The moral person possesses personal traits and characteristics, such as honesty, integrity, and trustworthiness, and the moral manager is one who proactively seeks to influence followers' ethical conduct through their own behaviour (Bouckenooghe, Zafar, & Raja, 2015).

5.1.1.1 Personal traits

Participants referred to the personal characteristics of their leader. These are traits that are understood to be innate qualities of an individual (Özbağ, 2016). The leader acts in a manner that demonstrates sensitivity to the requirements and interests of others (Mayer et al., 2012; Özbağ, 2016). An understanding of the personal traits associated with ethical leadership is

pivotal, as leaders possess the potential to influence the behaviour of employees. The emanating themes are presented and discussed below.

Honesty orientation

The word 'honesty' is derived from the Latin, and entails quality (Meraku, 2017). Honesty pertains to an individual who is viewed as being genuine and reliable in their conduct (Tamunomiebi & Orianzi, 2019). Honesty also refers to an individual who is fair, genuine and reluctant to deceive (Raza & Rehmat, 2019).

Participants who viewed their leader as being ethical within the working environment shared a similar sentiment and pattern with regard to their respective leader's behaviour. During the one-on-one interview sessions, these participants shared the view of honesty as being one of the leader's distinctive traits. The participants communicated that their leader's conduct was not deceptive, and that their leader's conduct within the working environment was relevant and required within the working sphere, for instance:

> *"Our leader is one that does business-related work during working hours."* (AMS-TECH).

Participants who identified their respective leader as unethical, showed several similarities in honesty behaviours. In the one-on-one interviews, these participants generally held a negative perspective with regard to their leader's portrayal of integrity within the working environment. Employees highlighted that their leader's behaviour was questionable in the work context, and offensive behaviour was also evident in the leader's conduct. These notions were also evident and echoed within the focus group sessions. Individual verbal contributions that highlighted the leader's behaviour included:

> *"A leader who puts his personal interests first and who is abusive at the workplace."* (AM-TECH),

> *"My leader defines success by results. He just wants to see projects being delivered and he is not interested on the how it was achieved."* (AM-TECH),

> *"The leader is only concerned with what outputs are achieved and not how, he checks production and activeness of employees."* (AF-TECH).

However, although the participants who viewed their leader as being unethical shared a common notion, some participants also highlighted the fact that traces of good intent were at times present within their respective leader. These participants expressed the sentiment that

although their leaders conduct was unethical, their leader did seem to portray some level of honesty in their conduct, however, the participants were not confident in the degree of sincerity in this conduct. Some participants who viewed their leader as unethical, highlighted the notion that their level of confidence in their leader's behaviour regarding honesty was non-existent. These sentiments were also echoed in the focus group discussion session, for instance:

> *"He [leader] informs us [employees] when there is something new (e.g., work task procedures) and hears our views although we are not sure if that does help in decision-making."* (AF-TECH).

> *"Our manager assumes and acts upon the hearsay without hearing the other side, making decisions based on emotions, and making the whole team suffer because of one member's flaw(s)."* (AME-TECH).

The employee's perception of viewing the respective leader as possessing the trait of honesty and trustworthiness is crucial, as this is necessary for the development and facilitation of healthy working relationships (Engelbrecht, Heine, & Mahembe, 2017). The implications of working environments where employees perceive their leader as lacking in honesty are detrimental, as employee interpersonal relationships with colleagues and other peers may deteriorate. Employees are less likely to follow leaders that they perceive as being dishonest, and may likely use their leader's dishonesty to take advantage of them (Tamunomiebi & Orianzi, 2019). That is, employees may use their leader's disingenuity and lack of honesty as a bargaining tool. More so, a work setting that lacks leaders or employees with honesty will contribute to the breakdown of moral values and the deterioration of an occupational profession (Kamaludin & Ismail, 2021).

Trust inclination

Trust refers to an attitude, perception and belief built by an individual that is based on the interpersonal interactions with other individuals (Vikaraman, Mansor, & Hamzah, 2018). Trust is a psychological state comprising the intent to accept susceptibility of another individual based on positive expectations of their intentions or behaviour (Cui et al., 2018).

The participants' perception of trust levels in their leader's behaviour was generally positive. Contributions provided in the one-on-one interviews outlined the perception that some employees contained a level of confidence and trust in their respective leader's conduct within the work setting. The participants highlighted that when it came to conduct at the workplace, their leaders emphasised lawfully carrying out workplace duties. This was the general feeling with employees who both identified the leaders as portraying ethical and unethical behaviours.

Similar sentiments were echoed within the focus group discussion sessions. Verbal contributions that were provided in the one-on-one interviews and again repeated in the focus group session included the following:

> *"I think she lives by the values of the organisation. I have never heard of her being involved in any of the scandals that are present in our organisation."* (AMS-TECH).

> *"He [leader] encourages the team to do things the right way and not contravene any standard that will put them on the wrong side of the law."* (AMJC-ENG).

> *"Our leader insists in doing things the correct way even if no one is looking."* (AME-TECH).

When employees trust their group members and their leaders or supervisors, employees are more likely to engage in entrepreneurial conduct directed at surpassing regular task demands (Hughes et al., 2018). The implications for organisations where trust is lacking in workplace interactions include that employees' conduct may shift towards self-protective behaviour (Colquitt et al., 2011). This means that employees will avoid participating in innovation, whistleblowing and exceeding regular work demands.

Other implications of low levels of trust in the workplace can also result in organisational decay, as relationships deteriorate and general disorganisation results. Thus, organisations where employees have minimal trust in their leaders have no basis for future success (Tamunomiebi & Orianzi, 2019). The social exchange theory advocates that trust grows as leaders and employees interact in high-quality relationships (Birtch et al., 2016; Engelbrecht et al., 2017). Ethical leaders' fair and caring treatment and open communication signal the type of trust that subordinates are likely to reciprocate.

People orientation

People-oriented leaders are individuals who encourage employee participation, who develop subordinates, and acknowledge the personal needs of individuals around them (León Eyzaguirre & Morales, 2018). These leaders have a sensitivity towards their followers' needs (Galli, 2014). People-oriented leadership integrates fostering trust, stimulating a shared vision, promoting involvement, and recognising individual achievements (Brown et al., 2005). People-oriented leaders direct and focus their behaviours on ensuring that the personal needs of individuals are satisfied (Rahim & Ahmad-Zaluki, 2018).

Whether the participants viewed their respective leader as conducting him/herself ethically or unethically, they equally shared and highlighted one general belief. These participants verbalised the notion that their leader was one who created and fostered an environment where individual employee development and growth was encouraged. That is, despite the leader being perceived as unethical, the leader was still seen as being concerned with the personal growth and development of employees. Participants also outlined the notion that their leader portrayed and demonstrated conduct towards employees which verified the leader's sensitivity and interest in the needs of their employees and fulfilling these needs, and explained it as follows:

> *"He [leader] encourages personal growth and hosts team building parties for his employees."* (AMJ-ENG),

> *"Involving all stakeholders to participate and give inputs on tasks/projects and make sure a mutual understanding between him, employees and stakeholders is met."* (AME-TECH),

> *"He [leader] is hands-on with our progress, by doing so, he [leader] is making sure we learn as much as we could so that we could be very credible professionals."* (AMJC-ENG).

The implications for an organisation that focuses on leadership that centres around people-orientation is that it diminishes employees' turnover intention (León Eyzaguirre & Morales, 2018). However, the influence of the people-oriented supervisor is also dependent and directed by the personal traits and circumstances of individual employees (Kirves et al., 2014). For instance, an employee's perception of how easy it may be to find new employment impacts the influence of people-orientated leadership (Kirves et al., 2014).

Consequently, some of the most successful leaders are those who consider the emotional needs of their followers, rather than focusing on instilling the facts of how tasks and goals should be completed. The employees' levels of job satisfaction are improved when leaders provide employees with individualised support and intellectual stimulation (Galli, 2014).

5.1.1.2 *Behavioural characteristics*

The behavioural characteristics of an ethical leader are those that proactively set out to influence the ethical conduct of followers, and that diminish the probability of employees engaging in unethical behaviour. This is done by using transactional efforts, such as communicating about ethics and disciplining unethical behaviour (Mayer et al., 2012;

Bouckenooghe et al., 2015). Ethical leaders emphasise ethical standards and place ethics at the forefront of their leadership agenda (Özbağ, 2016). The emanating themes regarding behavioural characteristics are presented and discussed below.

Ethical awareness

Ethical awareness involves an individual that possesses an understanding and reasoning of moral knowledge, moral issues and moral situations (Han, 2019). Leaders have a responsibility to carry out the standards of morality and ethical behaviours that will guide their followers (Sağnak, 2017). This is because leaders play a pivotal role in creating and preserving ethics within an organisation (Sağnak, 2017).

The participants in the study communicated that their leaders demonstrated a degree of possessing moral awareness in their conduct. These sentiments were echoed from participants who held differing beliefs of their leader being ethical or unethical. Participants highlighted and expressed the view that their respective leaders demonstrated morality within their behaviour and demeanour when dealing with individuals in the workplace. These sentiments were expressed in both the one-on-one interviews and the focus group interview sessions, for example:

> *"He [leader] always stresses honesty in the work that we do and tells us to prioritise quality of work over the money."* (AM-TECH).

> *"Ethical/moral issues are frequently discussed during our monthly management feedback meetings. The manager will also enforce the required training in terms of business ethics."* (AMS-SUP).

Participants also expressed the notion that their respective leader made efforts to ensure that employees attained and had an understanding of the correct procedures, work ethics and code of conduct to follow within the work setting, for instance:

> *"We [employees] are required to attend training and produce attendance register as proof that you are familiar with the code of conduct of the company."* (AMS-SUP).

> *"They [leader] make sure that you understand the company's policies so that you [employees] can make the right decisions."* (AMS-SUP).

Leadership commitment to and support for ethics encourages employees' creativity and increases employee satisfaction. This assists in improving the profitability of the entire

organisation (Haslinda et al., 2013; Han, 2019). Therefore, the implications for an organisation that develops and fosters a healthy organisational environment is likely to reduce employee turnover, increase employee satisfaction, and improve the bottom line of an organisation holistically (Nicolaides, 2019).

Ethical guidance

Ethical guidance entails providing direction on what should be done, or which attitudes and behaviours should be fostered within specific contexts and situations (Huxtable, 2020). That is, ethical guidance involves leaders communicating about ethics, explaining ethical rules, and promoting and rewarding sound ethical conduct (Basoro & Tefera, 2021).

According to the study participants, their leaders often promoted ethical conduct. These sentiments were shared by participants who viewed their leader as being ethical and equally so by those employees who viewed their leader as being unethical. The participants verbalised the concept that their respective leader made efforts to provide direction to employees on work ethics and the code of conduct in the workplace, and strived to provide clarity on the appropriate conduct and protocol that should be followed where employees may be faced with ethical dilemmas, for example:

> *"They [leader] share standards and online ethics courses and assessment to make sure we [employees] understand."* (AF-TECH).

> *"We [employees] are required to attend training and produce attendance register as proof that you are familiar with the code of conduct of the company."* (AMS-SUP).

As perceived by the participants, leaders often initiated and proactively implemented efforts to influence followers' ethical behaviour by communicating norms, explaining the reasons behind workplace decisions, and through the use of rewards and discipline to reinforce workplace ethical standards. The same sentiments were brought forth within the focus group sessions, for example:

> *"They [leader] always encourage employees to avoid any wrongdoing, if they [employees] are in doubt, they [employees] should consult first before they do anything."* (AMS-SUP),

> *"They [leader] make sure that we [employees] do things right and in line with the company policies."* (AMS-SUP).

The leaders are role models who provide explanations of expected work ethics and the code of conduct that followers are expected to adhere to within the work environment (Vikaraman et al., 2018). Ethical leaders encourage employees to share in the collective goals and values that are beneficial to group members or the organisation. This is achieved by providing clear ethical guidance and role modelling in social exchange relationships (Ko et al., 2018). Consequently, where ethical guidance is present, organisations are likely to reap the rewards of employees who possess a positive attachment to the group, and interact constructively and productively with other co-workers or group members. This will result in increased group performance and reduced emotional exhaustion (Zheng et al., 2015).

Manage ethical accountability

Ethical accountability is a system of redress for wrongs (Penman, 2018), and involves the assessment, observation and evaluation of both an individual's and own performance and conduct. It includes the rectifying or reinforcing of any deviations of conduct which are not in alignment with set work ethics and code of conduct (Ghanem & Castelli, 2019).

Participants who held the notion of their leader as being ethical, shared the sentiment that their leader had and followed a system where conduct within the working environment that may be construed as unethical, or as deviating from the organisations protocol for appropriate workplace conduct, was addressed and amended, for example:

> *"We have disciplinary procedures in the organisation that must be followed to correct any wrongdoing and they [leader] follow those procedures."* (AMS-SUP),

> *"I am aware of a few employees who had a disciplinary hearing against them and were penalised with no pay for two weeks."* (WMS-SUP).

On the contrary, participants who viewed their leader as being unethical highlighted the notion that moral conduct, when it came to executing workplace tasks and duties, was often disregarded and ignored. The participants communicated that these ethical oversights were a result of the belief that participants held that their respective leaders were primarily concerned with employees attaining the desired workplace outputs and results, regardless of how these outputs and results were accomplished.

> *"Success is defined by results, in the sense that at the end of the day deadlines must be met and how one meets them is often overlooked."* (AMJC-ENG).

Leaders fulfil the role of ensuring that employees comply with set work ethics and code of conduct. Leaders realise this role through a system of reward and punishment and keep standards and ethical values on the agenda through consistent communication of these standards and values to respective employees (Sağnak, 2017). The implications for an organisation lacking leaders who reinforce work ethics and the code of conduct may result in a work environment where employees disregard ethical conduct in their behaviour within the workplace leading to behaviours that may harm organisational productivity (Sağnak, 2017; Zeng & Xu, 2020). The way a leader conducts themselves is a powerful communication mechanism that sustains organisational cultural assumptions, values, and expectations. This is because the behaviour of a leader has a powerful effect and influence on the behaviour of followers (Zeng & Xu, 2020).

Promote dignity and respect

Dignity can be understood as respect expressed in work contexts (Lucas, 2017). As described by Lucas and Thomas (2019), dignity within the work context is sustained by subjective and objective factors. To clarify, the subjective factors include aspects, such as having meaningful work, autonomy, respect, and the objective factors include job security, financial reward, equality of opportunity, and safe and healthy working conditions. However, respect is a moral principle that involves valuing the pride, worth and value of another individual (Boafo, 2018).

Participants who viewed their leader as being ethical or unethical expressed two opposing views of their leader when it came to respect and dignity. Participants who viewed their leader as being ethical, argued that their leader was one who conducted themselves with nobility and distinction, and demonstrated this behaviour to all employees regardless of employees designation or age. These participants also highlighted that their leader also fostered a working environment that was healthy and safe for employees, for instance:

> *"He generally shows respect to all employees despite of age or position." (AMJC-ENG).*

> *"We argue and debate within the team without undermining any team member's opinion."* (AME-TECH).

However, some participants who viewed their leader as being unethical outlined the notion that their leader was one who did not foster a working environment that was safe and healthy. These participants verbalised that an employee's pride, worth and value was often impeded and disregarded, as their leader would often subject employees to verbal abuse within the working environment, and use unfounded, inappropriate, and insensitive hand gestures.

These verbal contributions echoed in both the one-on-one interviews and the focus group sessions, for instance:

"Our manager raises his voice to an employee in front of everyone." (AMJC-ENG).

"Our manager makes unwelcoming jokes and inappropriate hand gestures towards his subordinates." (AF-TECH).

In the absence of dignity in the work environment, organisations may be faced with the implications where employees can respond with resistance. An example of resistance includes employees taking action, such as unionising. This behaviour may be directed towards the organisation, or particular individuals considered to be responsible for the indignity. Other forms of resistance behaviour include undermining managers, withholding effort, and gossiping (Lucas, 2017).

Employees functioning in an environment characterised by respect and dignity, are at ease to share differences and have a sense of safety at work. Consequently, employees may express their thoughts and ideas on organisational practices, may critique certain procedures, and make recommendations which may benefit the organisation (Sağnak, 2017). Ethical leaders promote employees' ideas and create a climate of mutual respect (Walumbwa et al., 2017). Furthermore, respect within the working environment influences the quality of work that employees produce, and the employee's intention to leave or remain within their occupation (Boafo, 2018). This is because respect influences employee job satisfaction (Boafo, 2018).

Fairness promotion

Fairness pertains to an individual exhibiting behaviours that reflect trustworthy and honest conduct, refraining from practising favouritism and taking responsibilities for one's own behaviour (Den Hartog, 2015). Fairness relates to distributive justice and procedural justice (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2020). Distributive justice relates to employees' perceived impartiality of occupational outcomes, such as compensation and workload distribution. Procedural justice refers to the employee's perceived objectivity of how occupational process and procedures are conducted and executed (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2020).

Whether the participants viewed their respective leader as conducting him/herself ethically or unethically, they shared a universal view when it came to fairness promotion. The participants communicated that their leader was one whose conduct was honourable and dependable, and also highlighted that their leader abstained from practising favouritism. These notions came forth in both the one-on-one interviews and the focus group sessions, respectively, as follows:

> *"When it comes to employees who violate ethical standards our company has policies and disciplinary procedures and as far as I am concerned, they are being followed."* (AMS-TECH).

> *"Treating each employee the same without favouritism and holding everyone to the same standard."* (AME-TECH).

Ethical practices play a significant role in building the meaningful work experience of employees (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2020). Organisations that engage in ethical practices, such as practising fairn and responsible leadership, may experience elevated levels of employees with enhanced meaningful work experiences. These employee experiences may be beneficial for both employees and the organisation (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2020).

The implications of employees who perceive having been treated unfairly, whether due to their leader or by organisational policies, may display negative workplace behaviour such as decreased organisational citizenship behaviours (OCB) (Koon & Chong, 2018). Organisational citizenship includes several behaviours, such as helping others, undertaking extra tasks and complying with workplace rules and procedures (Sumarsi & Rizal, 2022).

Power sharing

Power sharing pertains to the extent to which leaders provide their respective employees with a voice. That is, listening to employee inputs and allowing employees to contribute to decision-making related to aspects concerning their tasks (Kuenzi et al., 2019).

Whether the participants viewed their respective leader as conducting him/herself ethically or unethically, they expressed similar sentiments with regard to power sharing. The participants who participated in the one-on-one interviews argued that their leader was one who demonstrated an interest in hearing the viewpoints of his/her respective employees. The participants further voiced the notion that their respective leader was not only one who listened to the inputs of employees, but also created a work environment that fostered a work setting for employees to engage in decision-making, and to voice their concerns, ideas, or sentiments when it came to their work tasks, duties and responsibilities. The same sentiments were also expressed within the focus group discussions, for example:

> *"He [leader] includes them [employees] in decision-making by allocating daily or weekly task that requires employees to apply their mind when resolving those tasks."* (AMS-SUP).

"Whenever there is a meeting, he [leader] asks the opinion of everyone in the meeting." Furthermore, *"In staff meetings, he [leader] requires input from all attendees with respect to ideas scaling up, better support for employees, etcetera."* (AMJC-ENG).

Providing employees with a sense of independence assists in prioritising cooperation and collaboration amongst employees (McNutt, 2021). This means that employees are more likely to adhere to work ethics and the code of conduct, and will commit to achieving workplace objectives (Jacobson Frey, 2020; McNutt, 2021). Leaders overlooking power sharing within the work setting may create an environment where employee teamwork, collaboration and cooperation decrease. This may mean that employees may become less likely to adhere to work ethics and the code of conduct, and may not feel obligated to achieve workplace objectives (Jacobson Frey, 2020).

Role clarification

Role clarity suggests that leaders communicate and clarify employee responsibilities, expectations and goals clearly and respectfully (Den Hartog, 2015).

Whether the participants viewed their respective leader as conducting him/herself ethically or unethically, they all expressed the notion that although their respective leader did not maintain ethical conduct, employee roles were communicated clearly. These participants who formed part of the one-on-one interviews argued that their leader ensured that the respective responsibilities, expectations and goals of employees were clearly and explicitly explained to employees. The same sentiments were expressed within the focus group discussions, for instance:

"He gives us [employees] a clear mandate and makes sure we get proper training and support." (AF-TECH),

"The value chain of the business is being communicated and discussed making sure every employee understands it and each department's office have the posters of company values to be a constant reminder to each employee." (AME-TECH).

"Making sure that the objective(s) are clear to the employees and stakeholder and that those objectives are understood by all parties." and *"Making expectations clear to each employee."* (AME-TECH).

Open communication and transparency with employees assist employees in grasping what is expected from them and enables them to understand and know when their performance is below or up to the benchmark (Den Hartog, 2015). In the absence of role clarity, followers may become unaware of their responsibilities, roles, and tasks within the organisation and work team (Vullinghs et al., 2020). Role clarity also provides employees with a sense of having control within their jobs.

5.1.2 Phenomenological experiences of group learning behaviour

This section presents the findings related to group learning behaviour. Groups have become the basis that enables organisations to adapt to the emerging pressures in today's world of work (Morais & De Moura, 2018). Research has shown that there are numerous advantages to accomplishing tasks in groups, as opposed to working individually (Tulin et al., 2018).

Considering that leaders are a source of guidance, where employees pay attention and follow their good attitudes, values and behaviour, ethical leaders may be able to teach acceptable behaviour to employees through group learning behaviour (Walumbwa et al., 2017). For the purpose of the study, group learning behaviour was defined as the actions that develop the process of learning in a team (Paananen et al., 2020).

The themes of group learning behaviour are summarised in Figure 5.2 and discussed below.

Figure 5.2
Themes of group learning behaviour

Group learning behaviour	
Ethical leadership	**Unethical leadership**
☐ Readily sharing resources	☐ Reluctant resource sharing
☐ Task focused behaviour	☐ Task focused behaviour
☐ Team collaboration	☐ Team collaboration aversion
☐ Cross-functional team learning	☐ Cross-functional team learning
☐ Team reflexivity	☐ Team reflexivity
☐ Knowledge storage and retrieval	☐ Knowledge storage and retrieval

5.1.2.1 Readily sharing resources

Sharing is the process of exchanging knowledge, experiences, perspectives and opinions among group members (Decuyper et al., 2010; Meeuwissen et al., 2020). This means that all verbal input, containing knowledge, competencies, opinions or creative thoughts, are shared from one group member to the rest of the group members who are unversed with this information (Decuyper et al., 2010; Raes et al., 2017).

Contributions provided in both the one-on-one and focus group interviews outlined the perception that both leaders and employees in the workplace fostered a culture of knowledge and skill distribution from one employee to another. The participants outlined that group members within the respective work groups presented behaviours that promoted and fostered the practice of the exchange of knowledge, skills and experiences amongst employees within the same work group, for example:

"Colleagues within our department make sure skills are transferred." (AF-TECH).

However, equal concerns were highlighted by some employees that not only did employees refrain from sharing knowledge and skills amongst each other, but that their respective work groups had no procedures or guidelines on how employees should conduct themselves and carry out their daily tasks, for example:

"There are no ground rules that we have within our team." (AM-TECH).

In the present management practice, it is a key issue to stimulate knowledge and resource sharing among group or team members of an organisation (Gagne et al., 2019). This is because the implication of the unwillingness of employees to share knowledge and resources may prevent an organisation from gaining advantages in the ever-changing competitive environment (Burmeister, Fasbender, & Gerpott, 2019). Furthermore, such behaviour, namely, the unwillingness to share knowledge and resources, hinders group or team creativity, job performance and innovative work behaviour (Fong et al., 2018; Yao et al., 2020). Thus, managers and leaders need to encourage knowledge and resource sharing among organisational members to assist the organisation in improving its innovative performance and competitive advantage (Yao et al., 2020).

5.1.2.2 Team-focused behaviour

Team-focused behaviour in a group or team setting refers to three types of individual behaviours. These individual behaviours are self-oriented, interaction-oriented and task-

oriented behaviours (Piwowar-Sulej, 2014). Self-oriented behaviours involve conduct such as an individual possessing the courage to take risks, self-confidence and a strong desire to be recognised. Interaction-oriented behaviour includes conduct by an individual such as facilitating co-operation and restoring harmony in a team setting. Lastly, task-oriented behaviours include having a strong focus on task completion (Iqbal & Piwowar-Sulej, 2021).

With regard to team-focused behaviour, both participants' who held the perception that their respective leader was ethical or unethical shared a similar and collective observation. Verbal contributions provided in both the one-on-one and focus group interviews outlined the notion that despite their leader being ethical or unethical, employees working together in a team still strived to achieve departmental and organisational objectives, for example:

> *"We [employees] all want to do what is best for the organisation."* (AMS-SUP).

> *"We [employees] promote to be each other's brother/sister keeper, we win as a team we fail as a team."* (AMS-SUP).

Contrary to the conduct of their respective leaders, the employees still strived to foster and maintain a working environment that was healthy and constructive. The participants in the present research study outlined the viewpoint that most members of their work groups or teams strived to ensure that their working environment was constructive in that members of a work group or team maintained the philosophy of nurturing an open-door policy and resolving any employee disputes, issues or grievances timeously, for example:

> *"We [employees] try to have a healthy working environment."* (AF-TECH).

> *"We [employees] have an open-door policy to discuss issues and resolve them, should the need arise to have a formal meeting, we follow grievance procedure."* (AMS-SUP).

A team balanced properly in terms of skills, experience, personality and behaviour is the basis for effective teamwork (Piwowar-Sulej, 2014). Groups or team members who do not exhibit team-focused behaviours result in groups or teams that lack or do not possess a strong focus on task completion (Iqbal & Piwowar-Sulej, 2021).

5.1.2.3   *Team collaboration*

Team collaboration is about learning through execution (Decuyper et al., 2010). That is, team members work together using shared acquired knowledge to attain work objectives. Team

activity can also be viewed as the implicit learning of groups through collaborative action-taking by mobilising any physical and psychological means with the intent to achieve group objectives (McGrath et al., 2000; Raes et al., 2017).

In the case of team activity, a common pattern was discovered among the participants who viewed their leader as one who conducted themselves ethically. These participants voiced the opinion that members of a work group or team generally feel responsible for the welfare, actions and behaviours of their respective peers or colleagues. Therefore, the participants highlighted that employees strived to ensure that group objectives are enforced amongst the work group and that objectives are achieved. This pattern was present in both the one-on-one and focus group interviews, for instance:

> *"We [employees] promote to be each other's brother/sister keeper, we win as a team we fail as a team."* (AMS-SUP).

No team collaboration behaviours were observed among the participants who viewed their leader as one who conducted him/herself unethically. That is, traces of team collaboration aversion were present. The participants who viewed their leader as being unethical did not portray behaviours that demonstrated the obligation to achieve group or team objectives. Furthermore, employees of a work group or team did not hold each other accountable for achieving these goals or objectives, for example:

> *"We don't really have that [processes to achieve work objectives]."* (AMJC-ENG).

When members of a team neglect working together while simultaneously sharing knowledge, the implications, or consequences of this may result in decreased workplace learning (Raes et al., 2017). This means that members of a group or team may be unable to align and develop the capacity of their individual group or team in order to create the results that its members truly desire. That is, members of a team may be unable to work together in order to attain group and organisational objectives (Decuyper et al., 2010; McGrath et al., 2000; Raes et al., 2017).

5.1.2.4 *Cross-functional team learning*

Cross-functional team learning entails learning across different groups (Decuyper et al., 2010; Meeuwissen et al., 2020). This means sharing and building knowledge with individuals or units that exist outside of the groups' boundaries. This also includes requesting information and feedback from outside of the group's boundaries (Raes et al., 2017).

During the one-on-one interview sessions, the participants reported instances of cross-functional team learning. These participants included both participants who viewed their leader as ethical and those who reported their leader as conducting themselves unethically. The participants highlighted that learning across different departments or work groups, or teams was a priority within the organisation. This was evident from the manner in which different employees from different departments conducted themselves and carried out their daily duties that was similar and that demonstrated that learning across departments or work groups or teams was evident. This was also evident in the focus group interview sessions, for example:

> *"By providing the necessary backup in dealing with management of other departments which are not so driven/committed as our department."* (WMS-SUP).

> *"They [ground rules and workplace guidelines] are all similar throughout the departments. Our company has almost 40 000 employees in different departments, and they all follow the same rules."* (AMS-TECH).

When different groups within an organisation neglect to share and building knowledge with different units that exist outside of the groups' boundaries. learning across departments or work groups or teams is hindered (Meeuwissen et al., 2020). This is because efforts to encourage shared team learning across different groups or teams, open communication, and the involvement of team members in decision-making foster a sense of shared commitment within an organisation (Hacking, 2020).

5.1.2.5   *Team reflexivity*

Team reflexivity is the process of continuous re-development and re-evaluation of group knowledge and experiences (Decuyper et al., 2010; Meeuwissen et al., 2020). Team reflexivity refers to group members reflecting on the present reality and future group goals. The process also includes the varying potential measures able to fill the gap between the present reality and future goal attainment (Raes et al., 2017). Within the reflection process, group members step out of the work routine and assess the results of their work, work habits, and their approach to executing work tasks. Through the development of a renewed shared vision, group members can adjust and modify their efforts towards fostering effective group learning and group performance (Raes et al., 2017).

During the one-on-one interviews, team reflexivity behaviours were evident. These behaviours were also apparent in the focus group sessions. Team reflexivity behaviours were evident when group or team members reflected on the team's dynamics, and delineated that their

working environment was one where the approach towards a particular task, or the manner in which the group or team was handling its collaboration was questioned. The participants explained that that is how deadlines are planned or how the alignment of individual contributions is planned, and it is often practised and is welcomed within their work group or teams, for instance,

> *"We [employees] discuss the issue we come across and share them with everyone so that help can be provided, and the transfer of skills can be simple."* (AF-TECH).

> *"We [employees] have an open-door policy to discuss issues and resolve them, should the need arise to have a formal meeting, we follow grievance procedure."* (AMS-SUP).

Groups or teams that are characterised as possessing high reflexivity are also categorised as possessing attention to detail, having wider inclusiveness in the discussions of potential problems, and both long and short-term planning and adaptation (Fu et al., 2021). Team reflexivity also increases the visibility of individual helping behaviours and awareness of effective ways to assist other team members. This can be achieved through team meetings, discussion, and other forms of communication (David et al., 2021). Team reflexivity, therefore, allows the team members to evaluate and review the situation, and to make decisions on how team members distribute their resources to aid and assist other members of the group or team.

5.1.2.6 Knowledge storage and retrieval

Knowledge storage and retrieval pertains to group knowledge and experiences being saved in a manner that allows for later use or subsequent inspection (Decuyper et al., 2010; Meeuwissen et al., 2020).

Participants who both identified their leader as conducting themselves as ethical and unethical all shared a similar sentiment related to knowledge storage and retrieval. This notion was highlighted in both the one-on-one interviews and the focus group sessions. The participants all highlighted that, regardless of their leaders' conduct, there was evidence of the guidelines on the processes and procedures of workplace conduct, the code of conduct and group or team ground rules and guidelines, and this information was readily available within their respective work groups or teams. The participants also highlighted that not only were these guidelines available, but they were also implemented within their particular work groups or teams, for instance:

"Everyone was provided with a workplace behavioural policy upon employment that highlights all the prohibited behaviours and their corresponding consequences." (AMJC-ENG).

"They [ground rules and workplace guidelines] are all similar throughout the departments. Our company has almost 40 000 employees in different departments, and they all follow the same rules." (AMS-TECH).

Not making proper arrangements to store group knowledge and experiences entails that when members of a group or team want to access this information in future for use or inspection, the information will not be readily available (Decuyper et al., 2010; Meeuwissen et al., 2020). This may hinder and delay the completion of tasks, and consequently, have a negative effect on group or organisational objectives.

5.1.3 Phenomenological experiences of group cohesion

This section presents the findings related to group cohesion. Hülsheger et al. (2009) stated that group cohesiveness is a vital precondition for learning behaviour, as it creates a working environment where group members feel free to challenge the status quo. Thus, it is vital for leaders to create a working environment that is conducive for group learning behaviour and group cohesion, to enable employees to carry out their duties efficiently (Ishak et al., 2019). Salas et al.'s (2015) definition of group cohesion was adopted for the present study, where group cohesion is differentiated into two concepts. These concepts include the task dimension and social dimension of group cohesion, which were confirmed by the data. Figure 5.3 presents the themes of group cohesion which are discussed below the figure.

Figure 5.3
Themes of group cohesion
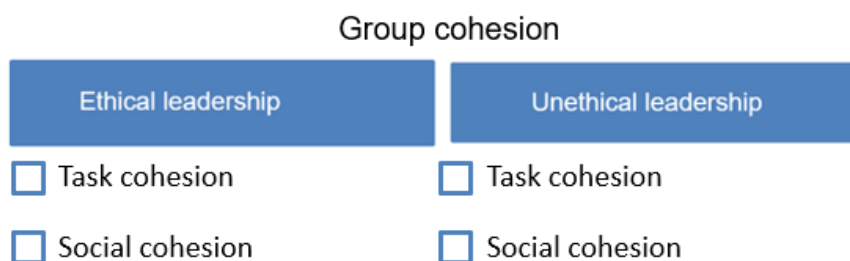
5.1.3.1 *Task cohesion*

Task cohesion pertains to the extent to which group members exhibit a level of commitment towards working well together in an attempt to achieve group goals (Valentina & Daniel, 2018). Prosocial group behaviour, such as group members encouraging each other and providing constructive feedback, develops and sustains an ethos of cohesion in work groups (Al-Yaaribi & Kavussanu, 2017). The recipients of prosocial group behaviour may gradually form a deeper bond with their fellow group members. Group members may also perceive their group as being more united in the pursuit of work group objectives (Al-Yaaribi & Kavussanu, 2017).

Whether the participants viewed their respective leader as conducting him/herself ethically or unethically, they shared a common view with regard to task cohesion. These participants communicated that within their work groups or teams, individuals were devoted and motivated in achieving group or team objectives, and working effectively and efficiently together. These thoughts were prevalent in both the one-on-one interviews and the focus group sessions. Participants also highlighted the notion that group, or team members were intent on conducting themselves in accordance with the code of conduct within their work groups or teams, regardless of whether or not they were being monitored by other members or their leader, for instance:

> *"The objective [of the work group] is to do the right thing all the time even if you are not being monitored."* (AMS-SUP).

> *"We have common goals that are given to our sector, if one person is not performing, that person brings the score of the team down, we win as a team and we fail as a team."* (AMS-SUP).

Furthermore, the participants in the one-on-one interviews unanimously shared and held a positive outlook in terms of their work groups. The participants believed that their group members were all working towards the same goal, shared the same work principles and were all centred on successfully achieving workplace objectives. The participants additionally highlighted that group members went beyond the call off duty when it came to achieving workplace objectives. It also came forth that group members demonstrated prosocial behaviours towards each other, as they supported each other and displayed a sense of unity in their conduct. The participants shared that group members supported one another, as no single employee would be left to carry out a challenging task in isolation. The participants all shared a similar notion that when it came to the successful completion of tasks, group members strived to ensure that tasks were completed and achieved collectively. These

sentiments and perceptions were again echoed in the focus group interview session, for instance:

"Team members might be called late at night to attend to a breakdown. They will attend to the call without any issue. If the breakdown necessitates, further resources may be required and when those team members are called, they respond even though they are not even on standby." (WMS-SUP).

"You [employee] must be your 'brother's keeper', reprimand your team members if they step out of line." (AMS-SUP).

"We [employees] all want to do what is best for the organisation." (AMS-SUP).

"We [employees] promote to be each other's brother/sister keeper, we win as a team we fail as a team." (AMS-SUP).

As suggested by Martin, Carron and Eys (2012), the perceptions of prosocial behaviour, which includes positive intergroup interaction, encouragement, and constructive feedback may result in the perception of mutual interdependence in pursuing task-relevant goals among group members (Al-Yaaribi & Kavussanu, 2017). The implications of these behaviours result in employees who are passionate, active, and alert in completing work tasks and achieving workplace objectives (Al-Yaaribi & Kavussanu, 2017).

5.1.3.2 Social cohesion

Social cohesion is a construct used to characterise the social environment in which members function (Jennings & Bamkole, 2019). Social cohesion also refers to the degree to which group members exhibit a level of attractiveness to their respective group. This is based on the group members' social relationships (Salas et al., 2015).

The participants reported an overall positive view with regard to their work groups within both the one-on-one and focus group interviews. Employees highlighted that their colleagues conducted themselves in a respectful and professional manner, as expected, and as modelled by their leader. Consequently, an environment where colleagues could function and interact with one another positively and constructively was maintained among fellow employees. Employees also highlighted that their main standard within their respective work groups was to ensure that no single employee was left to execute their tasks and duties without assistance or support from other colleagues, for instance:

"I am close to all of them [colleagues[, we [employees] promote team building and not working in silos." (AMS-SUP).

"The ground rules of our team are to be considerate, always ask if not sure and maintain respect." (AF-TECH).

Work groups that have social cohesion in organisations may exhibit feelings of trust, belonging, acceptance, and connectedness within workplace social interactions (Jennings & Bamkole, 2019). As such, leaders or organisations that foster an environment where work groups exist in a cohesive and interconnected social context result in numerous positive factors. These factors include reduced conflict, job satisfaction, trust, and reduction of perceived inequalities and exclusion (Fonseca, Lukosch, & Brazier, 2019). Therefore, the implications for the organisations exhibiting these factors may result in cohesion amongst group members in the workplace (Fonseca et al., 2019). This is because strong social relationships and interactions alleviate stress in the workplace (Jennings & Bamkole, 2019).

5.2   CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the research findings of the current research study. The chapter presented and discussed the themes and sub-themes which were identified for the research study. The chapter commenced with the presentation of the discussion of themes and sub-themes for phenomenological experiences of ethical leadership. Thereafter, the themes for phenomenological experiences of group learning behaviour followed, and the chapter concluded with the phenomenological experiences of group cohesion.

The next chapter focuses on providing the integration of the findings and a presentation of the study's psycho-social model, which is grounded on empirical evidence.

CHAPTER 6: COMPOSITE DESCRIPTION: INTEGRATION AND PRESENTATION OF PSYCHO-SOCIAL MODEL

This chapter provides an integration and presentation of the psycho-social model developed by the study. An integration of the literature and findings to establish a conceptual meaning is firstly provided. Thereafter, models in qualitative research are discussed. A discussion of how the psycho-social model was developed follows, and a psycho-social model of ethical leadership, group learning behaviour and group cohesion depicting the primary findings is presented.

6.1 INTEGRATION OF LITERATURE AND FINDINGS TO ESTABLISH CONCEPTUAL MEANING

The general perception held by individuals may be that an ethical leader will yield an efficient and productive group or team, while an unethical leader will yield the opposite (Afsar et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2019). However, this is not always the case, and the study demonstrated this notion. The present study found that even leaders who were perceived as being unethical (as perceived/experienced by participants) possessed a few of the personal characteristics of those who were ethical. These personal characteristics included aspects of good intent when it came to honesty, people orientation and fairness promotion.

Although some participants identified their leaders as unethical, they verbalised the notion that even though their leader demonstrated dishonesty in their conduct, their leader demonstrated traces of good intent. When employees view their respective leader as being honest and trustworthy, this facilitates the development and maintenance of healthy working relationships (Engelbrecht et al., 2017). However, a working environment where employees perceive their leader as dishonest is unfavourable, as the employees' interpersonal relationships with colleagues and other peers may deteriorate. Furthermore, employees are less likely to follow leaders that they perceive as being dishonest, and they may use their leader's dishonesty to take advantage of them (Tamunomiebi & Orianzi, 2019). In other words, employees may use their leaders' disingenuity and lack of honesty as a bargaining tool.

The participants also highlighted that their leaders made certain that their respective employees developed themselves within the working environment, and this notion was found across all types of leaders, despite some of them being seen as unethical leaders. The findings that were evident in the study showed that although the ethical leadership style was seen to have an impact on certain aspects of group learning behaviour and group cohesion, other aspects of these concepts were unaffected within working groups or teams.

With regard to group learning behaviour, the themes that were evident within this construct included readily sharing resources; task-focused behaviour; team collaboration; cross-functional team learning; team reflexivity, and knowledge storage and retrieval. Only the readily sharing resources and team collaboration themes were affected by a leader's ethical conduct, while the other themes were unaltered.

Pertaining to group cohesion, all the themes, which included task and social cohesion, were unaffected. This highlights the notion that these factors are not solely affected by ethical leadership, and that other mediating factors play a role as well (Jha & Varkkey, 2018). These mediating factors may include the organisational culture, work environment and individual characteristics of the employees (Jha & Varkkey, 2018).

Certain social conditions need to be met within teams to enable group learning behaviours and group cohesion to occur (Raes et al., 2017). Research has found that the presence of particular social conditions, such as psychological safety, and group potency or task cohesion, are linked with the occurrence of team learning behaviours and group cohesion (Raes et al., 2015; Raes, et al., 2020). However, it is noteworthy that a leader's behaviour does not strongly or solely influence the social aspects. These include aspects such as group members' friendship or closeness (Junior et al., 2018).

This is also demonstrated in the findings of the study and in the psycho-social model developed by this study, demonstrating why certain group learning behaviours and cohesion within groups are unaffected, regardless of the leadership style. Therefore, the differences in group learning behaviour or group cohesion amongst groups can also be assigned to other factors, other than leadership style. Hence, whether members of a group or team engage in knowledge sharing depends not only on the leadership style but also on the organisational culture, work environment and individual characteristics of the employees (Jha & Varkkey, 2018). Additionally, the influence of the supervisor or leader is also dependent on and directed by the personal traits and circumstances of individual employees (Kirves et al., 2014).

In accordance with the work of Moss et al. (2020), and as demonstrated in the psycho-social model presented later in this chapter, ethical leaders can establish a better relationship with followers if they are perceived as being trustworthy, take care of their subordinates (promote dignity and respect), and make fair decisions. Through this, they engender more loyalty and commitment among employees, as followers will be more willing to share information among each other (readily sharing resources), and work together to achieve group and organisational objectives (team collaboration). In line with these predictions, some studies (Babalola,

Stouten, & Euwema, 2016; Lin & Liu, 2017) confirmed a strong association between ethical leadership and employees' intention to stay in public sector organisations.

The leadership of any organisation is grounded on the character of the individuals who head the organisation (Swindall, 2011). Leaders serve as an organisation's conscience (Mostaza, 2018). They set the moral tone which cascades from the top to the lowest level of the organisational hierarchy. With organisations today facing high pressures and a competitive work environment as a consequence the fourth industrial revolution, leadership that is anchored upon an ethical framework provides organisations with the edge it may require to thrive (Mostaza, 2018). According to Mostaza (2018), organisations where the leaders exhibit model ethical conduct face only 15% of unethical occurrences or misconduct by employees. Additional to these findings, organisations that simply pay lip service to the importance of ethics may experience 56% less workplace deviance (Mostaza, 2018).

The role of leadership in facilitating learning behaviour is crucial within organisations. Leaders play a core role in promoting learning and offer the guidance required for organisations to integrate and nurture the learning processes (Sánchez-Cardona et al., 2018). Leaders promote team learning through a range of different behaviours. These include providing information and exchanging solutions, stimulating inquisitiveness, encouraging voice or autonomy, promoting an ethos for learning, helping to interpret situations in new ways, modelling new ways of thinking and action, being open to change, and developing mechanisms for learning transfer (Sánchez-Cardona et al., 2018).

In teams where cohesion exists, members think together and discuss each other's input (Meeuwissen et al., 2020), Typically, in such teams, members are engaged, feel safe to share ideas and trust that asking questions is permitted. Additionally, members within cohesive teams feel as though they belong to a group, are willing to share responsibility among the group members and feel responsible for the group's outcomes (Meeuwissen et al., 2020). The available literature largely coincides with the findings of the present study.

According to Qing et al. (2019), and as demonstrated in the results of the study and the psycho-social model, employees feel more obliged to reciprocate with positive attitudes within the work setting when they receive respect, their dignity is protected, and when they receive the perceived support and consideration of their leader. These behaviours and attributes incite and evoke trust and enthusiasm among employees and enable them to work together and collaborate with other team members to achieve the work objectives. These behaviours and attributes are also known to be key contributors to employee job satisfaction (Engelbrecht et

al., 2017). This is because a more people-oriented approach to leadership captures the leaders' abilities to respect employees, operate and conduct themselves with honesty and integrity, and promote efficiency.

6.2   MODELS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative models assist individuals in the review and study of various types of information (Vitez, 2022). Reason and logic are required to create a model. A model captures the necessary and essential information and produces the expected results. Qualitative models do not require mathematical formulas but rather are used to visually draw a diagram or to represent ideas, hunches, perceived patterns or relationships between parts of their projects, and discoveries in the data (Byrne, 2002).

Qualitative models are often used to provide support for theories (Vitez, 2022). The information gathered typically dictates which type of model to use, although standard models based on specific types of studies are commonly utilised. Numerous types of qualitative models can exist in various studies, and adjustments and modifications to standard models may also be required for a study to fit the typical components used for other studies (Vitez, 2022).

6.3   HOW THE PSYCHO-SOCIAL MODEL WAS DEVELOPED

The psycho-social model of the current research study was developed and designed based on the empirical research and findings of the current research study. In order to obtain the empirical findings of the present study, the research was guided by existing models in qualitative research that explain and demonstrate human behaviour, human motivations, the relationship between individuals, and social behaviour. These models include the social learning and the social exchange theories, as highlighted in Chapter 2. During the development of the psycho-social model that was derived from the empirical findings, three elements emerged and were followed during the data analysis phase. These elements include: (1) defining the structure of the model, (2) populating the model and, (3) drafting the structure.

6.3.1   Defining the structure of the model

The development of the structure of the model was informed by the pathways, outcomes or descriptions that were related to and provided by the participants in relation to their experience of group learning behaviour and group cohesion, as predisposed by ethical leadership. These pathways, outcomes or descriptions reflected participants' realities and experiences.

6.3.2 Populating the model

The social learning and the social exchange theories were used to inform and to assist in developing the psycho-social model of the study. In other words the study used existing model structures to inform the structural development of the psycho-social model. The steps followed in this process involved:

- Examining and utilising other model structures, literature and data to inform and develop the psycho-social model structure:

  - Literature presented throughout the study and data were used as a basis of the model structure and to inform the structure of the psycho-social model. This information influenced how the psycho-social model was developed, and furthermore, acted as a source of inspiration for generating ideas about how the psycho-social model structure should be developed.

  - A vigorous search of the literature was undertaken to ensure that the new structure is valid with regard to the work that other researchers and scholars have conducted. A systematic review of the literature was performed. Information regarding the history and development of qualitative models was also assessed. This review of the literature also provided the researcher with an in-depth understanding of this field and model development.

- Taking an existing structure and developing it further:

  - The social learning and social exchange models or theories were examined, used, and elements added to build, and re-parameterise the psycho-social model of the study.

6.3.3 Drafting the structure

This phase involved linking the pathways, outcomes or descriptions that were related to and provided by the participants, and the model structures, literature and data used to inform the development of the psycho-social model.

The depictions below provide a summary of the models of social learning and the social exchange which guided the current research.

As previously stated, the social learning and the social exchange theories were used to inform and assist in the development of the psycho-social model of the study, and existing model structures were used to inform the structural development of the psycho-social model. The

two theories advocated by Brown and Trevino framed the study as they are rooted in understanding ethical leadership and its consequences on employees and the environment (Al Halbusi et al., 2021).

The social learning theory was used as a guide within the study as it provides the social learning pillars of ethical leadership. These pillars being the moral person and the moral manager (Bai, Lin, & Liu, 2019). The process of social learning, that being observing, learning, and emulating the ethical role model often happens from the perspective of the employee or follower (Bai et al., 2019; Brown et al., 2005). Based on the social exchange theory, when employees perceive their leader and ultimately their organisation's practices as ethical, they become more committed to reciprocity with positive behaviour (Al Halbusi et al., 2021).

The depictions below provide a summary of the models of social learning and the social exchange which guided the current research.

Figure 6.1
Social learning theory model
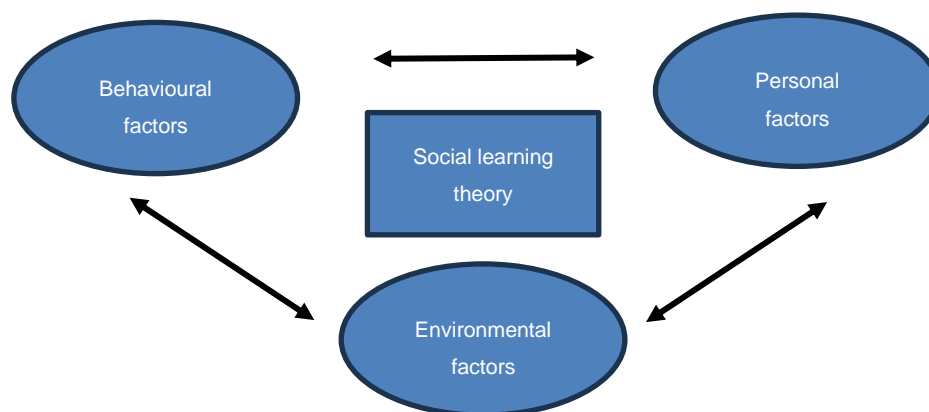
Source: Bandura, 1969

The social learning theory postulates that almost anything can be learned indirectly. This means that when an individual acts as a role model and uses rewards and punishments, followers observing this behaviour of their respective leader or manager, learn which behaviours their leaders expect from them (Zappalà & Toscano, 2020).

Conversely, the social exchange theory outlines that the ethical leadership behaviours implemented by leader or managers create a feeling of personal obligation in employees (Ma et al., 2017). Employees then feel inclined to reciprocate the fair and caring treatment received from the leader or manager (Zappalà & Toscano, 2020).

6.4 PSYCHO-SOCIAL MODEL OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP, GROUP LEARNING BEHAVIOUR AND GROUP COHESION DEPICTING THE PRIMARY FINDINGS

Figure 6.2 below presents the psycho-social model that aims to address the second general aim of the present study, namely, to develop a psycho-social model that describes the influence of ethical leadership on group learning behaviour and group cohesion in the energy sector. The psycho-social model is based on and was developed in accordance with the empirical findings of the present study. The term 'psycho-social' refers to a broad concept that typically pertains to how (factors) an individual experiences and responds to their surroundings (Rugulies, 2019).

Figure 6.2
Psycho-social model of ethical leadership, group learning behaviour and group cohesion
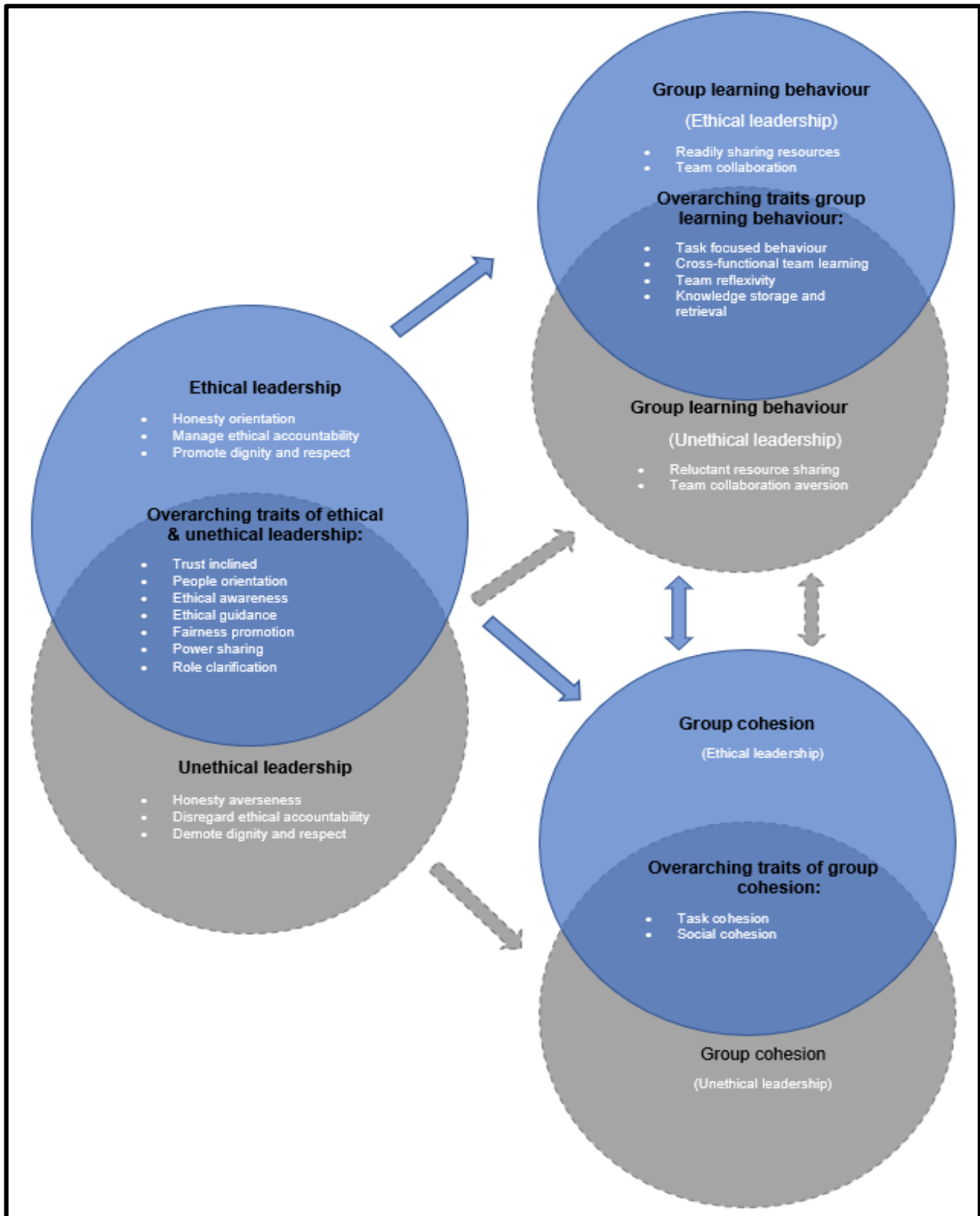
The model above depicts the findings and verbal representations of the study's participants who perceived their leader to be either ethical or unethical. The psycho-social model demonstrates that although some leaders are seen and perceived as being ethical or unethical by their respective followers, both these leaders share certain commonalities. These commonalities are depicted in the model as overarching traits. The characteristics of an ethical leader include:

- Honesty orientation,

- Manage ethical accountability,

- Promote dignity and respect,

- Trust inclined,

- People orientation,

- Ethical awareness,

- Ethical guidance,

- Fairness promotion,

- Power sharing, and

- Role clarification.

Of these ten characteristics, the unethical leader displays seven. Where these traits differ, the unethical leader demonstrates traits that include:

- Honesty averseness,

- Disregarding ethical accountability, and

- Demoting dignity and respect.

Therefore, the above demonstrates that in the presence of ethical leadership participants tend to experience honesty orientation, manage ethical accountability and promote dignity and respect. Secondly, in the presence of unethical leadership, participants claim that there is an aversion to being honesty, ethical accountability is disregarded and there is a demotion in dignity and respect of the other person. Lastly, what is highlighted and is most intriguing is that in the presence of both ethical and unethical leadership participants reported that there is an inclination of trust, people orientation, ethical awareness, promotion of fairness, power sharing and role clarification.

Certain characteristics within work groups or teams, that is, group learning behaviour and group cohesion, are also shared similarly amongst those participants whether they perceive their respective leader as being ethical or unethical. When functioning in groups or teams within the working environment, these are the characteristics that occur and the environment that is created by the ethical leader, as expressed by participants when it came to group learning behaviour:

- Readily sharing resources,

- Team collaboration,

- Task focused behaviour,

- Cross-functional team learning,

- Team reflexivity, and

- Knowledge storage and retrieval.

Of these six characteristics of group learning behaviour, where followers or employees were working with an unethical leader, only two characteristics differed. These characteristics are:

- Reluctance of resource sharing, and

- Team collaboration aversion.

In light of the above, ethical leadership also effects group learning behaviour. The present study found that in the presence of ethical leadership, participants claim that they readily share resources and there is team collaboration. In the presence of unethical leadership, group learning behaviour is also impacted in that there is a reluctance to share resources and there is team collaboration aversion. What is most intriguing is that irrespective of groups or teams functioning under an ethical or unethical leader, participants claim that there is task focused behaviour, cross-function team learning, team reflexivity and knowledge storage and retrieval.

With regard to group cohesion, whether the participants perceived their respective leader as being ethical or unethical, these leaders both fostered group cohesion amongst their employees. The characteristics of group cohesion included:

- Task cohesion, and

- Social cohesion.

This means that with group cohesion, regardless of whether groups or teams functioned under an ethical or unethical leader, both leadership styles yielded working teams where task and social cohesion was existent.

6.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided an integration and presentation of the newly developed psycho-social model, which is grounded in empirical data, and that was develop by the study. The chapter began by providing an integration of the literature and findings to establish a conceptual meaning. Thereafter, models in qualitative research were discussed. A discussion of how the psycho-social model was developed followed, and a psycho-social model of ethical leadership, group learning behaviour and group cohesion depicting the primary findings of the study was presented. The chapter concluded with a chapter summary.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SELF-REFLECTION OF THE RESEARCHER

This chapter presents the conclusions derived from the literature and empirical findings. Subsequently, the limitations of the study are provided and the recommendations are presented. This is done with relevance to the discipline in which this study was conducted, namely, industrial and organisational psychology. This chapter is concluded with the researcher's self-reflections as a researcher.

7.1 CONCLUSIONS AND RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION

The general aims of the present study were to firstly, describe the phenomenological experiences of employees' group learning behaviour and group cohesion, as predisposed by ethical leadership. Secondly, to develop a psycho-social model that describes the influence of ethical leadership on group learning behaviour and group cohesion in the energy sector. The literature review was directed at conceptualising the concepts of ethical leadership, group learning behaviour and group cohesion.

This section first presents concluding notes on the findings and discusses the key contributions of the research.

7.1.1 Theoretical contribution

The theoretical contribution of the study was grounded in the themes and sub-themes that were constructed during the analytical phase of the study. The conceptualisation of the constructs and the link between the constructs are reflected by the conclusions drawn based on each specific aim, as highlighted below.

7.1.1.1 Specific aim 1. To conceptualise the construct of ethical leadership from the literature

The conclusion can be drawn that a leader that is regarded as ethical, is one that engages in moral conduct or behaviours that are beneficial for all parties involved. This leader refrains from immoral conduct or behaviours that may cause harm to others (Lasakova & Remisova, 2015). Ethical leadership refers to the demonstration of behaviours that are consistent with appropriate norms portrayed through both the leader's individual actions and interpersonal relationships (Brown et al., 2005; Gumusluoglu, Karakitapoğlu-Aygün, & Hu, 2020; Neubert et al., 2009).

On the contrary, an unethical leader is an individual that is typically regarded as being manipulative and exploitative in nature (Blair et al., 2017). This leader is one that is perceived as having a conceited demeanour, utilises control as opposed to empowerment, and participates in corrupt activities.

Ethical leadership is essential to ensure that group member interactions are comprised of trust, fairness and empowering behaviour (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008). Thus, ethical leadership is essential, as leaders are the shapers and developers of a group or team. This is achieved through the facilitation of activities that encourage and promote collaborative learning within teams and groups (group learning behaviour).

7.1.1.2 Specific aim 2. To conceptualise the construct of group learning behaviour from the literature

Group learning behaviours refer to actions that build the process of learning in a team (Paananen et al., 2020). Group learning behaviour may be viewed as the degree to which group members seek opportunities to develop new skills and knowledge, welcome challenging assignments, and are willing to take risks in terms of new ideas (London et al., 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2017). Thus, the conclusion can be drawn that group learning involves the collective effort of group members to achieve a common goal through the process by which members continuously and supportively learn from and with their group members (Sojayapan & Khlaisang, 2018). During the process of learning, each member must bear in mind the notions of collaboration, work delegation, and mutual responsibilities. This means that the association between group success and the social skills of the individuals in groups should be optimal to achieve group efficiency (Freeman, 2012; Sojayapan & Khlaisang, 2018).

Group learning is a phenomenon that takes place over time, and there is a critical need to understand groups within the context of time (Cronin et al., 2011). Group learning differs from individual learning in that the ability to acquire knowledge and skills is collectively shared by group members, and the group learning outcome is collectively available and used (Ellis et al., 2003; Wiese & Burke, 2019).

7.1.1.3 Specific aim 3. To conceptualise the construct of group cohesion from the literature

Cohesion pertains to the extent to which team or group members are motivated to preserve the groups' continuity and welfare (Salas et al., 2015; Tulin et al., 2018). Cohesion can also be described as the degree to which members of a team or group display a level of resistance

in response to forces that may be disruptive to the functioning of their respective team or group (Chiocchio & Essiembre, 2009; Friedkin, 2004; Manata, 2016).

Group cohesion may further be categorised into two concepts (Salas et al., 2015), namely, the task dimension and social dimension of group cohesion. The task dimension of cohesion pertains to the degree to which group members demonstrate a level of commitment to working together effectively and efficiently. This is carried out with the intent of achieving group goals (Carron et al., 1985; Valentina & Daniel, 2018). However, the social dimension of cohesion refers to the level of which an individual possesses a level of attraction towards a particular team or group. This is based on the members' social relationships within the specific team or group (Seashore, 1954; Lott & Lott, 1965; Wiersema & Hernsberger, 2021; Hill & Villamor, 2022).

Thus, it can be concluded that it is pivotal for leaders and organisations to bear in mind that it is not only the strength of identification with a group that influences learning behaviour, but also what that group membership means, in terms of norms for desirable group behaviour (Stevens, 2018). Since group learning behaviour and group cohesion are flexible concepts and are context dependent, it is crucial that leaders create and facilitate a working environment that fosters group learning and cohesion. This is because if leaders do not create a working environment that fosters learning and cohesion, group learning and group cohesion within organisations may be hampered (Smyth et al., 2017).

7.1.1.4 Specific aim 4. To explore the theoretical relationship between ethical leadership, group learning behaviour and group cohesion in the literature

Organisations today are faced with the quandary that they have to attain a balance between financial success and ethics in an attempt to succeed in the present times. The ever-lengthening list of organisational ethics scandals provides organisations with a compelling reminder that financial success is futile and meaningless if it is not gained ethically (Hansen et al., 2013). Leaders or managers are the first to come under question when organisational scandals arise as some of the worst ethical debacles that have occurred can be directly attributed to decisions made by leaders or managers (Gao & Hall, 2017).

Leaders are the shapers and developers of teams. Furthermore, leaders facilitate work activities that encourage and promote collaborative learning within teams and groups (Brown et al., 2005; Toscano, 2020). Leaders play the vital role of monitoring the respective teams or groups, and they have to execute the necessary action to deal with the internal and external challenges that may hinder the group's tasks or social functioning (Kozlowski & Bell, 2008;

Kozlowski & Bell, 2019). Ethical leadership is thus regarded as a key resource that can either reinforce or damage the manifestation of ethical behaviour within organisations.

Organisations today also increasingly depend on the efforts of groups to enhance the organisations' ability to learn in an environment that is characterised by competitiveness, globalisation and constant change (Rebelo et al., 2019). Thus, groups have become the basis that enables organisations to adapt to the emerging pressures in today's world of work. However, the advantages of group learning only occur in groups that are cohesive (Chiocchio & Essiembre, 2009; Tulin et al., 2018). Since leaders are a source of guidance, and employees pay attention to and follow their good attitudes, values and behaviour, ethical leaders may be able to inculcate acceptable behaviour among employees through the type of group learning behaviour that leads to a conducive working environment (Walumbwa et al., 2017).

Group cohesiveness is a vital precondition for learning behaviour, as it creates a working environment where group members feel free to challenge the status quo and explore new ways of functioning (Hülsheger et al., 2009). It is also important to keep in mind that a lack of group cohesion can inhibit the group learning process (Hendry et al., 2016). Thus, it is essential that leaders and organisations bear in mind that it is not only the strength of identification with a group that influences learning behaviour, but also what that group membership means, in terms of the norms for desirable group behaviour, namely, group cohesion (Stevens, 2018).

7.1.2 Pragmatic contribution

This study has pragmatic value in that its findings offer a potential tool to leaders, organisational consultants and coaches on how to engage in ethical leadership practices to stimulate group learning and group cohesion in the context of 4IR. This will aid organisations in their increasing reliance of groups or teams to deliver on organisational objectives.

The findings that manifested in the study showed that although the ethical leadership style was seen to have an impact on certain aspects of group learning behaviour and group cohesion, other aspects of these concepts were unaffected within working groups or teams. This means that a group's social bond, namely, group cohesion, could serve as buffer against the adverse impact of leadership practices. With regard to group learning behaviour, only the readily sharing resources and team collaboration themes were affected by the leader's ethical conduct, while the other themes were unaffected.

This further substantiates the notion that particular social conditions should be met within teams for group learning behaviours and group cohesion to occur (Raes et al., 2017). Furthermore, the presence of particular social conditions, such as psychological safety, group potency or task cohesion, are linked to the occurrence of team learning behaviours and group cohesion (Raes et al., 2015). However, the differences in group learning behaviour or group cohesion amongst groups can also be assigned to other factors other than leadership style. For example, whether members of a group or team engage in knowledge sharing not only depends on the leadership style but also on the organisational culture, work environment and individual characteristics the employees (Jha & Varkkey, 2018).

The psycho-social model which is re-presented below is based on and was developed from the empirical findings of the study. The model demonstrates the role and effects that ethical and unethical leadership have on group learning behaviour and group cohesion.

Figure 7.1
Psycho-social model of ethical leadership, group learning behaviour and group cohesion

Group learning behaviour
(Ethical leadership)
- Readily sharing resources
- Team collaboration

Overarching traits group learning behaviour:
- Task focused behaviour
- Cross-functional team learning
- Team reflexivity
- Knowledge storage and retrieval

Group learning behaviour
(Unethical leadership)
- Reluctant resource sharing
- Team collaboration aversion

Ethical leadership
- Honesty orientation
- Manage ethical accountability
- Promote dignity and respect

Overarching traits of ethical & unethical leadership:
- Trust inclined
- People orientation
- Ethical awareness
- Ethical guidance
- Fairness promotion
- Power sharing
- Role clarification

Unethical leadership
- Honesty averseness
- Disregard ethical accountability
- Demote dignity and respect

Group cohesion
(Ethical leadership)

Overarching traits of group cohesion:
- Task cohesion
- Social cohesion

Group cohesion
(Unethical leadership)

The model, therefore, has the inherent potential to serve as guide and *consulting tool* for use in team and organisational dynamics, a *diagnostic tool* to address the potential impact of ethicality/poor ethicality on group learning and cohesion, as well as a *team coaching tool* to facilitate group learning and group cohesion through ethical leadership practices.

The recommendations for the discipline of industrial and organisational psychology and the recommendations for future research are discussed in Section 7.3.

7.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

With reference to the works of Meltzoff and Cooper (2018), all research has its advantages and disadvantages. The study too encompasses limitations that should be considered. With regard to the empirical study, potential bias may have been present. This may have resulted from the sampling method used for the study, namely, purposive sampling. This may arise from the consideration that participants were selected based on their willingness and readiness to participate in the research study (Ngozwana, 2018). Therefore, it may have occurred that only participants that had particular and specific feelings about the topic at hand availed themselves for the study. This potential bias was, however, managed through the selection of participants who held both the perception of their leader as being ethical or unethical.

An additional limitation that may be present is due to generalisability. Considering that the sample of the study comprised a small number of participants. Although the nature of the study was focused on obtaining a depth of understanding, generalisability may have been compromised. However, within qualitative research, the main aim is to obtain meaning and depth, as opposed to generalisability (Brannen, 2017). Nevertheless, the qualitative nature of the study does allow for some level of transferability.

Lastly, the ratio of male to female participants was imbalanced. Only one female out of the total of eight participants participated in the study. This is due to the fact that women are underrepresented in the energy sector (Impulse, 2022). Globally, women hold about 20% of the jobs within the oil and gas industry, and less than a third of the jobs in the renewable energy sector. In the South African context, women account for 31% of the employees of the state-owned electricity utility organisation, and 21% of the workforce in the coal sector (Impulse, 2022). The imbalanced ratio of male to female participants in the study is unfavourable, as this means that the majority of perspectives obtained for the purpose of this study come from a male view.

7.3   RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents both the recommendations for industrial and organisational psychologists and the recommendations for future research.

7.3.1   Recommendations for industrial and organisational psychologists

Industrial and organisational practitioners should consciously and purposefully consider the leadership styles that would be most appropriate when engaging and interacting with employees within organisations. Although leadership only influences certain aspects within group learning behaviour and group cohesion, it should be noted that industrial and organisational psychologists should consider the aspects highlighted in the study to enhance the benefits of group learning behaviour and group cohesion among groups or teams in organisations.

Industrial and organisational psychologists should also consider that, to an extent, both ethical leaders and ethical organisations produce employees who may alter their behaviour in accordance with the standards set by their respective leaders.

Moreover, it is essential for industrial and organisational psychologists to obtain an understanding of leadership and its relevance in the working environment. The value of leadership tools and techniques to stimulate the process of learning and cohesion should not be undervalued. Lastly, industrial and organisational psychologists should be familiar with ethicality, and group learning and cohesion on multiple levels, namely, the individual and organisational levels, to enable their followers to continuously grow and develop.

7.3.2   Recommendations for future research

It is possible for the current research study to be conducted quantitatively in future. This will allow for a larger sample to be utilised to determine how many respondents experience a sense of group learning behaviour and group cohesion, as predisposed by ethical leadership. This may be done in an attempt to generally outline the phenomenological experiences of employees' group learning behaviour and group cohesion, as predisposed by ethical leadership. This will make it possible for data to be generalised to a larger group of individuals.

In order to rectify the male to female ratio, future researchers may increase the number of female participants in the study. This can be achieved by approaching more departments and organisations in the energy and other sectors, as it is critical to provide a voice to more female

participants. It will also be interesting to hear the female perspective and experience regarding the impact of ethicality and how this may influence group learning and cohesion.

Moreover, a different theoretical lens may be utilised. For instance, a systemic and/or a psychodynamic approach may be followed. Through this, other unconscious factors which play a role in how group learning behaviour and group cohesion manifest in the presence of ethical and unethical leaders maybe uncovered.

A further recommendation for both industrial and organisational psychologists and for future research includes the study being completed using a longitudinal approach. A more comprehensive study may then be completed, as additional information can be collected on the topic of the experiences of employees' group learning behaviour and group cohesion, as predisposed by ethical leadership. More so, a longitudinal study may be used to make comparisons with the findings from cross-sectional studies. This will allow for the determination of variations and similarities between different studies.

7.4 SELF-REFLECTION OF THE RESEARCHER

A reflexive approach to the research process is commonly accepted in qualitative research, as it creates transparency during the research process (Cruz & Tantia, 2017). Thus, from the onset of the present study, I, as the researcher, had to work on my awareness of that which frames my own perceptions and personal beliefs and how it influences my research (Kalu & Bwalya, 2017). This is pivotal because, as mentioned by Haven and Van Grootel (2019), qualitative research embraces partiality, and consequently, the qualitative researcher plays a large role in generating findings from the data collected.

Following each one-on-one interview and focus group session, the researcher engaged in mindful and conscious self-reflection. This self-reflection was aimed at reflecting about what happened during each interview and the impact and influence it may have had on the researcher. Through this process it was apparent that the researcher was nervous when beginning with the research interviews. This was due to not knowing what to expect, and not wanting to make mistakes. However, the researcher came to realise that what was pivotal was not merely a well-prepared interview, but also being present and actively and attentively listening to the participants. Another important aspect that arose during the self-reflection process was the importance of being flexible during the interview sessions. Thus, bringing forth the need to conduct semi-structured interviews. As the researcher continued conducting interviews with the respective participants, the process started to flow better.

To account for and address the influence of researcher preconceptions, an honest reflection of the interest in the study was provided (see Chapter 1). An explanation of how strategies to enhance trustworthiness, including the credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability of the research findings, was provided and it was explained how these concepts were applied.

The researcher's bias and personal experiences may have influenced the themes and sub-themes in the data-analysis process. To mitigate this, all the themes and sub-themes were constructed from the data where the participants were given a voice by adding verbatim data transcriptions (see Chapter 5), and consequently, the findings of the study were co-constructed.

7.4.1 Self-reflection on being a researcher in this study

Following each one-on-one interview and focus group session, I engaged in mindful and conscious self-reflection regarding what transpired during each interview and focus group session. I also reflected on how these sessions impacted and influenced me. As explained by Corlett and Mavin (2018), the thoughts, feelings, fears and desires of an interviewer have an effect on the interview. Therefore, the process of reflection assists in bringing the unconscious into the conscious state and allows the interviewer the opportunity of review. Moreover, transparency is created through the acknowledgement of what may have transpired to the researcher in the interview (Corlett & Mavin, 2018).

Through the process of reflection, the realisation came forth that what was pivotal was not merely a well-prepared interview or focus group session, but being present and actively listening to the participants. Another aspect that was important during these sessions was being flexible during the interviews. This was the main reason for the selection of semi-structured interviews and focus group sessions.

This awareness through the process of reflection made me conscious of how I take up my role as a researcher and interviewer, as well as the need to differentiate consciously between the two roles, and when to assume which role in particular instances. Upon reflection following the interviews and focus group sessions, I realised, with my industrial and organisational psychology background that it was not always easy to stay in the role of the interviewer.

Doing self-reflection after each interview and focus group session aided me in developing consistent self-reflection, which I started to apply subconsciously during the interviews and focus group sessions.

7.4.2 Personal ethical and leadership transformation as a result of the study

Regarding my research, and as stated by Anderson (2019), transpersonal researchers and scholars engage on a journey of transformation. This means that researchers and scholars embark on a journey that implicates and connects their comprehension of the phenomenon under study and themselves as human beings. I found the topic of the current research study enticing, as it formed part of my personal experience as someone who experienced different types of leadership styles within the workplace. As mentioned by Anderson (2019), researchers and scholars gain a strong connection with a particular research topic when it relates to them and their personal experience.

My journey and exposure began with my entrance into the working environment and has continued during this PhD journey. My engagement with leadership and the need to explore the different types of leadership was initiated by my experiences which deepened further while conducting this research.

7.5   CLOSURE

This chapter highlighted the conclusions obtained from the literature and empirical findings. The limitations based on the literature and empirical findings were presented. The recommendations for the discipline of industrial and organisational psychology and the recommendations for future research followed. The chapter concluded with the self-reflection of the researcher.

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APPENDIX A:
ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

UNISA | university of south africa

UNISA IOP ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 26 January 2021

Dear Ms. Reneilwe Matabologa

NHREC Registration # : (if applicable)
ERC Reference : *2020_CEMS_IOP_036*
Name : Ms. Reneilwe Matabologa
Student #: 58551050
Staff #: NA

Decision: Ethics Approval from 01 February 2021 to 01 February 2026

Researcher(s): Name: Ms Reneilwe Matabologa

Supervisor (s): Name: Prof Aden-Paul Flotman

Ethical leadership, group learning behaviour and group cohesion in the energy sector: A psycho-social model

Qualification: Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology – Postgraduate degree

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance to the Unisa IOP Ethics Review Committee for the above-mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for a period of **Five (5) years.**

The low risk application was reviewed by the IOP Research Ethics Review Committee on 26 January 2021 in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment. The Ethics Application was approved on 01 February 2021.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. *The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa COVID-19 Position Statement on research ethics dated 26 June 2020 which is attached.*

University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

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2. *All data-gathering must adhere to and be aligned with restrictions applicable to the Government's current Lockdown Alert Levels.*

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

4. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the Unisa CEMS/IOP Research Ethics Review Committee.

5. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.

6. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.

7. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.

8. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.

9. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date (**01 February 2026**). Submission of a complete research ethics progress report will constitute an application for the renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

*The reference number **MatabologaRM_2020_CEMS_IOP_036** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

URERC 16.04.29 - Decision template (V2) - Approve

University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

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Yours sincerely,

Signature
Chair of IOP ERC
E-mail: vnieka2@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429-8231

Signature
Executive Dean: CEMS
E-mail: mogalmt@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429-4805

APPENDIX B:
INFORMATION SHEET AND INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Title: Ethical leadership, group learning behaviour and group cohesion in the energy sector: A psycho-social model

Dear Prospective Participant

My name is Reneilwe Mathabo Matabologa and I am doing research with Prof Aden-Paul Flotman, an associate professor in the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology towards a Doctor of Philosophy at the University of South Africa. We have funding from UNISA for degree purposes. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled "Ethical leadership, group learning behaviour and group cohesion in the energy sector: A psycho-social model".

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

I am conducting this research to to describe the phenomenological experiences of employees' group learning behaviour and group cohesion as predisposed by ethical leadership. This study is expected to collect important information that could highlight aspects within organisations which may hinder on the welfare of employees and groups. Ultimately employee performance and organisational productivity will be affected. That is, organisations will be provided with information which will enhance the working environment and conditions of employees in a group setting.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

You have been selected to take part in this research project as you meet the research criterion and the purpose of this study. That is, working in the energy sector for more than three years and hold the perception/subjective experience that your leader is ethical or unethical in his\her leadership practices.

Participants' contact details were obtained through social networks and referrals. That is, the researcher requested acquaintances in the researchers' circle to refer individuals who met the requirements of the research study and whom the acquaintances knew that these potential participants would not have an issue in partaking in the research study. Participants were

selected on the basis that they met the criteria required for the research study. The number of individuals who are required to partake in the research study amount to eight.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

Participation within this research project requires participants to be involved in a focus group interview and an interview of approximately sixty (60) to ninety (90) minutes and thirty (30) to sixty (60) minutes respectively. During the focus group and one on one interviews the researcher will take written notes of the events and responses. Identifiable information will not be collected or recorded.

Describe the participant's actual role in the study.

The study involves *semi-structured interviews and focus groups*. Open ended questions will be asked in this research study. Participation within this research project requires participants to be involved in a focus group interview and an interview of approximately sixty (60) to ninety (90) minutes and thirty (30) to sixty (60) minutes respectively.

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

This study is expected to collect important information that could highlight aspects within organisations which may hinder on the welfare of employees and groups. Ultimately employee performance and organisational productivity will be affected. That is, organisations will be provided with information which will enhance the working environment and conditions of employees in a group setting.

ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

The only risk that is associated with this research study pertains to probable minor discomfort or inconvenience that may be experience by the research participants. Examples of minor discomfort or inconveniences that participants may have include perceived anxiety in participating in the research study. However, participants will not experience harm or a risk above the everyday norm. The confidentiality and privacy of the participants will be maintained, for instance, electronic files will be encrypted with passwords in order to ensure

the safety and confidentiality of the data and the researcher will also avoid disclosing information that would result in infringing on participants privacy.

While every effort will be made by the researcher to ensure that you will not be connected to the information that you share during the focus group, the researcher cannot guarantee that other participants in the focus group will treat information confidentially. The researcher shall, however, encourage all participants to do so. For this reason, the researcher advises participants not to disclose personally sensitive information in the focus group.

WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Participants personal information, such as the participants name will not be recorded or required anywhere. Furthermore, no one will be able to connect the participants data that participants provide to the participants. Your answers will be given a code number, or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings.

Data collected may be reviewed by individuals responsible for making sure that research is executed correctly, this includes members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. Otherwise, data obtained from this study will strictly be for the use of the researcher. Data will be stored securely in a locked filing cabinet in my private office for a period of five years. Thereafter, it will be permanently destroyed, that is, information will be deleted from my hard drive and any hard copies will be shredded.

A report of the study may be submitted for publication, however, since code number or a pseudonym will be used individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report. Participants should bear in mind that it is sometimes impossible to make an absolute guarantee of confidentiality or anonymity in cases where focus groups are used as a data collection method.

Focus group discussion is a method where a researcher gathers a group of individuals to discuss a particular subject. This method is aimed at drawing from the complex personal experiences, beliefs, perceptions and attitudes of the participants through a moderated interaction (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995; Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick, & Mukherjee, 2018). While every effort will be made by the researcher to ensure that you will not be connected to the information that you share during the focus group, the researcher cannot guarantee that other participants in the focus group will treat information confidentially. The researcher shall, however, encourage all participants to do so. For this reason the researcher advises participants not to disclose personally sensitive information in the focus group.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked filing cabinet in my private office for future research or academic purposes and electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. hard copies will be shredded, and electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer through the use of a relevant software programme.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

Participants will not receive any payment or reward offered, financial or otherwise for their participation in the research study. Participation with this research study will not incur any costs from the participants' side. Any costs incurred by the participant should be explained and justified in adherence with the principle of fair procedures, if applicable.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the College of Economic and Management Sciences, Unisa. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Reneilwe Mathabo Matabologa on 0124293831 or email matabrm@unisa.ac.za. The findings are accessible for one year. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact 0124293831 or email matabrm@unisa.ac.za.

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may email flotma@unisa.ac.za.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Thank you.

Reneilwe Mathabo Matabologa

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname…………………………………… (please print)

Participant Signature…………………………………………..Date…………………

Researcher's Name & Surname: Reneilwe Mathabo Matabologa

Researcher's signature   Date …………………

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview start:		Date of Interview:	
Interview end:			
Participant age:		Participant race:	

Research question: *"How do participants experience group learning behaviour and group cohesion, as predisposed by ethical and unethical leadership?"*

Aim:

a) To describe the phenomenological experiences of employees' group learning behaviour and group cohesion as predisposed by ethical leadership.

b) To develop a psycho-social model that describes the influence of ethical leadership on group learning behaviour and group cohesion in the energy sector.

INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP SESSION GUIDE – PART ONE

1. Welcome participant.
2. Introduce myself – Name, occupation and designation
3. Explain the interview process – purpose for the interview and research project, how much time is allotted, the note taking, and the opportunity for the applicant to ask questions.

INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

ETHICAL LEADERSHIP:

1. Reflect on your leaders' behaviour, would you regard your leader as being ethical?
   a. Provide an example(s) of your leader/manager behaving/acting ethically, if any.

> b. Provide an example(s) of your leader/manager behaving/acting unethically, if any.

2. What do you believe affects your leaders' decision-making perspective?
3. Are provisions for growth and expansion provided in your group? Provide examples +

Ethical Leadership Scale (Adapted from Brown, Treviño, and Harrison, 2005)

1. In your opinion, does your leader/ manager conduct himself/herself ethically?
2. How does your leader/manager define success (by results or by the way that they are obtained)? Provide examples.
3. Are employees who violate ethical standards disciplined appropriately by your leader/manager? Provide examples
4. Does your leader/ manager discuss business ethics or values with employees? Provide examples
5. Does your leader/ manager set an example of how to do things the right way in terms of ethics? Provide examples
6. In your opinion, does your leader/ manager have the best interest of employees and other stakeholders in mind? Please elaborate
7. When making decisions, does your leader/ manager ask the employees "what is the right thing to do?"

GROUP LEARNING BEHAVIOUR:

Adapted from **the CIMA model** (Continuous Improvement in Global Product Innovation Management)

1. What are the (objectives) policies and procedures of your work team?
2. What are the set of ground rules and guidelines that your team has created for team performance and behaviours?
   a. Are your teams' ground rules and guidelines similar across different departments/teams? Please provide examples of these similarities
3. Provide examples of how your leader/manager manages team operations and efficiency.

4. How are group objectives enforced by your team members and your leader/manager?
5. How do you and your team members ensure that work objectives are achieved?
6. How are gaps in attaining team goals fixed by the group members and or your leader/manager?
7. What methods do team members use to express disagreements constructively?

GROUP COHESION:

Group Environment Questionnaire (Adapted from Carron et al., 1985)

1. What sort of social activities are available in your team?
2. Do you enjoy being part of these social activities? Why?
3. Provide examples of how your team demonstrates a level of commitment to working together in achieving work goals.
4. Are you close with any of the members of your team? Why are you close with these colleagues?

INTERVIEW/FOCUS GROUP SESSION GUIDE – PART TWO

1. Advise the participant when they can expect to have feedback on the research project
2. Thank the person for coming for the interview.

APPENDIX D:
TECHNICAL AND LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

Retha Burger
B.A.(H.E.D.)
Independent Skills Development Facilitator

tel: 012 807 3864
cell: 083 653 5255

fax: 012 807 3864
e-mail: retha@skillnet.co.za

Dear Ms Matabologa

This letter is to record that I have completed a language edit of your doctoral thesis entitled, "Ethical leadership, group learning behaviour and group cohesion in the energy sector: A psycho-social model".

The edit that I carried out included the following:

-Spelling   -Grammar
-Vocabulary   -Punctuation
-Pronoun matches   -Word usage
-Sentence structure   -Correct acronyms (matching your supplied list)
-Captions and labels for figures and tables
-Spot checking of 10 references

The edit that I carried out excluded the following:

-Content
-Correctness or truth of information (unless obvious)
-Correctness/spelling of specific technical terms and words (unless obvious)
-Correctness/spelling of unfamiliar names and proper nouns (unless obvious)
-Correctness of specific formulae or symbols, or illustrations

Yours sincerely

Retha Burger

28 January 2023

APPENDIX E:
TURNITIN REPORT

turnitin

Digital Receipt

This receipt acknowledges that Turnitin received your paper. Below you will find the receipt information regarding your submission.

The first page of your submissions is displayed below.

Submission author:	R M MATABOLOGA
Assignment title:	Revision 2
Submission title:	Ethical leadership, group learning behaviour and group coh...
File name:	p_group_learning_group_cohesion_A_psycho-social_model_2...
File size:	1.16M
Page count:	133
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Character count:	226,786
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Ethical leadership, group learning behaviour and group cohesion_A psycho-social model