

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

**Exploring Ubuntu in Leadership perceptions among South
African construction professionals**

Milisani Manasoe
Student number: 15391818

**A research proposal submitted to the Gordon Institute of Business
Science, University of Pretoria, in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Business Administration.**

07 November 2016

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to gain a deeper understanding of Ubuntu, and how relationships within the leadership-follower exchange can be harnessed and maintained with Ubuntu as a leadership approach. The study aimed to explore the relational nature between leaders and followers, in the context of leadership being co-created through the interconnected relationships and richly interactive contexts within the business context. The study was based on Leadership as a social process, which entails interaction and collaboration between leaders and stakeholders, and was set in the context of working teams within organisations as well as in project teams in the construction sector.

A qualitative and exploratory research method was used to interview ten construction professionals in leader as well as follower positions in the construction sector of South Africa. Ten semi-structured in—depth interviews were conducted to find answers to the research questions that explored how Ubuntu can be relevant in the business context as a relational style of leadership in as far as it impacts leader-follower exchanges.

The key findings of the research are that respondents displayed an understanding of *Ubuntu* and its relevance in the context of business. Respondents related Ubuntu to collaboration between companies and consultants in their approach to sourcing and delivering of projects.

An Ubuntu and Leader Member Exchange Model was developed using the values, behaviours and character traits of Ubuntu, and characteristics of high quality Leader Member Exchange relationship working teams.

KEY WORDS

Ubuntu, Leader Member Exchange, Relationships, Working Teams, Construction Sector

DECLARATION

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

Name: Milisani Manasoe

Signature:

Date: 7th November 2016

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1. Introduction to the research problem

1.1 Background to study

The construction industry is a significant contributor to economic growth, as well as job creation, in South Africa. From 2008, construction has contributed around nine per cent to total formal and informal employment in South Africa, while the contribution of construction to gross domestic product (GDP) has been approximately nine per cent (CIDB, 2015). The industry is transforming with the economy requiring a wider base of contracting entities (Martin and Root, 2012). Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and affirmative action policies in the form of preferential procurement in the awarding of building contracts, as well as the appointment of professional consultants, have been put in place as mechanisms to facilitate change within the industry in order to empower previously disadvantaged individuals (Bowen, Edwards and Lingard, 2013).

The building profession plays a significant role in determining the performance of the industry (Chan and Chan, 2005). Construction professionals generally work in teams within their organisations as well as with consultants from different construction professions in the execution of projects. This means that relationships between leaders and followers are crucial for effective collaboration in the execution of work. As leaders acting in the current complex, uncertain and interconnected business environment, the challenge is to reduce complexity and uncertainty while providing a desirable future, which is shared by the people they lead (Maak and Pless, 2006). There is a need for a leadership approach that is orientated towards enhancing relationships among individuals or organisations, particularly when seeking to establish an environment that is conducive to collaboration, network governance and the management of potential boundaries among perspectives, organisations or disciplines (Quick and Feldman 2014).

Bowen, Edwards and Lingard (2013) found that construction professionals encounter harassment and discrimination on ethnic grounds, and that discrimination is rooted in gender and racial stereotypes. South African business leaders are in need of the leadership skills to manage post-apartheid organisations with a racially and culturally diverse workforce previously dominated by Eurocentric, autocratic and hierarchical conglomerates (Kerr-Phillips and Thomas, 2009). The expectation for post-apartheid South Africa was not only an emergence of a more inclusive workplace, but also a new

kind of managerial leadership that was influenced by traditional sub-Saharan values (Mbigi and Maree, 1995).

South African organisations face the challenge of finding a leadership model that considers cultural differences while maximising the benefits derived from diversity, and an Afrocentric approach, such as one that is founded on the values of *Ubuntu*, could contribute towards improving effectiveness (Poovan, du Toit and Engelbrecht, 2006). Nwagbara (2012) argues that the notion of *Ubuntu* is central to the attempt of building a transformed and just society and calls for a re-writing of the organisational framework from the African worldview and culture, and argues for African-orientated management and leadership paradigms in the postmodern African context.

The term *Ubuntu* has been used throughout sub-Saharan Africa to define how people and communities should behave in their interactions (Taylor, 2014). The Nguni word *Ubuntu*, when loosely translated, means ‘to be human’ and the aphorism ‘*Umuntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu*’ translates to ‘A person is a person because of or through others’. Bekker (2006) describes this as the capacity in African culture to express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, humanity and mutuality in the interest of building and maintaining communities with justice and mutual caring. *Ubuntu*, therefore, advocates humaneness, human interdependence and a collective consciousness with its foundation being the relationship that one has with others.

As a philosophy, *Ubuntu* is by its nature relational, tying an individual to his or her immediate family, extended family and community in relationships and mutual obligations (Kamoche, 2011). Although not fully adopted into leadership theory, the study proposed that it could potentially fall under relational leadership theory, which, according to Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011), requires that leaders hold themselves in relation with, and morally accountable to, others, and thereby sensitising leaders to the importance of their relationships and interactions in the quest for morally-responsible leadership. Thomas, Martin, Epitropaki, Guillaume and Lee (2013) argue that relationship-based approaches to leadership are often conceptualised in terms of the relationship quality between the leader and follower or the social exchanges they engage in.

Gade (2011) argues that *Ubuntu* is a dynamic term that has taken on new meanings across different points in history. He attributes this process of redefinition to be a possible consequence of the changing social and political circumstances. He

conducted a historical analysis of how *Ubuntu* has been defined in theory. He puts forward five stages which include: stage one (1846 onwards) when *Ubuntu* was understood as a human quality; stage two (post 1960s) when *Ubuntu* was defined more broadly than just a human quality and as related to a philosophy or an ethic; stage three was a period in which *Ubuntu* was defined as African humanism; stage four was a period in which *Ubuntu* was defined as a worldview; and stage five: was a period in which *Ubuntu* was defined as something connected to the proverb '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*'.

The study therefore sought to explore *Ubuntu* as a leadership approach and, through an exploration of the association to the relational connotations that stem from the proverb '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*', look into how participants relate and engage with each other in the leader-follower exchange within organisations in the built environment. The intention was to draw key and meaningful insights that will assist organisations in positively influencing leader-follower responses in order to enhance organisational effectiveness.

1.2 Problem statement

Set in the context of the difficulties highlighted in creating inclusive working environments that foster effective collaboration, the research aimed to look into how relationships within the leader-follower exchange can be harnessed and maintained with *Ubuntu* as a leadership approach. This study aimed to explore the relational nature between leaders and followers in the context of leadership being co-created through the interconnected relationships and richly interactive contexts of the business environment. Leadership is viewed as a social process, which entails interaction and collaboration between leaders and stakeholders.

Kamoche (2011) proposed that leaders can make use of the *Ubuntu* philosophy to positively influence follower responses and organisational effectiveness. The study intended to propose how *Ubuntu* can be a means for South African organisations to become more competitive. The study sought to explore whether *Ubuntu* can be a means to promote an inclusive and collaborative leadership style that is Afrocentric and make South African construction professionals within small to medium organisations in the construction industry more competitive.

1.3 Purpose statement

In the fields of management, organisation studies, human resources and international business, Africa remains relatively under-researched (Kamoche, 2011). The study explores the philosophy of *Ubuntu* within leadership, grounded on the aphorism 'I am because we are' approach and how that can be reflected in leader-follower relationships within organisations. Due to its communitarian philosophy, which elevates the role of interpersonal relationships and values such as harmony and care, *Ubuntu* has relevance in the business context (West, 2014).

The purpose of the study was to unearth the perceptions, values and commitment attached to empowering the leader-follower relationships that contribute towards the effectiveness of organisations through the values of *Ubuntu* within leadership.

1.4 Research objectives

The following research objectives were proposed to explore *Ubuntu* in leadership and its impact on leader-follower relationships in project teams within the construction industry.

The objectives were:

1. To explore the perceptions of *Ubuntu* as a leadership style from construction professionals, and how it can, as an approach that is relationship based, be applied as a style of leadership within organisations.
2. To explore the behaviour and character traits that are in line with the *Ubuntu* value system to better understand how leaders and followers interact and relate to each other.
3. To explore leaders and followers' perceptions about *Ubuntu* in as far as it can contribute towards the quality of leader-manager exchange relationships within work teams.

1.5 Benefits of the study

The study aimed to contribute towards leadership within the construction industry, which is a research area that has received little attention (Chan and Chan, 2005). The salient points considered for this study included *Ubuntu* and leader-follower relationships. These were explored in order to contribute to organisations and construction professionals who have an interest in applying *Ubuntu* in their leadership approach to address the challenges faced in collaboration and inclusivity.

The study aimed to contribute towards the field of leadership in the South African context and thereby adding to the body of knowledge of leadership in the African context. It also aimed to provide insights on how leaders and their followers can be better trained to be more effective.

1.6 Scope of the study

The scope of the study was limited to studying the views and perceptions on *Ubuntu* as a leadership approach and its contribution towards leader-follower relationships within organisations.

The study was also limited to exploring *Ubuntu* in leadership and its impact on leader-follower relationships in project teams within the construction industry. The topic of *Ubuntu* as a leadership approach and its impact on leader-follower relationships within organisations has not been widely investigated, and the need for inclusive and collaborative leadership styles that are Afrocentric has been established.

1.7 Outline of the research

The literature review is chapter two of the research paper. It begins with an exploration of the current literature within the fields of *Ubuntu* in leadership and leader-follower exchanges. The introduction to the literature review begins with a discussion on the challenges of an increasingly diverse workforce, as well as multidisciplinary and cross-

functional work teams. This is followed by the topics of leader-follower exchange theory and *Ubuntu* in leadership – the underlying theories on which the study is based. The chapter will establish the need for the advancement of *Ubuntu* within leadership in organisations in order to positively influence follower responses and leader-follower relationships for organisational effectiveness.

The research questions are included in Chapter 3 of the research report. This chapter begins with the opportunities drawn from the gaps in the literature to explore how the *Ubuntu* approach to leadership could contribute towards cohesion and effectiveness in project teams within organisations. Research questions and sub-questions that contributed towards fulfilling the objectives of the study are highlighted.

Chapter 4 contains the research methodology and design. This section begins with an outline of the research design which was exploratory in nature. This section of the research paper further highlights the aim of the study and that the key and meaningful insights gained from the research are used to assist organisations in positively influencing leader-follower responses in order to enhance organisational effectiveness.

The methodology also defines the population of the study as professionally registered construction professionals from small to medium enterprise companies within the building industry in South Africa. The criterion for the definition of leaders and followers is outlined. Sampling methods in line with the exploratory nature of the research design are also discussed. The chapter concludes with the methods for data analysis, as well as the limitations of the research.

Chapter 5 of the research study contains the data analysis, beginning with the main themes found from the interviews conducted with the participants in the leader and follower groups.

Chapter 6 contains a discussion of the results with reference to the research objectives.

Chapter 7 concludes the research study by summarising the main findings of the research, as well as the contribution of the study to organisations and construction professionals who have an interest in applying *Ubuntu* in their leadership approaches to address the challenges faced in collaboration and inclusivity.



2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of the following literature review is to discuss the different perceptions of *Ubuntu* with regards to its understanding, relevance and applicability in society and in the business context. The literature review begins with a discussion around the meaning of *Ubuntu*, looking first into the interpretations of *Ubuntu* as a belief system ingrained in African culture and how it has transcended into modern society through its application in the business context. Gade's (2011) five stages of the understanding of *Ubuntu* is discussed. The chapter will also explore *Ubuntu* as a value system and how the frameworks that have been developed around the values ascribed to *Ubuntu* have been translated in the context of business.

Finally, *Ubuntu* as a leadership style is discussed, commencing with an overview of leadership theory, followed by an examination of *Ubuntu* as a relational theory, particularly in the context of Leader Member Exchange and looking at *Ubuntu* as a relational leadership style. The study began by examining academic literature in the fields of leadership, *Ubuntu* and leader-follower theories. This was to establish a basis on which to build the research.

2.2 Theory on Ubuntu

There is difficulty in translating or articulating *Ubuntu* as a concept in English (Tutu, 1999; West, 2012). Van Binsbergen (2001) translated *Ubuntu* to mean 'a collection of people', which can also be translated to mean '*Abantu*' in Nguni. Ramose (1999) explains *Ubuntu* through its etymology, separating the word into its prefix 'ubu' meaning 'being' and the stem 'ntu' meaning 'human', which thereby presents an interpretation of *Ubuntu* as a dynamic rather than static concept in which a person is in a state of being or becoming human.

Theory on *Ubuntu* has not reached consensus on its interpretation, relevance and application in modern society, and as a result its usefulness in modern society and in business remains highly contested. Makhudu (1993 p.40) puts forward that 'every facet of African life is shaped to embrace *Ubuntu* as a process and philosophy which reflects the African heritage, traditions, culture, customs, beliefs, value system and the

extended family structures'. *Ubuntu* is the 'basis of an African communal cultural life', and stems from indigenous African culture' (Tambulasi and Kayuni, 2005, p. 147). Karsten and Illa (2005, p. 613), as quoted by Ncube (2010) put forward that '*Ubuntu* expresses an African view of the world anchored in its own person, culture, and society which is difficult to define in a Western context.' Although *Ubuntu* is an African philosophy, theory on the subject has been deeply influenced by works by non-Africans (Gade, 2012). This may have contributed to the general lack of consensus in its understanding and interpretation.

Gade (2011) argues that *Ubuntu* is a dynamic term that has taken on new meanings across different points in history. He attributes this process of redefinition to be a possible consequence of the changing social and political circumstances. He conducted a historical analysis of how *Ubuntu* has been defined in theory. He puts forward five stages which begin in 1846 with *Ubuntu* being defined as a human quality, then as a philosophy or ethic, then an African humanism, then a worldview, and finally defining *Ubuntu* through the aphorism '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*'. However, although the understanding of *Ubuntu* may have varied over time in theory, there has not been a clear definition of *Ubuntu* that can be ascribed to a point in time in history. Some aspects of *Ubuntu* have become dominant while others become less dominant as the socio-political landscape changes. The aspects of *Ubuntu* that theorists have ascribed to are discussed below:

i) Ubuntu as a human quality

Mkhize's (2008, p.43) understanding of *Ubuntu* is that it 'incorporates ideas of social justice, righteousness, care, empathy for others and respect'. Desmond Tutu has also written that if one possesses *Ubuntu* they are 'generous, hospitable, friendly, caring and compassionate' (1999, p34). These human qualities would involve sensitivity to the needs of others, charity, sympathy, care, respect, consideration and kindness (Chikanda, 1990).

ii) Ubuntu as a Philosophy or Ethic

Ubuntu has been defined as either connected to, or identical to, a philosophy or an ethic. As Ramose (1999, p. 49) says, '*Ubuntu* is simultaneously the foundation and the edifice of African philosophy.' Metz (2014) puts forward that, when interpreted as an ethical theory, it is well understood to prescribe honouring relationships, shaping a way of life as well as caring for other's quality of life.

iii) ***Ubuntu* as an African Humanism**

Ubuntu has been defined as an 'African humanness' reflecting an African understanding of the essence of being human – a humanity that is reflected in collective personhood and collective morality (Broodryk 2002, p. 13; Khoza, 2011; Mbigi, 1996; Ndlovu, 2015; Venter, 2004). As a concept it has been described as a foundation of sound human relations in African societies (Khoza, 2006). Loosely translated, the Nguni term "*Ubuntu*" means humanity, humanness or being human (Khomba and Kangaude-Ulaya, 2013; Mangaliso, 2001; Khoza 2011). Mangaliso (2001, p. 24), as quoted by Sulamoyo (2010) defines *Ubuntu* as 'humaneness – a pervasive spirit of caring and community, harmony and hospitality, respect and responsiveness – that individuals and groups display for one another'. He describes *Ubuntu* as 'the foundation for the basic values that manifest themselves in the ways African people think and behave toward each other and everyone else they encounter' (p.24).

The distinctiveness of *Ubuntu* has been put to question in theory. Some scholars argue that the foundational meanings and practices of *Ubuntu* can be found in societies, philosophies and theologies in other parts of the world (McDonald, 2010). West (2014) puts forward that there is very little empirical support provided in literature to support the argument that sub-Saharan African societies maintain values of *Ubuntu* which are different from those maintained by the West. He argues that, based on the universality of *Ubuntu* values and the absence of distinctively African business practice that correspond with the values of *Ubuntu*, the distinctiveness of *Ubuntu* as an ethic that can inform business ethics globally can be put to question. He puts forward that clarity is required on what is meant by *Ubuntu* as well as the degree to which *Ubuntu* values are universal or particular to Africa.

Mbigi (2000), on the other hand, is cited by Kamoche (2011) as suggesting that the concept of *Ubuntu* is so unique to African social settings and constitutes the beginnings of an Afrocentric managerial approach. Ramose (2002, p.327) argues that the attempt to find 'universal insights of European and African thought' results in 'dissolving the specificity of *Ubuntu* into abstract 'universality' and thereby denies *Ubuntu* its right to be different. Kamwangamalu (1999, p. 36) notes that qualities of *Ubuntu*, or humanness, may exist in every person, but 'these qualities are not innate... rather [they are] acquired through socialisation.'

iv) *Ubuntu* as a Worldview

Setiloane (1998, p.75) argues that an African worldview places a significant emphasis on the 'wholeness of all being'. The notion of an interdependence of one with their community has come across in theory surrounding *Ubuntu* (Mangaliso, 2001). This interconnectedness of the human being has also been extended to God, spirit powers, nature and ancestors, which not only ties *Ubuntu* to religion, but to cultural practices as well (Mkhize, 2008; Mafunisa, 2008; West, 2012; Geber and Keane, 2013), thereby contradicting more universal *Ubuntu* ideals (West 2012; Mkhize, 2006).

Ubuntu has been largely defined as being communitarian (West, 2014; Metz, 2014; Khomba and Kanguade-Ulaya, 2013). Turaki (2006, p. 36) argues that 'People are not individuals, living in a state of independence, but part of a community, living in relationships and interdependence'. Ngcoya (2015) further highlights the vulnerability of a human being that this understanding creates due to the dependence on others in defining their existence. He argues that, because a person's existence is in a context where social interactions are with others, it 'leads to a painful exile from the certainties of the self' (Ngcoya, 2015, p.253). Bell and Metz (2011), however, distinguish the understanding of *Ubuntu* as being descriptive in terms of one's identity being shaped by their community, and rather highlight the notion of a human flourishing as a result of social relations with their community, and is therefore obliged to nourish those social relationships.

The nature of this relationship between one person and their community has been a matter of debate within theory. Geber and Keane (2013) highlight that the expectation in African culture is to seek to realise the community's aspirations. Ngcoya (2015) defines the human as a community being, and describes the relationship between an individual and their community as an 'entanglement of the self with or in others' with the act of giving or receiving being reciprocal and stemming from a mutual recognition and cultivation of selves. Kamoche (2011) alludes to a relational existence that ties an individual to his immediate family, extended family and community in a web of relationships and mutual obligations.

This sentiment is echoed by Khomba and Kanguade-Ulaya (2013) who put forward that the individual belongs to the community, and the community is more important than the

individual. *Ubuntu*'s communitarian nature has also been contrasted with individualism (Lutz, 2009). Naude (2013, p.246) argues that when *Ubuntu* is interpreted in a narrow or ethnic fashion it is not only corrupted, but it is reduced to the use of one's power to benefit those close to the individual. He further highlights that in this context the community becomes one's family, tribe or political party, which could lead to *Ubuntu* being a system of patronage that can be used to pursue power and money.

v) *Ubuntu* defined through aphorism '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*'

Ubuntu has come to be understood through the aphorism '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*', which, when loosely translated, means 'a person is a person because of or through others' and has been interpreted as a humanist philosophy that translates to a person realising a state of being human through affirming their humanity through a recognition of the humanity in others, and establishing humane relations with them (Gade, 2012; Ramose, 2003). Shutte's (2001) interpretation of *Ubuntu* is also from a perspective of an individual's existence defined in relation or relationship to others. This promotes the notion that a person becomes a person only through their relationship with and recognition by others, which develops one's 'fullness of being' through their relatedness and relationship with others (Mangaliso, 2001; Hailey, 2008, p.7).

Sulamoyo (2010, p.42) describes Hofstede and Hofstede's (2005) individualism versus collectivism dimension as follows: 'individualism is a cultural dimension in which people are supposed to look after their own interest while collectivism is a cultural dimension in which people expect others in their group to look after them and protect them.' He argues that metaphors and proverbs such as '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*' can be seen as rejections of the individualistic attributes within society, as they support the argument that African culture is more collectivist in nature than individualistic. However, he cited Botha (2005) who outlined that when the dimension of individualism is examined in the context of *Ubuntu*, the outcome is not that *Ubuntu* rejects individualism, but rather that *Ubuntu* respects individualism within the realm of collectivism and communal responsibility.

Nwagbara (2012) also makes a distinction between individualism and *Ubuntu*, inferring that *Ubuntu* entails a community spirit that stems from a sense of belonging and purpose. Shrivastava, Selvarajah, Meyer and Dorasamy (2014) describe the relationship between the individual and their community as symbiotic, which is contrasted to Hofstede's (1980) theory of collectivism, which refers to a social framework in which individuals expect the community to take care of them in exchange

for loyalty. Booysen (2001) also argues that Hofstede's (1985) collectivism construct is based on an understanding that the individual's identity is merged with that of the collective, while *Ubuntu* entails that individuals work for the collective good. *Ubuntu* would entail the individual and the collective co-existing, with the individual pursuing his or her own good by pursuing the common good, rather than pursuing the common good instead of his or her own good (Lutz, 2009).

The notion that *Ubuntu* means that people are interconnected may have developed because it could have been used as an argument against the segregation ideology of the previous apartheid regime (Gade 2011, p.321). In the context of the South African transition process from an apartheid society into the 1990s, the notion of *Ubuntu* has been central in attempts to build a transformed, just society as a driver for meaningful reconciliation, justice and healing in South African communities (Eliastam, 2015). The Interim Constitution of 1993 (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 200 of 1993: Epilogue after Section 251), as quoted by Gade (2012) states that 'there is a need for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation but not for retaliation, a need for *Ubuntu* but not for victimisation' as part of addressing the divisions of the apartheid era. *Ubuntu* was also the foundation of the Moral Regeneration Movement that was launched in South Africa in 2002 (Matolino and Kwindigwi 2013). There has also been growing interest in *Ubuntu* as a philosophy, particularly in how it can be applied to a variety of disciplines, which include, but are not limited to, law (Bekker, 2006; Bennett, 2011), business ethics (Lutz, 2009; Ntibatagwirwa, 2009; West, 2014), and psychology (Berg, Salman and Troudart, 2011).

Lutz (2009) highlights the discrepancy between traditional African cultures and African business education, which is primarily indistinguishable in the theoretical content from Anglo-American business education. He argues that, in developing an African theory of management based on the philosophy of *Ubuntu*, the organisation would have to be recognised as a community rather than a collection of individuals. The purpose of management would therefore be to the benefit of the community, as well as the larger community, rather than individuals or a collection of individuals. Literature does not present a wide collection of frameworks on how *Ubuntu* can be applied as a leadership theory, but the frameworks that have been of interest to the study are discussed in the following section.

2.3 Leadership and *Ubuntu*

Winston and Patterson (2005, p4), as cited by Deppe (2010), are quoted as defining leadership as ‘one or more people who selects, equips, trains and influences one or more follower(s) who have diverse gifts, abilities and skills and focuses the follower(s) to the organisation’s mission and objectives causing the follower(s) to willingly and enthusiastically expend spiritual, emotional and physical energy in a concerted, coordinated effort to achieve the organisational mission and objectives’. Hill and Lineback (2011) put forward that in becoming a great leader one would need to be able to manage themselves, their network, as well as their team. Within organisations, leaders are facing the challenges of an increasingly diverse workforce, as well as multidisciplinary and cross-functional work teams. Bekker (2007, p1) argues that ‘there is a desperate need for an indigenous, innovative, values-based leadership approach in Africa that will mobilise a wide variety of participants around a common goal’. There is an increasing need for collaboration within organisations in order to achieve goals and to ensure efficient work teams. Bedwell, Wildman, Diaz Granados, Salazar, Kramer and Salas (2012) describe collaboration as an evolving process where two or more parties engage in joint activities in a reciprocal manner with the aim of achieving at least one shared goal.

Mangaliso (2001) argues that the *Ubuntu* philosophy has not been fully embraced in the workplace since its strategic advantages are not fully appreciated by managers. He argues for *Ubuntu* as a means of gaining competitive advantage in the South African workplace, and provides a guideline for how managers can incorporate the principles of *Ubuntu* within organisations. He outlines the guiding principles as follows:

1. Treat others with dignity and respect
He points out that helpfulness towards others can be a contributing factor towards creating an environment of collegiality that is based on caring and sharing. He places emphasis on humility, harmony and valuing diversity.
2. Be willing to negotiate in good faith
The manager would have to be empathetic when resolving conflict, as well as take time out to listen.

3. Provide opportunities for self-expression
He argues that honouring achievement, self-fulfilment and the affirmation of values would result in the creation of goodwill among employees
4. Understand the beliefs and practices of indigenous people
This would be done through incorporating indigenous practices and beliefs into standard corporate policies.
5. Honour seniority, especially in leadership choices
Appreciating the value of the experience, connections and wisdom that seniority adds.
6. Promote equity in the workplace
He suggests that this be done through exercising fairness in the recruiting and promoting of previously disadvantaged individuals.
7. Be flexible and accommodative
The manager would have to balance using the principles of *Ubuntu* with other management principles that may be in place and have been tried and tested already.

Ncube (2010) argues that *Ubuntu*, from a worldview perspective or guiding philosophy, holds promise for progressive and ethical change for Africa, and so developed an *Ubuntu* leadership philosophy framework, partly based on Mbigi's (1997) African Tree concept, as a humanistic approach to leadership that could offer an alternative to Western leadership philosophies.

Table 1 below highlights the main themes found in the Ubuntu Leadership Philosophy Framework.

Table 1: Ncube (2010) Ubuntu Leadership Philosophy Framework

Modelling the way	By committing to African values and ethical behaviour, the leader would model ethical values and characteristics for others.
Communal Enterprise and Shared Vision	Leaders inspire a shared vision for the future. Enterprise is seen as communal with benefits derived from it being shared rather than attributed to an individual. Group outcomes would out-weigh individual goals
Change and Transformation	Change is initiated by leaders through an open and transparent process. Decisions making would be through reaching consensus, and the process would be iterative. Transformation would be a gradual process.
Interconnectedness, Interdependency and Empowerment	Building relationships would be central to effective leadership. Through building relationships with others, leaders would build trust and foster collaboration and reciprocity. Leaders would be cognisant of interconnectedness as a principle of Ubuntu and thereby empower others by allowing them to act on their own initiative and belief in themselves.
Collectivism and Solidarity	Collectivism as an African social culture would translate into the needs of the individual being less important than the needs of the community. The collectivist mentality would encourage teamwork and a non-competitive environment. Solidarity and the spirit of working together towards achieving common goals for the benefit of the organisation.
Continuous Integrated Development	Leaders practicing Ubuntu would work towards cultivating innovation and developing human potential. Through building relationships and mentoring, leaders would empower others by nurturing their growth.

Ncube (2010) argues that developmental leadership philosophies focus on leaders, behaviours, values and traits, and that *ubuntu* is rather about the nature of the individual in a leadership role. The model therefore does not place significant emphasis on the values and behaviour of *ubuntu* leadership, and thus falls short in highlighting how the model can be practically applied in organisations as a means of contributing towards effectiveness. Shrivastava, Selvarajah, Meyer and Dorasamy (2014) suggest

that further research is needed to test whether managers who subscribe more strongly to *ubuntu* values also display different workplace behaviours in terms of greater inclusivity and impartiality. The study investigated how the values described above can be translated to behaviours and character traits that individuals demonstrate within organisations. Muchiri (2011) puts forward that more work is required to establish the key characteristics, behaviours and leadership models to build a logical taxonomy of leadership behaviours and approaches for organisations in sub-Saharan Africa. The *Ubuntu* leadership philosophy framework highlights the importance of building relationships, but fails to promote it in as far as it can contribute towards the quality of relationships between leaders and their followers, and effectiveness within organisations.

2.4 Ubuntu values and behaviour

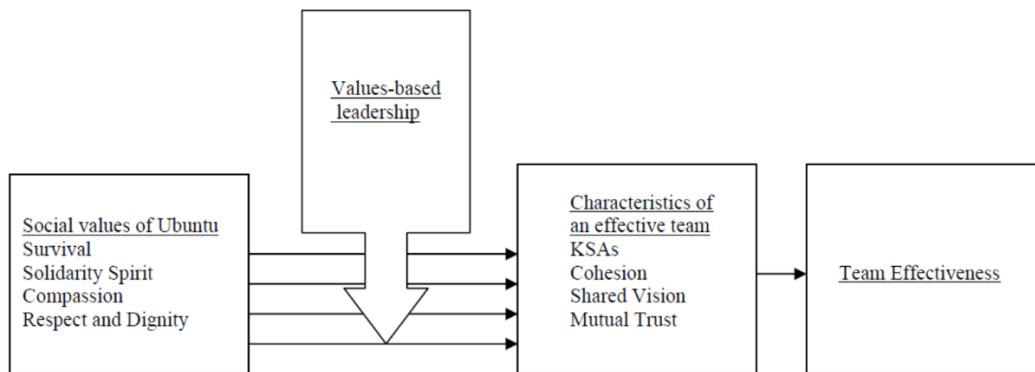
Khoza (2006) describes *ubuntu* as a concept that is generally accepted as the foundation of sound relations in African societies, ascribing values such as a universal brotherhood for Africans, sharing, respect and treating other people as human beings. *Ubuntu* has been ascribed values such as caring and community, harmony and hospitality, respect and responsiveness that individuals and groups display for one another to *ubuntu*. (Mangaliso, 2001)

Mbigi (1997) proposed a framework of *ubuntu* based on the collective African way of life. His framework contains five key social values of *ubuntu* based on the collective finger's theory. Namely, survival, solidarity spirit, compassion, respect and dignity. Poovan *et al* (2006) quote Mbigi and Maree (1995, p.110) in their explanation of the principle behind the collective finger's theory by the African proverb 'a thumb, although it is strong, cannot kill aphids on its own, and that it would instead require the collective cooperation of the other fingers'. They further illustrate by stating that the fingers can be seen to be individual person who would need to work collectively in order to achieve a goal.

Poovan *et al* (2006) explore the management of South Africa's diverse workforce by analysing the impact of the social values of *ubuntu* on specific characteristics of team effectiveness. They argue that in the context of South Africa's diverse workforce, it would be wise to consider using an Afrocentric approach to leadership based on the value system of *ubuntu*. They put forward that the concept of Afrocentricity "promotes a

moral and spiritual transformation in African culture to reintroduce principles of communalism, participation and connectedness to African people, thereby producing a uniquely African leadership style” (p.20). They identify four team characteristics that are significant for team effectiveness, namely Knowledge Skills and Abilities (KSA’s), Cohesion, Shared Vision and Mutual Trust. Figure 1 below illustrates Poovan *et al* (2006) theoretical model below depicting how Mbigi’s five values of Ubuntu can have a positive effect on the four team characteristics that are significant for team effectiveness.

Figure 1: Poovan *et al* (2006) Theoretical model of the relationship between Ubuntu social values, Value-based Leadership, Effective team characteristics and Team effectiveness



The main theoretical concept that emanated from their research was collectivism, and that without a collective mind-set, the social values of *Ubuntu* would not be possible to practice. They concluded that if *Ubuntu* is to be applied to South African organisations as a value system to ensure effectiveness, team members would need to not only tackle tasks collectively but that they would have to see themselves a collective through having a collective mind-set.

Poovan *et al* (2006, p.21) point out that “*Ubuntu* values are not exclusively African. However, they limited their study to Black South Africans, which they justified by making the assumption that these individuals would have an intimate experience of *Ubuntu*. However, it may not be the case that the understanding and experience of *Ubuntu* is along ethnic lines. The study does not place emphasis on the behavioural and personal qualities of the members within teams. While it does discuss cohesion and mutual trust, it does not consider building high quality leader-follower relationships as a contributing factor towards these factors, as ultimately to team effectiveness.

Taylor (2014) puts forward that, from a philosophical and ethical perspective, Ubuntu has implications on relationships between people and how those relationships should be conducted. He argues that Ubuntu can be understood from a deontological perspective, which would be grounded in rule-based theory, a consequentialist approach which would be defining Ubuntu-like behaviour, or that approaching Ubuntu from a virtue ethics perspective, which would focus on character traits that would define what kind of people we should be. Theory has sought to find traits that correlate with the attributes of great leaders in an attempt to gain an understanding of leadership (Mothilal, 2010). Although a deontological approach could allow for easier application, implementation and interpretation, it may be more valuable to explore the behaviour and character traits that are in line with the Ubuntu value system to better understand how leaders and followers interact and relate to each other.

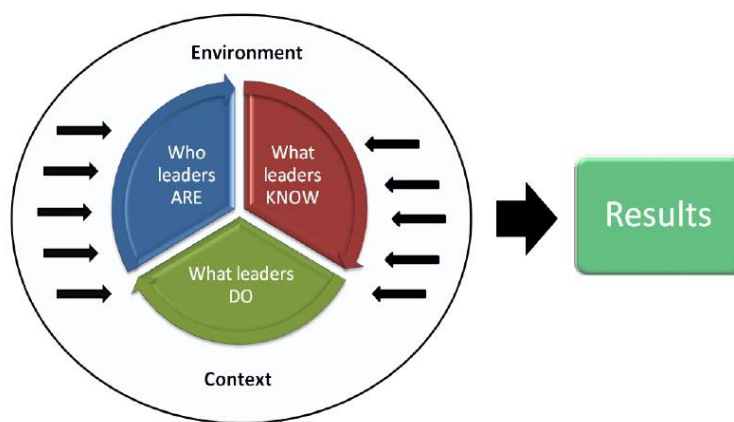
Dulewicz and Higgs (2005) as cited by Deppe (2010) further suggested a framework of studying leadership that is cognisant of the personality, cognitive, behavioural and learning factors. They put forward that effective leadership is a combination of:

1. Personal characteristics, which would enable an individual to engage in a leadership role effectively
2. Skills and behaviour, that would contribute towards providing effective leadership.
3. A range of styles which would related to the context in which leadership is to be practiced
4. The leadership behaviours would be exercised in a range of ways to march the personal style of the individual leader.

Ulrich, Zenger and Smallwood (1999), as cited by Mothilal (2010) put forward that leaders' attributes can be defined by who they are, which includes their values, motives, personal traits and characteristics; what they know, which includes their skills, abilities and competencies; and what they do, which includes their behaviour, habits and styles.

Mothlal (2010), Deppe (2010) and Sandilands (2010) further explored the attributes of effective leadership, combined their research and developed a New Leadership Model illustrated in Figure 2 below:

Figure 2: Mothlal (2010), Deppe (2010) and Sandilands (2010) New Leadership Model



Mothlal (2010) explored the “who leaders are” component and put forward six elements of personal traits that contribute to the effectiveness of leaders, namely Drive, Conscientiousness, Self Confidence, Openness, Charisma and Emotional Intelligence.

Deppe (2010) identified fifteen themes relevant to the behaviours of effective leaders as engaging and being approachable, having and articulating a vision, managing emotions, inspiring and motivating, communicating, choosing the right team, displaying energy and passion, showing you care, listening, being visible, focusing on results, empowering one’s staff, expressing trust and confidence in one’s people, responding to situations in a flexible manner, as well as building strong teams.

Sandilands (2010) explored the “what leaders know” component of the study, looking into the knowledge attributes that influence the behaviours of leaders in South Africa, and how they are acquired. His study found that the majority of leaders saw knowledge

as an enabler to enact behaviour, and that knowledge was acquired through experience, qualifications, continuous learning and mentorships.

2.5 Ubuntu and the leader-follower exchange

Leadership is often considered as a social exchange process in leader-follower relations (Chan and Chan, 2005). Leadership can also be defined as being socially constructed by leaders and followers in a web of reciprocal exchanges in which the subject and object become identical (Liu, 2010; Shutte, 1993). Relational leaders hold themselves in relationship with others, and are therefore morally accountable to others (Cunliffe and Eriksen, 2011). Burns (1978, p. 20) sees the purpose of leadership and the leader–follower relationship as a transforming one through which ‘... one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality’.

Leader-member exchange has its roots in vertical dyad linkage (VDL) theory (Cashman, Dansereau, Graen and Haga, 1976; Dansereau, Graen and Haga, 1975; Graen, 1976; Graen and Cashman, 1975). The premise of VDL, and later leader-member exchange, is the existence of dyadic relationships, with leaders differentiating among their followers and forming relationships that vary in quality between their followers (Dansereau, Graen, and Haga, 1975 and Kauppila, 2016).

Graen, Cashman, Ginsburg and Schiemann (1977), as cited by Brower, Schoorman and Tan (2000), assert that Leader Member Exchange has three elements to it – the supervisor, the subordinate and the exchange relationship – and put forward that the quality of the exchange relationship is as an objective element separate from the individuals involved in relationship.

Several scholars have presented the dimensions of Leader Member Exchange, and some examples of them are summarised in the Table 2 below:

Table 2: The Dimensions of Leader Member Exchange

Graen and Uhl-Bien's (1995) three dimensional conceptualisation of Leader Member Exchange	Liden and Maslyn's (1998) four dimensional conceptualisation of Leader Member Exchange	Schriesheim, Castro and Cogliser's (1999) six dimensional conceptualisation of Leader Member Exchange
1. Loyalty	1. Loyalty	1. Loyalty
2. Respect	2. Affection	2. Attention
3. Trust	3. Contribution	3. Trust
	4. Professional Respect	4. Mutual Support
		5. Liking
		6. Latitude

Leader-member exchange differentiation

Leadership-member exchange differentiation occurs when leaders form high quality relationships with some members of their work groups and low quality transactional relationships with other members (Vidyardhi, Liden, Anand, Erdogan and Ghosh, 2010). As this stream of research developed from VDL and became known as Leader Member Exchange, the labels of the 'in-group' (in which the leader develops a much closer relationship with some subordinates and gives them more negotiating latitude) and the 'out-group' (the other subordinates) were dropped, and the quality of the relationship was measured on a continuum based on the premise that each relationship was unique (Brower *et al*, 2000).

Due to the uniqueness of the dyadic relationships between leaders and followers, there is differentiation in the quality of leader-follower exchanges (Liden, Erdogan, Wayne and Sparrowe, 2006). The levels of differentiation between followers may be low when the leader forms similar – high or low quality – relationships with all group members (Kauppila, 2016). Naidoo, Scherbaum, Goldstein and Graen (2011) put forth that

Leader Member Exchange relationships, and the leaders' as well as their followers' perceptions of and attributions about them, are likely to develop over time as norms for behaviour form and individuals become familiar with each other. It is important that leaders focus on creating a relationship system with all members of the group, as maintaining high quality relationship systems with all followers will contribute towards valuable organisational results (Miricescu, 2015). The willingness to take the interests of others into consideration, while role-modelling and valuing their development, stands as a crucial aspect for emerging and current leaders (Martin, Naylor, Jefferson, David and Cavazos, 2015).

Leader-member exchange, group dynamics and performance

High quality Leader Member Exchange relationships are characterised by trust, open communication and information sharing, while low quality Leader Member Exchange relationships are characterised by contractual type obligations and minimal resource exchanges (Anand, Vidarthi, Liden and Rousseau, 2010; Walumbwa, Cropanzano and Goldman, 2011). The premise of Leader Member Exchange theory is that leaders differentiate among their followers (Dansereau, Graen, and Haga, 1975). The basis of their differentiation could be objective factors such as the follower's performance or ability. Naidoo, Scherbaum, Goldstein and Graen (2011) highlight that leaders tend to form high quality relationships with some employees, often high performers or high ability followers, and low quality relationships with others, who are usually low performing followers.

Through differentiating, leaders assign work tasks to the followers most capable of successfully completing them, making use of each member's capacities to produce high levels of performance (Liden *et al*, 2006). However, if followers perceive a leader's differentiation to be based on factors other than competence or ability, feelings of resentment and injustice are likely to develop, which would impact negatively on the group's functioning and performance (Hooper and Martin 2008). The perceptions followers have of the basis of their leaders' differentiation, as well as the leaders' objectivity in forming Leader Member Exchange relationships with their followers, are therefore important for team dynamics.

The levels of quality of relationships not only has an impact on team dynamics, but also on the allocation of tasks. Maslyn and Uhl-Bien (2001) attribute the level of support and the assigning of tasks to the extent of the quality of the leader-follower relationship, with challenging work tasks and high levels of support being apportioned to followers in

high quality relationships and menial work and low levels of support being apportioned to followers in low quality relationships. Mangaliso (2001) points out that *Ubuntu* in management places an emphasis on the social effect of conversation, with primacy being awarded to establishing relationships in which unity and understanding among group members is valued above efficiency and accuracy of language.

Khomba and Kanguade-Ulaya (2013) argue that *Ubuntu* is centred on collectivism and teamwork, the creation of synergies and competitive advantages through humanist leadership styles and a consensus in teamwork systems, effective communication and a community-based corporate social responsibility. They put forth that applying the *Ubuntu* philosophy within organisations does not necessarily mean that one would not address themselves to a problem, but that they would take into account whether their actions would empower or enable the community around them.

Theory has not reached consensus on the direct link between Leader Member Exchange differentiation and performance, as it posits that this relationship is dependent on conditions such as high levels of interdependence within groups (Liden *et al*, 2006; and Naidoo *et al*, 2011), as well as the existence of group process variables such as cohesiveness and synergy (Dotan, Goldstein, Nishii, Mayer; and Schneider, 2004 as cited by Naidoo *et al*, 2011). Theory to the contrary found no negative relationship between Leader Member Exchange differentiation and group members' work outcomes (Bauer and Erdogan 2010; Gooty and Yammarino, 2013; Liao, Liu, and Loi, 2010).

Dansereau, Graen and Haga (1975), Duchon, Green and Taber (1986), as well as Gerstner and Day (1997) established that followers with high quality exchanges with their leaders perform better compared to followers with lower quality exchanges, thereby establishing that there are positive effects of individual Leader Member Exchange quality on individual level outcomes such as follower performance and attitudes. Burch and Guarana (2014) put forward that Leader Member Exchange highlights the importance of leaders' unique relationships with followers as the driver of positive attitudes and behaviours.

Walumbwa *et al* (2011) highlight two sets of processes through which Leader Member Exchange enhances job performance and organisational citizenship. The first being the social exchange process in which high Leader Member Exchange managers encourage reciprocal obligations such as commitment in their supervisors. The second

is through the advancement of self and means efficacy, which then improves job performance.

As a value system, *Ubuntu* is characterised into five key values by Mbigi (1997); namely survival, solidarity spirit, compassion, respect and dignity. Poovan *et al* (2006) investigated how these five values influence team effectiveness. Their study was limited to participants that were solely of African descent, with their focus on teams. This study will investigate whether these values are of importance and to what extent they are practised in the leader-follower relationships within organisations.

The extent, as well as the basis of Leader Member Exchange differentiation in a group with leaders who practise an *Ubuntu* style of leadership, has not been explored and would be of interest, particularly with regards to knowledge sharing, as well as the extent of support and interdependence within groups that have leaders who have an *Ubuntu* style of leadership.

2.6 Conclusion

Theory on *Ubuntu* and its usefulness in the current society as well as within organisations is highly contested. Mainly academia is conflicted on whether it offers possibilities for transformation within South African society or whether it is open to manipulation and abuse due to its vagueness and inherent contradictions (Eliastam, 2015). Motolini and Kwindiwgi (2013) highlight a disconnection between the ideals of *Ubuntu* and the lived reality in most South Africans. They suggest that *Ubuntu* does not have the capacity to shape ethics in the current South African context. Wanasika (2013) does not support the presence of African values in the post-apartheid South African workplace, having found that black managers aspire to values which are antithetical to their traditional values.

Literature highlights the importance of a leader's relationship with their followers as a driver of positive attitudes and behaviours. From the literature review it has been established that there is a need for the advancement of *Ubuntu* within leadership in organisations, as leaders can harness its philosophy to positively influence follower responses and organisational effectiveness (Kamoche, 2011). As Khomba and Kanguade-Ulaya (2013: p. 686) note, the values of *Ubuntu* 'can find resonance well

beyond Africa's borders', whereas West (2014: p. 53) seeks greater clarity as to the 'degree to which *Ubuntu* values are universal or particular to Africa'.

South Africa is in need of ethical, effective and responsible leadership, not only to address the challenges within society, but in ensuring effectiveness within multicultural and diverse organisations. In the context of transformation of industries with the previously excluded individuals entering and participating in the construction industry, it was an opportunity to explore how this approach to leadership could contribute towards cohesion and effectiveness in project teams within organisations.

3. Research questions

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this exploratory research was to firstly gain a deeper understanding of how *Ubuntu* can be relevant in the business context as a relational style of leadership in as far as it impacts leader-follower exchanges. Secondly, using the Mothilal (2010), Deppe (2010), Sandilands (2010) New Leadership Model, it sought to gain a deeper understanding of the values (who) and behaviour (how) of leaders who could practice an *Ubuntu* style of leadership to be effective within organisations.

3.2 Research question 1

Theorists have developed guiding principles and frameworks around how *Ubuntu* can be applied to organisations (see Mangaliso, 2001; Ncube, 2010), however theory on *Ubuntu* has not reached consensus on its interpretation, relevance and application in modern society, and as a result its usefulness in modern society and in business remains highly contested. Theory around how *Ubuntu* as an approach that is the premise of sound human relations can be applied as a relational leadership theory within organisations.

The study asked the following question:

How can *Ubuntu* as a relationship-centred approach to leadership be applied in the business context?

3.3 Research question 2

Dulewicz and Higgs (2005), as cited by Deppe (2010), suggest a framework of studying leadership that is cognisant of the personality, cognitive, behavioural and learning factors. More research to establish the key characteristics, behaviours and leadership models to build a logical taxonomy of leadership behaviours and approaches for organisations in sub-Saharan Africa. The study sought to explore the behaviour and character traits that are in line with the *Ubuntu* value system to better understand how leaders and followers interact and relate to each other.

The study raised the following question:

How can *Ubuntu*-like behaviour and personal traits contribute towards how leaders and followers interact and relate to each other towards improving the effectiveness of working teams?

3.4 Research question 3

Literature highlighted the importance of a leader's relationship with their followers as a driver of positive attitudes and behaviours. West (2012) describes *Ubuntu* as a communitarian philosophy that highlights interpersonal relationships and values such as harmony and care. This study sought to explore leaders' and followers' perceptions about *Ubuntu* in as far as it can contribute towards the quality of Leader Member Exchange relationships within work teams. Stemming from the aphorism of *Ubuntu* which states that '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*' – a person is a person through other people – which Bekker (2006) describes as the capacity of African culture to express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, humanity and mutuality in the interest of building and maintaining communities with mutual justice and caring, the study explores whether *Ubuntu* is perceived to have a place in creating high quality relationships between leaders and their followers.

The study asked the following question:

How can *Ubuntu* contribute towards high quality leader-follower relationships within working teams?

4. Research Methodology and Design

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology that was employed to investigate the research questions posed in Chapter 3. The research methodology used was based on various publications of qualitative research methods from several scholars, including Saunders and Lewis (2012), Marshall and Rossman (2014), Maxwell (2012) and Creswell (2013).

4.2 Research design

The research study was qualitative in nature. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to find answers to the research questions. Despite extensive writing on *Ubuntu* and research on the subject in the fields of leadership and business ethics, limited research has been conducted on the relational aspects of *Ubuntu*, particularly within the field of leader-follower exchange. The methodology was deemed to be the most appropriate approach for instances where little is written on a subject and when the objective is to gain a better understanding of the topic under investigation (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2013) highlights that collecting qualitative data poses advantages to the researcher in that it can be not only convenient time wise, but it also represents data that the interviewees have given focussed attention. Maxwell (2012) put forward that qualitative research intends to explore:

1. The meanings and perspectives of the people studied
2. How perspectives are shaped by their physical, social and environmental contexts
3. The specific processes that are involved in maintaining or altering the phenomena.

The nature of the research was exploratory and intended to gain insights from construction professionals on their perceptions of *Ubuntu* and how it can be translated into the relationships between individuals within leadership and follower positions. Gray (2013) highlights that exploratory research sought to explore what is happening and to ask questions around it.

Saunders and Lewis (2012) describe the usual means of conducting exploratory research as:

- Searching for academic literature

- Talking to experts in the field
- Conducting focus group interviews.

The academic literature search assisted in gaining an understanding of the theory around *Ubuntu*, as well as the frameworks that have been developed around the concept within the field of leadership. The search of the literature also informed the theory of Leader Member Exchange and the applicable constructs and dimensions around Leader Member Exchange as well as the model of relational leadership by Brower *et al* (2000). The research study did not involve focus group interviews, but instead involved one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with professionals within the construction industry.

4.3 Data collection tool: semi-structured interviews

Marshall and Rossman (2014) defined exploratory methods as appropriate for when the researcher intends to:

- Investigate phenomena that is not well understood
- Identify and discover categories of meaning
- Generate hypotheses for further research.

The study explored the values of *Ubuntu* to discover whether the categories of meaning around *Ubuntu* were relevant in the context of business, competition and relationships within the construction industry. The aim of the interview was to establish interviewees' perceptions of *Ubuntu* as a leadership style among South African construction professionals, and the research questions asked were in the context of current and ideal practices, as well as how *Ubuntu* can contribute towards their improvement. The research questions posed were therefore intended to explore and - where possible - challenge existing data while gathering new data.

The research explored construction professionals' perceptions of *Ubuntu* and its place within the current business context, and particularly how it can impact relationships between leaders and followers within teams in organisations as well as in project teams. Participants were interviewed in order to find out their opinions and perceptions of the role and significance of *Ubuntu* in leadership, specifically with respect to how it translates into the relationships between leaders and followers within organisations, as well as how it can, if at all, be used as a means to bring about a value-based

leadership approach to effect positive change in South African small to medium enterprises within the construction industry. Interviewees were not asked to disclose their names nor their places of employment, but were encouraged to give practical examples of their real-life experiences. This allowed for the full exploration of participants' beliefs and perceptions, and the open-ended nature of the questions enabled the participants to communicate more spontaneous accounts of their social beliefs.

4.4 Population, universe and sampling

4.4.1 Universe

The universe and industry consists of public and private companies, both formal and informal businesses. Within the universe are construction professionals and from it, the 'leaders' and 'followers' definitions are subjective.

4.4.2 Population

The population of a study comprises a complete set of members available to the researcher (Saunders and Lewis, 2012) and for this study is composed of professionally registered architects, quantity surveyors, project and construction managers, as well as civil engineers from small to medium enterprise companies within the building industry in South Africa. The population was further defined as construction professionals currently residing or practicing in Johannesburg and Pretoria, South Africa.

4.4.3 Sampling

Saunders and Lewis (2012) describe a sampling frame as a complete list of all members of the total population, and that a sample should be selected from a sample frame when using probability sampling. Professional registration is a legal requirement in South Africa and, as such, a sampling frame in the form of a list of names of professionally registered individuals was available from the professional registration bodies, which include the South African Council for the Architectural Profession (SACAP), the South African Council for the Quantity Surveying Profession (SACQSP), the South African Council for Project and Construction Management Professions (SACPCMP), as well as the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA). Due to time constraints and no means of accessing information pertaining to contact details, as well as the exploratory and qualitative nature of the research, non-probability sampling was

used. This was deemed appropriate because of the lack of a complete list of the population and therefore no means of sampling at random (Saunders and Lewis, 2012). The researcher had access to a considerable portion of the expertise in the construction sector, and targeted construction professionals from the architectural, engineering and project management fields.

Robinson (2014) put forward that the size of the sample can be limited due to constraints including planning, engagements and availability. The initial intent was to interview 15 participants, but due to time and scheduling constraints, ten participants were picked from the population based on the judgement of the researcher according to the criteria of leaders and followers set out below, as well as from referrals within the industry. The research participants were categorised as leaders and followers, and the sample inclusion and exclusion criteria was developed to ensure homogeneity of the population (Robinson, 2014) as follows:

Leaders:

- Have senior and leadership roles within the organisation or project team and have influence over followers
- Have decision-making rights
- Have subordinates reporting to them
- Do not necessarily have to be the employer, but have powers to manage and discipline subordinates
- Have a level of control over operations
- Have a minimum of ten years post-qualification experience or a professional registration, which would entail an extensive amount of experience within the industry.

Followers:

- Have junior positions within the organisations
- Report to senior professionals within the organisation
- Are registered as candidates or professionals with the relevant professional registration bodies, but do not have senior and leadership roles or the minimum years post-qualification experience
- A consultant within a project team that is led by a consultant who acts as a principal agent on behalf of a client.

The sample inclusion and exclusion criteria assisted in ensuring that the interviewees were from the correct sector and fields, and that they would be knowledgeable of the construction sector so as to provide meaningful insight from the perspectives of both leaders and followers within organisations and project teams.

Purposive sampling was utilised due to convenience and time constraints. Snowball sampling was used, whereby interviewees were asked for references of further participants that would meaningfully contribute to the research project. The sample group included both males and females and covered all racial groups to capture the demographics within the industry as best as possible.

4.5 Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis was individual professionals within the building industry, which included those in leadership as well as follower positions. Their perceptions of *Ubuntu* in leadership were explored within the context of leader-follower relationships within organisations.

4.6 Data collection

Data was collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Due to the lack of previous studies on the subject of the research, there was no secondary data available. The research study therefore had to use primary qualitative data collected from the participants of the research (Saunders and Lewis, 2012). Following the obtainment of clearance, the researcher called potential interviewees to explain the nature of the research and to ask for their participation as interviewees. In instances where the potential candidates were not available for the research, they were asked to recommend suitable candidates in their place. The interview was preceded by a pre-interview letter. The researcher made 20 requests for participants, and 16 positive responses were received. Of the 16, only ten were available due to various reasons, which included time and scheduling constraints. Using the interview guide, the researcher conducted a pre-test before conducting the interviews to ensure that the time for completing the interview would not exceed one hour. The interview guide was not modified or altered following the process of gaining ethical clearance and conducting the pre-test.

The interviewees were asked to provide a preferred means and place for conducting the interviews, and the decision to conduct them telephonically or face-to-face was based on their convenience. Four of the interviews were conducted telephonically, while the remaining six were conducted as face-to-face interviews. None of the participants were willing to conduct the interviews via Skype due to not owning the software or not being able to connect to it. The interviews lasted an average of 45 minutes. The interview was succeeded by an immediate feedback session or a post-interview thank you phone call, in which the researcher thanked the interviewees and highlighted their valuable input. The interviews were then manually transcribed verbatim by the researcher due to financial constraints and thus not being able to use professional transcribing service providers.

4.7 Formulation of the interview guide

The interview was divided into unstructured questions where the interviewer asked probing questions until the line of questioning was exhausted. The interview guide provided the much-needed overall structure to the interview, but the researcher employed effective communication and listening skills to ensure that the interviews were engaging and as comfortable and natural as possible. Additional questions were asked to further explore the research question or in instances where the interviewee posed perceptions or opinions that had the potential of contributing more insight on a particular question or theme. The sessions were recorded using a Dictaphone and then transcribed and analysed for emerging themes using qualitative techniques. The researcher took down notes during the interview, which included notes around the main themes identified, as well as the surrounding environment and body language of the interviewees. The researcher captured demographic data at the beginning of each interview, and noted facts such as age, years of experience, position and educational background.

The unstructured portion of the interviews were a discussion centred around what leadership styles the interviewees know of and have come across during their experience in the construction industry. Probing questions were asked around their perceptions of the types of leadership styles they have encountered, as well as their perceptions of their effectiveness. This was followed by structured questions around the main themes of the research study.

The three questions posed in chapter three each explored different aspects of *Ubuntu*. Research question 1 was posed to check the understanding of *Ubuntu* that the participant had, as well as to assess their perception of its applicability as a leadership style. The questions posed were intended to probe into what value *Ubuntu* has or could potentially have in the current business context. The concept of *Ubuntu* was not explained, but the contesting opinions within academia pertaining to its relevance in the business context were highlighted. This was to ensure that the interviewer would provide their opinion of the meaning of *Ubuntu*, as well as their understanding of its place within the current business context.

Research question 2 was posed to gain the perceptions of *Ubuntu* from a deontological and consequentialist perspective, as well as how *Ubuntu*-like behaviour and personal qualities can be translated into interpersonal relationships, communication and decision making. In the exploration of leaders within the context of *Ubuntu*, the study sought to gain an understanding of who they are, which included their values, motives, personal traits and characteristics; what they know, which includes their skills, abilities and competencies; and what they do, which included their behaviour, habits and styles.

Research question 3 explored the quality of relationships within the context of *Ubuntu*. The key values ascribed to *Ubuntu* were highlighted and the questions posed looked into the themes around differentiation, collectivism, teamwork and competition.

Table 3 below is a summary of the interview guide used for collecting the data, as well as the concepts and themes that were explored relative to the research questions in Chapter 3:

Table 3: Interview Guide Questions Summary Relative to Research Questions

Interview Question	Theme Explored	Research Question
1 a – g	Ubuntu as a Leadership Theory	Research Question 1
2 a – f	Ubuntu Values, Behaviour and Personal Traits	Research Question 2
3 a – e	Ubuntu and Leader Member Exchange	Research Question 3

4.8 Data analysis

Creswell (2014) describes the process of qualitative research as involving emerging questions and procedures, collecting data typically in the participants setting, analysing data inductively by building from general themes drawn and making interpretations of the meaning of the data. The data analysis was inductive.

The process of analysing the data was based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step process for undergoing thematic analysis, and included:

1. Familiarising oneself with the data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing the themes
5. Defining and naming the themes
6. Producing the report.

All interview transcripts were read through and initial notes were made around the researcher's first impressions. The transcripts were then read individually and each sentence of the transcribed interviews was read and re-read using a line-by-line analysis. The data then underwent a process of open coding, in which the data was examined word-by-word and line-by-line and codes are freely generated, which reflects the words of the respondents themselves (Poovan *et al*, 2006).

The coding structures were developed around the relevant words, phrases and sentences from the interviews. The relevant words, phrases and sentences were labelled. The researcher was aware of the level of subjectivity involved in the coding process and based the criteria for assessing the relevance of codes around the perceptions, differences and concepts surrounding the categories of information that were relevant to the literature search and phrases that were repeated several times or which the interviewee placed emphasis on or highlighted as being important. The categories had to be internally consistent but distinct from one another (Marshall and Rossman, 2014).

The aim of the coding process was to discover the underlying patterns within the data. The process of coding the data took an average of two and a half hours for each interview, and the total time taken for coding amounted to 25 hours.

The relevant codes were then grouped into categories or families and further analysed to highlight co-occurrences and connections between them. A hierarchy among the categories was noted as some were of more significance than others.

The data analysis was inductive in nature and used the key themes covered in the interview to analyse the coding data. Results were then interpreted to generate theoretical constructs and therefore relevant recommendations.

4.9 Research limitations

The participants of the study were leaders who have senior and leadership roles within organisations or project teams and have influence over followers. These included senior, professionally registered consultants, executives and directors in organisations within the construction industry. The study involved participants who are followers who report to or are part of project teams led by leaders in organisations within the construction industry. The study was limited to companies that employ professionals within the building industry and included architectural, mechanical and electrical engineering, as well as construction project management organisations. Geographical and time limitations resulted in the sample selected being from construction professionals residing in the Johannesburg and Pretoria region.

Due to the small size of the sample, it is not representative of the population and as such results are not necessarily applicable to the entire population. There could be bias on the part of the researcher in conducting the sampling technique. Time constraints were a limitation to the study and posed a challenge to the depth of the study. In-depth interviews take up a substantial amount of time, and this could have negatively influenced a portion of the potential interviewees approached from being willing to take part in the research.

The researcher was mindful to avoid interviewer bias, which occurs when the comments, tone or non-verbal behaviour of the interviewer would create bias in the way that respondents respond to questions. The research study could have been prone to response bias, which occurs when respondents could be sensitive to certain themes and therefore choose not to reveal and discuss certain topics which the interviewer may wish to explore (Saunders *et al*, 2007).

4.10 Conclusion

The research study was qualitative and exploratory and used inductive analysis of its data. The population of the study included professionally registered construction professionals from small to medium enterprise companies within the building industry who are currently residing or practicing in Johannesburg and Pretoria, South Africa. Ten construction professionals were interviewed for the research study, and the interviews were recorded and transcribed into text. The transcribed interviews were then coded, and codes were reviewed according to a criteria set for basing their relevance to the research study. The research limitations have been identified and the researcher took reasonable steps to mitigate the risk of bias. The results of the research study are presented in the next chapter, which uses the research questions presented in chapter three.

5. Results

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to gain a deeper understanding of Ubuntu, and how relationships within the leadership-follower exchange can be harnessed and maintained with Ubuntu as a leadership approach. It sought to explore the relational nature between leaders and followers, in the context of leadership being co-created through the interconnected relationships within the business context.

This section presents the results of the perceptions of Ubuntu as an approach to leadership in the business context. The results from the exploration of Ubuntu are from a consequentialist approach, which was defining Ubuntu-like behaviour, as well as the exploration of the character traits that would define what kind of people we should be. Finally, the results of how leaders and followers' perceptions about Ubuntu in as far as it can contribute towards the quality of Leader Member Exchange relationships within work teams are presented.

The qualitative data is presented in verbatim quotations and evidence that is cited within the framework of research questions. The themes and sub-themes are explored and emerging themes are supported by pertinent quotes. To ensure anonymity, respondents are referred to in their code names in text. Please refer to Appendix C for a description of the participants.

Demographic Information

The study conducted ten in-depth, semi-structured interviews of construction professionals.

Figure 3: Graphs - Gender and Race of Interviewees

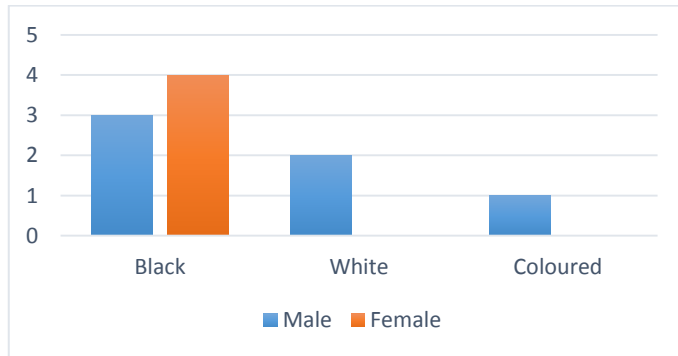


Figure 3 above illustrates the racial and gender composition of the interview participants. Of the ten interviewees participating in the research study, six were male, four were female. The interviewees' racial groups were comprised of seven black, one coloured and two white people.

Figure 4: Graphs - Professional Fields of Interviewees

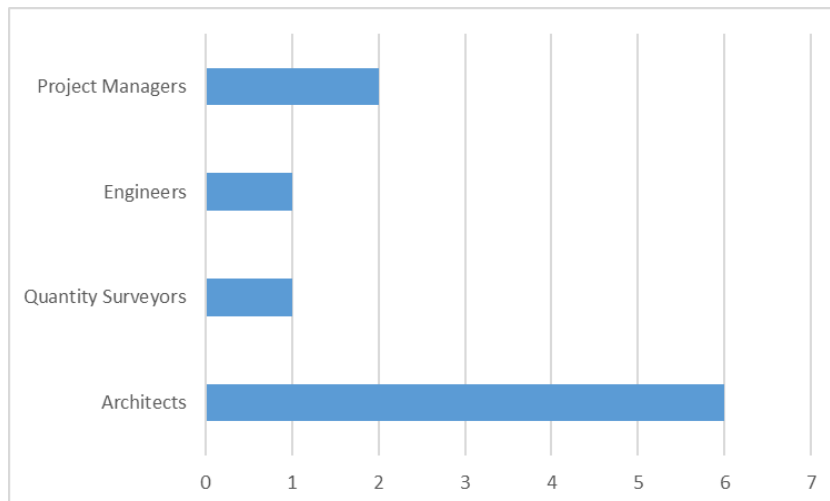


Figure 4 above illustrates the professional fields that the participants work in. The interviewees comprised of three followers and seven leaders.

Central Themes

Table 4 below highlights the main themes and sub-themes to be discussed in the presentation of the research study results.

Table 4: Main Themes and Sub-Themes

Main Theme Explored	Sub-Theme
Ubuntu as a Leadership Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaning of Ubuntu • Applicability of Ubuntu in the business context - Principles of Ubuntu - Contribution to values of organisation - Contribution towards improving relations between consultants - Contribution towards effective performance of project teams
Ubuntu Values, Behaviour and Personal Traits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ubuntu from a deontological perspective • Ubuntu from a consequentialist perspective • Ubuntu from a virtue ethics perspective
Ubuntu and Leader Member Exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader-Follower Relationships • Leader-Member Differentiation • Group Dynamics • Group Performance

The data collected from the respondents was classified into themes and sub-themes. The interview questions posed were to formulate a discussion on the perceptions of construction professionals based on their insights on the main concepts raised.

The unstructured portion of the interviews was a discussion around the types and effectiveness of leadership styles that the respondents have encountered. Respondents gave their personal experiences and highlighted that autocratic and authoritarian styles of leadership are dominant within the construction industry. Bullying and verbal abuse by leaders were described as being rife, leading to instilling fear in followers and hostility within the working environment.

Respondent B commented that that “...in the industry is quite forceful, it’s quite militant, aggressive from what I know. Even the women, I’d expect to be calm but they’re quite aggressive...that’s what I find currently within the profession. I have not found this great leadership, it’s no nonsense and they’re aggressive.”

Respondents understood the styles of leadership as being effective in producing results within the time constraints of projects. Respondent A explains that...” *mostly the guys screaming and shouting and more aggressive about getting things done in the office...it sort of moulds you to understand ... how to spend your time, how to structure what you need to do, and then you achieve it, cause once you achieve it you kind of get the whole idea as to why people behave the way they are when they are your superiors or your team leaders.* “

Although there seems to be an understanding that this approach is dysfunctional, the leadership approach seems to be results-driven and not relationship driven.

Respondent I is of the view that the style of leadership is “*a functional dysfunction: from a people point of view people are battered, but from a work point of view things get done*”

The respondents highlighted the challenges around bullying and abuse within the industry, as well as the high levels of construction professionals, particularly women, who exit the industry because of not having the resilience to cope within the hostile environment the construction industry has been described as.

“you develop your tenacity but most of the time people who don’t have that threshold that allows them to withstand those kind of pressures they often exit the industry. and that’s fair. it’s just sad that the people who exit generally happen to be females but there are males who exit as well but not in the large quantities that females do. but you develop what they call a thick skin and then you live with it.”

The need for mentorship, guidance and support from leaders was highlighted, especially at the early years of one's career. Respondent B put forward that young graduates are discriminated against because of their lack of experience, and put forward that "*people should be more receptive of different types of people, younger people*". Leaders were seen to be in positions where they could impart knowledge to their followers. Through mentorship and guidance, taking charge as well as clearly defining tasks, they could ensure that followers produce a better product.

5.2 Research Question 1: Results

The first research question sought to identify and obtain the respondents' understanding of Ubuntu, and how it relates to the business context. Respondents were asked what meaning and principles they associate with Ubuntu, as well as how those can contribute towards the values of organizations, improving relations between consultants and the performance of project teams.

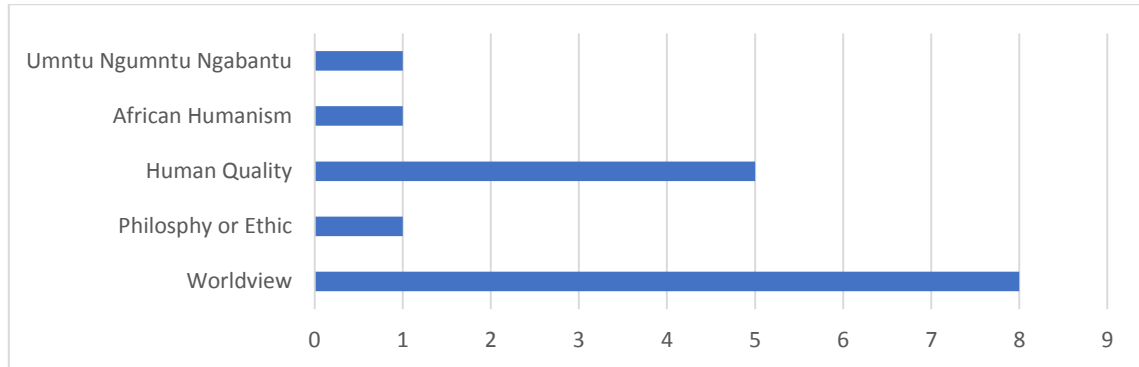
Ubuntu as a Leadership theory was divided into the sub-themes Meaning of Ubuntu, as well as Ubuntu and its application in the business context. Seven sub-questions were used to explore the theme and subthemes:

1. What meaning do you attach to Ubuntu?
2. How does it relate to the business context?
3. What are the principles of Ubuntu?
4. To what extent are these principles applied by professionals in the construction industry?
5. What value does Ubuntu as a style of leadership contribute to the values within your organisation?
6. In the context of best practice in how project teams are formulated, led and managed, do you believe Ubuntu as an approach has the potential to contribute towards improving relations between consultants?
7. How would Ubuntu as an approach positively contribute towards more effective performance of project teams?

Sub-Theme 1: Meaning of Ubuntu

Respondents provided varying definitions of Ubuntu, and believed Ubuntu had a place in society. Please refer to Appendix D for the summarized meanings of Ubuntu. Figure 5 below highlights the categories of the definitions provided in the study.

Figure 5: Meaning of Ubuntu



Ubuntu was predominantly defined as a worldview. Ubuntu was described as being grounded in collaboration, communitarianism, and interconnectedness.

...” you start something and you sort of reach into the community, or reach into a business venture with somebody that you know is good ...and you try with your skills and your resources try to make another person’s idea or business work”

Respondents described the meaning of Ubuntu as collaboration, which was explained working with other businesses, sharing opportunities with others within the community and working together as one team with the same goal in mind.

...” you draw on other people other skills other organisations and with that you grow the circle and you build what was a singular project goal became the multiple goals, multiple projects”

Through building relationships Ubuntu was explained as drawing on the skills within one’s network to achieve project goals.

From a communitarian perspective, Ubuntu was explained as an African concept that relates to living life as a community. Respondent F explains the communitarian concept as “*in everything as you achieve or as you grow or as you do whatever you do that you take care of the next person.*” The Ubuntu principle of placing importance on the community was highlighted by Respondent E, who saw imparting knowledge and skills by the professionals to graduates who will form part of the next generation of professionals.

Interconnectedness was explained as an understanding the value and contribution of everything and everyone, and achieving goals through a holistic approach. Respondent I explained that having Ubuntu means that a person has “*a certain understanding and empathy common human comradery for those around you and nature*” and a “*higher sense of understanding that you don’t live on this world alone.*”

...” *you are a leader because there are followers, because they need a leader.*”

The above extract points to an interdependency between leaders and followers, as well as between people within organisation and work teams. This was further elaborated by Respondent I who explained that Ubuntu is “an appreciation that every person has value and that as a community we are we are because of each other.”

As a human quality Ubuntu was described as being cultured and sensitive towards the community when approaching projects. Respondent I explained that the construction sector had an element of Ubuntu in that construction professionals have to be considerate of the end user when designing buildings and structures, while Respondent B recalled refusing to work on a project that entailed relocating a community to accommodate the building of a hotel.

Respondents described Ubuntu as being caring and humble towards others, while being mindful of the openness to abuse and exploitation that Ubuntu can bring, as explained in the extract below:

“*Ubuntu leaves you open you know its very kind ... it leaves you open for abuse. So you just need to make sure that you learn from the lessons but at the same time that you learn from the lessons that you don’t apply it to everybody...*”

Ubuntu was also described as the coming together of cultural and racial differences.

Sub-Theme 2: Applicability of Ubuntu in the Business Context

Respondent F highlighted the difference between Ubuntu as it was known and practiced previously, to what Ubuntu is understood to be in the present context. The differences lie in an awareness of the changes in society and the notion of application of rationality in a business context:

“Ubuntu ...today its making sure you know how what it is you’re doing has to be on point. Which would allow you to then practice the kindness, practice the not worry so much about somebody backstabbing you because you know how to look after yourself and defend yourself should that happen... Back in the day when it was Ubuntu I would put my guard down even if you don’t it was more like a martyr syndrome. And maybe you could because people were less likely to take advantage of that. Whereas now I’d say you know both... Essentially Ubuntu these days has to do with...allowing your emotion to have a place whilst ensuring that your mind is actually the leader. Whereas before it seemed like the emotion was the leader and the mind followed that. I think that it would be brain before the heart and not heart before the brain in how it would work now. Whereas now I would say now it’s just brain, people are just cold in business dealing especially Gauteng...”

The need for Ubuntu within the business context, was highlighted, as well as the difficulties encountered in its application.

...” it’s difficult to approach arrogant leadership with Ubuntu as a leadership, you get what I mean. I believe that Ubuntu works in your own little bubble, whatever you have created, your own community that you have created, almost like a family but I don’t believe that you can go to someone else’s home and try to practice Ubuntu without finding yourself getting damaged.”

The difficulty in practicing Ubuntu as an approach to leadership in the context of a different styles of leadership within the industry was highlighted. Ubuntu was said to work within the community that one creates, however, convincing someone who aspires to a different style of leadership was highlighted as being difficult. Respondent F seemed to allude to the vulnerability to exploitation one would find themselves in when confronted with leadership styles that are common in the industry while practicing Ubuntu.

Respondents explained that Ubuntu would have to be part of policies of the organisation as part of its implementation.

“I think that Ubuntu can go into business practice in that you must put in regulation ...its putting policies in place, its putting contracts in place that speak of my belief.”

Limitations of the application of Ubuntu in organisations were ascribed to a lack of guidance and frameworks from which organisations could work from, which has resulted in civil society to drive the process.

Table 5 below highlights the perceptions of the participants on the applicability of Ubuntu in the context of business.

Table 5: Applicability of Ubuntu in the Business Context

Feedback on Applicability of Ubuntu in the Business Context	Extract
Collaboration	<i>“that sharing and giving is a circle that in the construction industry is quite great.”</i>
Employee orientated	<i>“staff would really come first”</i>
Building quality relationships	<i>So Ubuntu is building-up and maintaining relationships.” relationship with the boss where they could be able to discuss everything with him</i>
Warm working environment	<i>“A company should be like a family unit, there has to be a bit of emotion instead of people being cold hearted I’m coming to work.”</i>
Fair judgement from leaders	<i>“Essentially Ubuntu these days has to do with ...allowing your emotion to have a place whilst ensuring that your mind is actually the leader”</i>
Accommodating African customs and practices	<i>...” I mean I guess it works in cultures around Europe where abantu don’t have spirit, they don’t need to see people all the time. We have national braai days”</i>

Ubuntu was described as a 'smart investment' which promoted the creation of strategic relationships and alliances with businesses or consultants. Work is shared with consultants in the hope that they will return the favour in future.

...” I think it would make for I think collaboration and Ubuntu would it is something that would increase collaboration amongst different companies and different people and as a result would actually push our growth. It’s almost like of like a catalyst to make growth in business happen much faster.”

Ubuntu in the context of business was described as valuable in that it promoted building relationships and promoting collaboration, and thereby acts as a catalyst of growth of businesses as well as the construction industry. Respondent A explained the ripple effect of collaboration in that the cycle of awarding project opportunities to others is extended to more than one person, and that an opportunity will eventually be offered to the person initially offering others an opportunity.

Respondent I explains that the construction industry is *“a cold place, it’s just how much money are we making, how can we make more of it, with less... and I would say Ubuntu is the opposite of that.”* The social aspect of the working environment that would come with practicing Ubuntu within organisations.

... “company should be like a family unit, there has to be a bit of emotion instead of people being cold hearted”

Respondents highlighted Ubuntu’s potential of creating empathy and authenticity within organisations. Respondent B describes empathy as *...” when you hold hands with someone you I feel you and you know what you’re going through.”*

From a leadership perspective, it was important that leaders were fair and were seen to be fair by their followers. Respondent E explained that *...” a leader ...should not just be fair. He should be seen as fair”*

Respondents explained that they spend a substantial amount of time at work, and believe that Ubuntu would contribute towards making the working environment friendlier and orientated towards ensuring employees are happy, and ultimately motivated to perform.

Respondent H explained that organisations practicing Ubuntu would be understanding and accommodative of African culture and customs in the workplace.

... as African people when someone is getting married you can't just arrive on Friday... there's things that we must do as a family that. Ubuntu would be like understanding ukuthi (an employee) must go... maybe just let me give her Friday, just a Friday"

Respondents were of the understanding that Ubuntu can span across racial groups, and *"could be something that is easily practiced between races..."*

Respondent G highlighted that Ubuntu is not *"unique internationally"* and that *"people do get that right but they don't call it Ubuntu."*

However, Ubuntu was also understood from a cultural perspective, with respondents arguing that Ubuntu is inculcated in a person through a process of socialization in one's upbringing:

Respondent E put forward that *Ubuntu is more of an African concept than a western concept in the sense that we are more in tune with living life as a community. And living life as a community started as a tribal thing with clans...for instance helping or expected to help relatives and extended family members that are in need.... So Ubuntu is that thing of giving without expecting anything back."*

Respondent I argued that *"Ubuntu is a culture. you are born into it, you are demonstrated how it is lived, and then you its inculcated into you at a subconscious subliminal level that you have to live it, and it has to be something that is also around you for you to live it."*

Sub-Theme 3: Principles of Ubuntu

The salient principles were unity and collaboration, honouring commitments, kindness and Caring, as well as Interconnectedness.

Unity and collaboration was described as working together on projects and sharing of opportunities:

"Going forward together and building a better future together."

“I give you another something, you give me back... might be some let’s call it an opportunity in a team”

Honouring commitments was explained as delivering on projects to good quality standards:

...” it’s making sure you know how what it is you’re doing has to be on point.”

...” the first one is get the job done, get a decent job done.”

Kindness and Caring was explained as displaying kindness and affection to one’s subordinates:

...” ensuring that you do care about yourself but you care about others...”

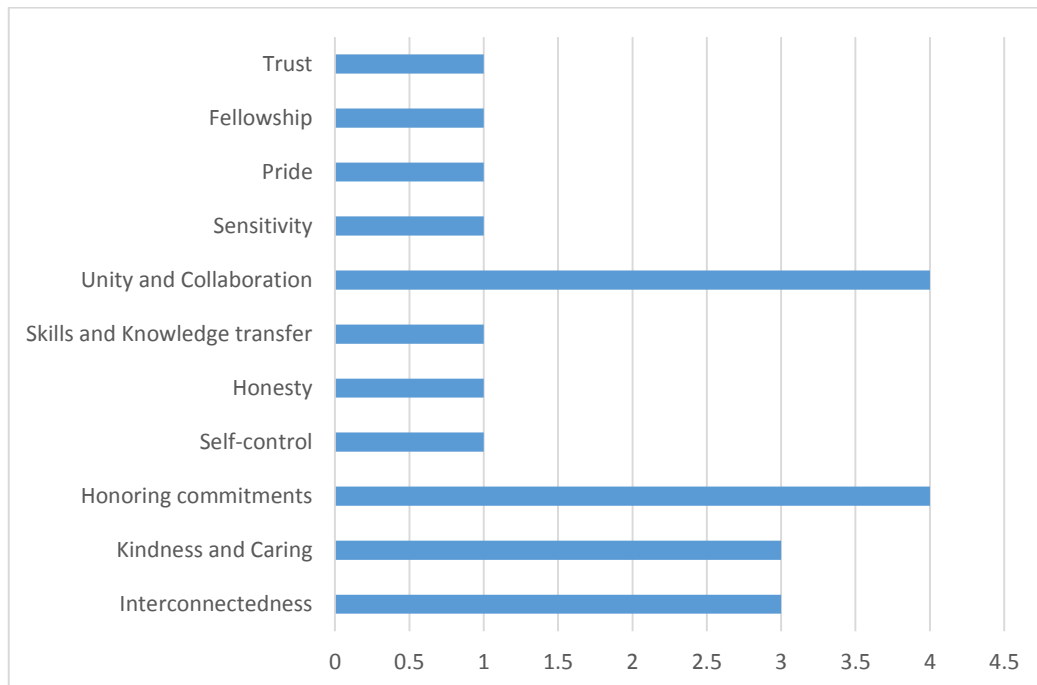
“I think you have to be affectionate to your subordinates”

Interconnectedness was explained as an awareness of the value of everything in the universe, and knowing that one is part of a circle of life.

...” everything exists for a reason.... you are just part of the circle.”

Table 6 below highlights the principles of Ubuntu.

Figure 6: Principles of Ubuntu



Respondent D explained that not applying the principles of Ubuntu leads to the quality of the end product being compromised. He elaborated that the lack of unity and the

coming together or meeting of minds comes through in the way the building looks, and that one can see “*how much chaos was between the team itself in the building.*” Skills and knowledge transfer were highlighted and the benefits of allowing for them in organisations were described as resulting in growth not only in one’s knowledge within the sector but that they would grow the understanding of the various professions and improve one’s skills.

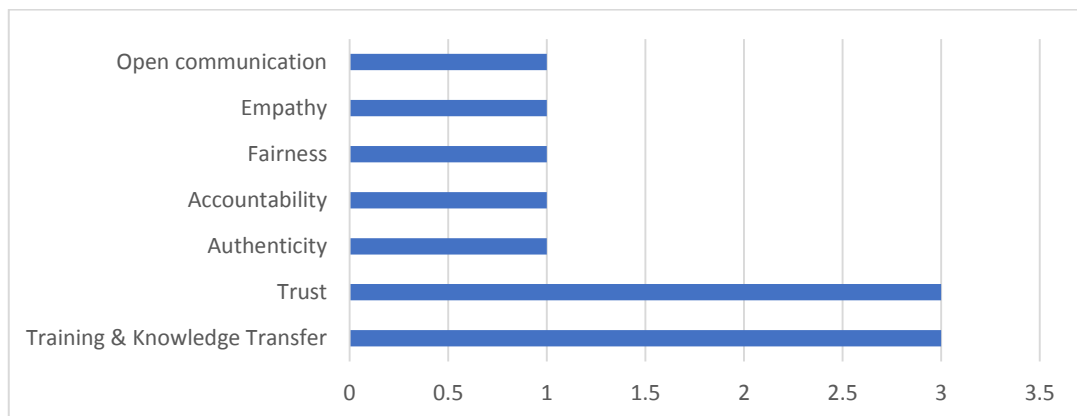
Respondent F highlighted that very little Ubuntu is practiced within the industry, although there are more instances of young black professionals who gravitate towards each other to collaborate on projects due to feeling “pushed out” of the industry. She points out that “*need tends to breed Ubuntu in today rather than just kindness.*”

Sub-Theme 4: Contribution to the values within organisations

The respondents highlighted that Ubuntu could contribute towards the values of the organisation by creating an environment that was conducive to open communication, empathy, fairness, accountability, authenticity, trust, training and knowledge transfer.

Figure 7 below illustrates the contribution Ubuntu would have in organisational values.

Figure 7: Ubuntu contribution to values of organisation



Building trust was highlighted as the significant contributor of Ubuntu to the values of organisations. Respondents were of the view that should trust be coupled with adequate training and knowledge transfer, it would result in the building and maintaining of quality relationships. A leader would trust his or her followers to deliver the work, and the followers would gain the confidence to apply themselves to their work. Respondent I explained that Ubuntu in an organisation builds that truth that you need that keeps people accountable...and when you give a person that accountability and authority over themselves a leader can trust that a follower is going to do what they said they would do.

Leaders with Ubuntu would exercise a fair and balanced judgement in contract administration.

Sub-Theme 5: Contribution towards improving relations between consultants

Ubuntu was explained as promoting the sharing of skills and knowledge amongst consultants. “in the sharing of skills and knowledge amongst consultants then it does grow your view as a person, it grows your knowledge within your sector or field.” Ubuntu was described as promoting cohesiveness within project teams in that it ensured that the team gelled and with a spirit of working together. Team members would treat each other with respect and kindness, and work together in ensuring the quality of work and output.

Sub-Theme 6: Contribution towards effective performance of project teams

Respondents described Ubuntu as promoting the acknowledgement and appreciation of each member of the team’s contribution towards achieving goals. Respondents explained that the acknowledgment and rewarding of employees for performance contributed towards building loyalty towards the leader, and that followers would reciprocate through effective performance in order to not let the leader down.

... “you don’t want to embarrass let down humiliate the person that is giving you a particular opportunity so you would perform and you would make sure that the work is up to the crunch”

Ubuntu was interpreted as being inclusive not only in decision making, but also in the sharing of achievement as a group. Respondents explained that the Competition was seen as positive in that it would not be between members of the group, but against other groups.

Respondents highlighted the risk of abuse when practicing Ubuntu This was related to vulnerability on the part of the person practicing Ubuntu.

“I find that you can get abused easily. Because obviously Ubuntu leaves you open you know its very kind...it leaves you open for abuse. So you just need to make sure that you learn from the lessons but at the same time that you learn from the lessons that you don't apply it to everybody.”

5.3 Research Question 2: Results

The second research question sought to explore Ubuntu from a deontological, consequentialist as well as virtue ethics perspective. An overview of the values of survival, solidarity spirit, compassion, sharing, dignity, respect, community, harmony and hospitality, and responsiveness was given. Respondents were asked to identify the behavior and character traits that they ascribe to Ubuntu.

Sub-Theme 1: Ubuntu from a deontological perspective

Ubuntu guiding principles identified include the sharing and transference of skills, inclusive decision-making, working in harmony, fairness, morality, as well as holding people accountable for their actions.

Respondent A explained the sharing and transference of skills as beneficial in the construction industry: *“in the construction industry the greatest if a skill is passed on not just from a financial context or perspective, but even the skills get passed on, philosophies or ideas are passed on. It enables somebody else to have exactly that passed on his own organisation or business.”* The sharing and transference of skills was understood to have a ripple effect in that the person obtaining the skills would pass them on to the next person, and thereby helping the industry grow.

“Everybody needs to have a say, a level of respect, to be part of the decision. “

The principle of inclusive decision-making was explained as leaders involving and engaging with their team members to brainstorm ideas around projects.

“...”it would be working in harmony as opposed to the usual cat fights and politicking up and down.

Working in harmony was explained as a common understanding of what the main goal is and the members of the team working towards achieving it. This was contrasted with the politicking and infighting that is prevalent within the construction industry.

Respondent E explained that *“Ubuntu it boils down to just being fair and morality and community.”* He elaborated that when approaching projects, within the confines of the contractual obligations, members of the group can decide to make a moral decision for the benefit of the community. The mutual agreement to exercise the principles of fairness and morality would be applied in how the project implementation is approached

Respondent I highlighted that need to hold people accountable to upholding the values of Ubuntu. In attempting to incorporate the values into an organisation, she suggested that there be a values tribunal that would act as an accountability body. Leaders within the organisation would then use their discernment to take the advice from the members of the tribunal and make a ruling.

Sub-Theme 2: Ubuntu from a consequentialist perspective

Ubuntu-like Behaviour and personal qualities

Ubuntu-like behaviour and personal qualities can be translated into interpersonal relationships, communication and decision making the following points were obtained from the conversations.

- Different people will respect each other
- Friendliness
- Kindness, considerate, fairness
- Relate well with people
- Understanding one another

Competitiveness in the workplace

Competition in teams that practice Ubuntu was seen as positive and necessary to drive performance. However, competition was seen to be with other teams and not within teams. Teams were seen to work together to compete against other teams, and in that light built the cohesiveness of the team.

Respondent I explains that “*The competitiveness is the competitiveness of the team. That our team is on time it’s on track were doing this, but we don’t compete against each other because we are all on different paths and streams. But we can compete with the other team. That’s also like that should glue us together that competitiveness. It shouldn’t be us out showing each other it should be them. it should be them coming together and out showing those other people. So teams don’t compete internally, ever.*”

Sub-Theme 3: Ubuntu from a virtue ethics perspective

Character traits that the respondents associated with Ubuntu are outlined as:

- A positive outlook or approach

This was applied in the context of solving conflict and problem solving. Respondent C explains that *...if you have a problem at work ...it will be what is the problem, how can we solve the problem.*” The leader was described as not placing blame and instead would find ways of solving the problem in an inclusive approach.

- Fairness in judgement
- Being open-minded and approachable
- Good communication skills
- Emotional Intelligence (balance of emotions, consistency, caring, friendly, listening skills)

5.4 Research Question 3: Results

The third research question sought to explore leaders and followers’ perceptions about Ubuntu in as far as it can contribute towards the quality of Leader Member Exchange relationships within work teams. The study explored whether Ubuntu is perceived to have a place in creating high quality relationships between leaders and their followers. The research question was divided into four sub-questions which fall under the sub-themes Leader-Follower Relationships and Group Dynamics and Performance:

1. What value would be created in adopting an Ubuntu style of leadership in how one relates with followers?
2. What are the main challenges faced in relationships within project teams?
3. How would these be addressed should Ubuntu be adopted?
4. How would leaders create an environment that fosters teamwork?

Sub-Theme 1: Leader-Follower Relationships

The respondents articulated the positive impact that Ubuntu would have in the relationships between leaders and their followers. Respondent B explained that the authoritative leadership style prevalent in the industry would be replaced by leaders who did not instil fear nor were condescending towards their followers. Leaders practicing Ubuntu as a style of leadership were described as being open to ideas from their followers.

The leader was described as being in a position to clearly convey the vision at the beginning of every project, and put together a team to accomplish the goals. An understanding of the different personalities of the followers in the team was important, and leaders would gain this understanding by being open-minded. Respondent B explained that *“as a leader I think you would gain insight and its different types of realms or worlds or ideas that might not in your lifestyle, in your level...so that’s what once you can gain insight and once ...you gain clarity as to why different types of people do different types of things...it would be better to manage your hybrid of followers, and acknowledge that the followers are different and not just one type of follower.”*

Leaders would understand the strengths and weaknesses of their team members and assign tasks accordingly. Leader Member differentiation was understood to exist in the context of a leader who practices Ubuntu as a leadership style, but that the leaders would strive to build trust and achieve high quality relationships with all their followers. This would entail leaders being providing support through kindness, understanding and help towards low performers. Respondent F highlighted that this level of support does not condone poor performance, and that *“Ubuntu is not a slack thing. It needs a person to reciprocate.”*

The follower responses were seen to be reciprocal should a leader invest in high quality relationships with their followers.

“if you are a leader and then you have an Ubuntu towards your followers I think it you will end up with you will actually end up with followers who are really want to go out there...for you. They would go out there...and then they will fight your fights.”

Followers were described as having a sense of loyalty towards the leader, and the cohesiveness created within the team was described a contributor towards effective performance and high quality of work.

“I think it would improve the relationship in a sense that everybody would learn from one another it wouldn’t just be a top down system. It would be sort of like an engaging system. which I think would be great for both the leader and both the follower.”

Leaders were described as being engaging, fair and kind in their treatment of followers, and promoting of an environment that is conducive to knowledge sharing and beneficial to both the leader and followers.

Sub-Theme 2: Ubuntu and Group Dynamics

Respondents described Ubuntu’s contribution towards group dynamics as its promotion of open communication, transference of knowledge and teaching, as well as trust and cohesiveness. Table 6 below summarises the group dynamics as discussed by the respondents.

Table 6: Ubuntu and Group Dynamics

Group dynamics	Extract
Open communication	<i>“then that means now you will be an open channel of communication and you will actually be trying to instil respect in different teams. and then you also try to you know there is nothing frustrating in a team where you are having a feeling that you know your contribution or you know your contribution towards your work is being undermined for whatever reason.”</i>
Knowledge transfer, mentorship and learning	<i>I think it’s also knowledge. a lot of teaching then that I think would be positive if everybody is practicing Ubuntu. I think more than anything its mentorship and learning.</i> <i>An easy one is the transference of knowledge. I have been starved of knowledge transfer so I have had to go look for everything, for most things. Which is why sometimes I would sit down and ramble and ramble and ramble I only asked you one question. The transfer of knowledge is a big thing for me. So that’s an easy one to say there’s actually a transfer of knowledge</i>
Team cohesiveness	<i>“I think that whole feeling of feeling like one team... ” “Well it would be working in harmony as opposed to the usual cat fights and politicking up and down.</i>
Trust	<i>“Value is the best one of the best working environment</i>

	<p><i>you can ever have because that quality of trust because no one will back stab or no one will look down on me and no one has bad intentions.”</i></p>
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To ensure productive and effective work environment the study presume that adoption of Ubuntu leadership style to improve Leader Member Exchange relationship is essential. However, construction professionals believe that the leaders can create a conducive environment that fosters teamwork through employing the following concepts.

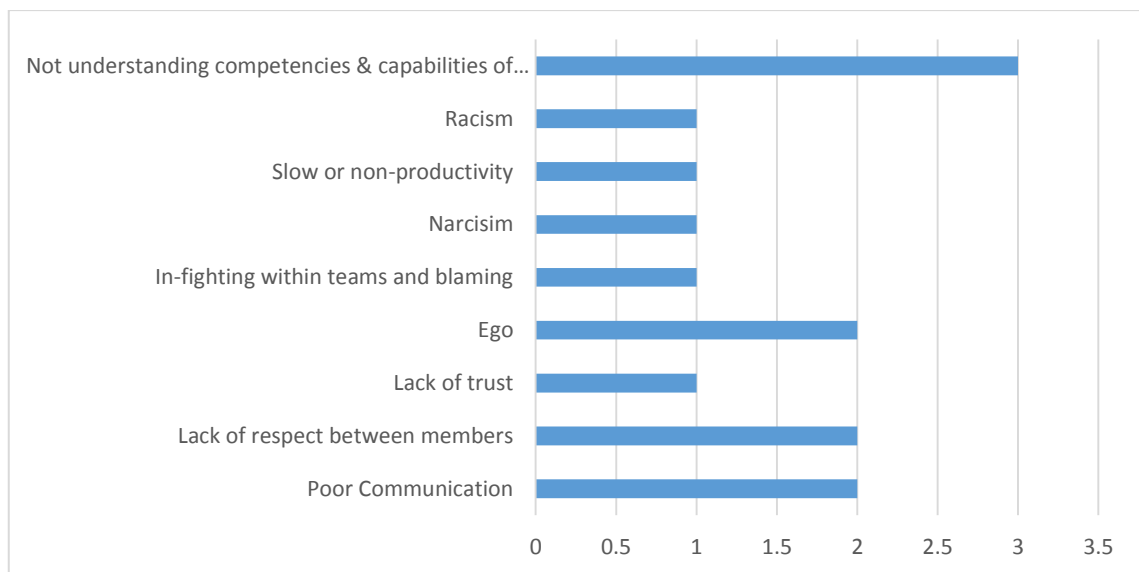
- Collaborative behaviour, encourage kindness
- Give attention to everyone, respect for everyone, friendly environment
- Promote learning
- Respect and dignity, professionalism
- Supportive,
- Team building, instilling positive environment
- Understanding the strength and capabilities of teams or individuals.

...” even in an Ubuntu setting you force teamwork...you say guys you will work together...and then you keep an eye and every time there’s some...you step in to try to figure out what’s the conflict here. Ok then you stand up for maybe the weaker person. In that instance you try and side but when there’s you know then the next person who is the weaker person you step in. until people can actually have felt each other out and then...”

...so Ubuntu is a great equaliser because every time you think something that’s sideways...you will catch yourself again you’re like hey no maybe not.

Respondents identified not understanding competencies and capabilities of team members, racism, slow or non-productivity, narcissism, infighting and blaming within teams, ego, a lack of trust and respect between team members as well as poor communication as the main challenges faces in project teams. Figure 8 below depicts the challenges faced in project teams.

Figure 8: Challenges faced in Project Teams



The most salient identified challenges face in project teams include a lack of understanding of the competencies and capabilities of team members, ego, a lack of respect between team members as well as poor communication. Ubuntu was explained as being able to contribute towards addressing these challenges by encouraging team members to collaborate to achieve common project goals, caring, sharing of information, respect, trust, and being open-minded. Respondent A elaborated that leaders would need to understand the abilities and skill set within the team.

It was highlighted that teamwork cannot be separated from Ubuntu, and that “*Ubuntu is a collaborative behaviour to encourage cohabitation or collaboration.*”

Ubuntu was explained as contributing towards team dynamics by encouraging that each member’s contribution is taken into consideration, building on trust and respect, patience to understand diverse views and backgrounds as well as open communication and knowledge sharing.

Sub-Theme 3: Ubuntu and Group Performance

Leaders said to create high quality relationships with their followers, leading by example and build self-efficient working teams. Through creating high quality relationships, they also create environments that foster teamwork and loyalty on the part of their followers.

“Well it would be working in harmony as opposed to the usual cat fights and politicking up and down. It’s trying to understand what the main goal is and everybody working toward that and people trying to flex egos and show how much of a boss they are.”

Respondents highlighted that through open and honest communication within teams clarity would be obtained faster. Respondents highlighted that in a supportive environment where communication is open, and one is able to be honest about problems they encounter followers are likely to believe in their contribution towards the goals of the team.

...if you have that among ourselves, if we are honest about the problems that we encounter. and you have that passion for what we do... so you end up almost on the same level plate. ...same level plate that means we will try to ...whatever title that is there ...we will ...as one team which is together towards one goal...will have a very positive contribution in whatever project that we are doing.

Respondents noted that followers can have passion for what they do, and motivation to deliver and in this way Ubuntu can be a driver of performance within teams.

5.5 Summary of the Results

The results from the ten in-depth interviews of leaders and followers within construction professionals were presented. The results were structured to answer the research questions posed in Chapter 3.

The first research question sought to obtain an understanding of Ubuntu, and how it relates to the business.

The meaning of Ubuntu that came from the feedback was that:

- Ubuntu described as a worldview that was founded on reciprocity, collaboration and the wholeness of being.
- As a human quality, it was ascribed to leaders being approachable and caring towards their followers
- As a philosophy it's premise was unity
- As an African humanism it was described as an African concept that promotes one giving without expecting anything in return.
-

Ubuntu was found to have relevance in the business context as a style of leadership that fosters collaboration, an employee orientated focus within organisation, building quality relationships, and a warm and friendly working environment in which there is fairness and the accommodation of African customs and practices.

The second research question sought to explore Ubuntu from a deontological, consequentialist as well as virtue ethics perspective.

The guiding principles of Ubuntu were identified as caring for other people, having good relationships, respect, patience, sharing, supportive of one another and be united.

Character traits associated with a leader practicing Ubuntu as a leadership style were listed as friendly, attentive, honest, friendly, kind, patient, understanding, professional and being respectful.

The main principles highlighted by the respondents included unity and collaboration, honouring commitments, Kindness and Sharing, as well as Interconnectedness. Unity and collaboration were described as working together on projects and sharing of opportunities while honouring commitments was explained as delivering on projects to good quality standards. Interconnectedness was explained as an awareness of the value of everything in the universe, and knowing that one is part of a circle of life.

Character traits associated with a leader practicing Ubuntu as a leadership style were listed as friendly, attentive, honest, friendly, kind, patient, understanding, professional and respectful. They would have to have good interpersonal and communication skills. The team environment in an Ubuntu setting was described as having open communication, transference of knowledge and teaching, trust and team cohesiveness.

The third research question sought to explore leaders and followers' perceptions about Ubuntu in as far as it can contribute towards the quality of Leader Member Exchange relationships within work teams.

Respondents explained that leaders practicing Ubuntu would seek to achieve high quality relationships with their followers, by leading by example and building self-efficient working teams.

6. Discussion of Results

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of the results from chapter five. The chapter compares the findings from the explorative, semi-structured interviews conducted with the literature that was reviewed in Chapter 2. The study sought to ascertain whether any new or valuable insights have emerged on *Ubuntu* in leadership; the values and behavioural, and character traits ascribed to *Ubuntu*; as well as on how *Ubuntu* contributes towards high quality leader-follower relationships within working teams.

The study explored three themes, and the following three research questions are covered in this chapter:

- Theme one: *Ubuntu* as a leadership theory
 - Research question 1: How can *Ubuntu* as a relationship-centred approach to leadership be applied in the business context?

- Theme two: *Ubuntu* values, behaviour and personal traits
 - Research question 2: how can *Ubuntu*-like behaviour and personal traits contribute towards how leaders and followers interact and relate to each other towards improving the effectiveness of working teams?

- Theme three: *Ubuntu* and leader-follower exchange
 - Research question 3: how can *Ubuntu* contribute towards high quality leader-follower relationships within working teams?

6.2 Research Question 1: Ubuntu in the Business Context

Research Question 1: How can Ubuntu as a relationship-centred approach to leadership be applied in the business context?

According to the feedback received from the qualitative and exploratory study on construction professionals, respondents displayed an understanding of *Ubuntu* and its relevance in the context of business. Respondents of the research study gave their personal insights on the current leadership styles within the industry. The main points given around the effectiveness of the autocratic and authoritarian leadership styles were that they are what the industry has come to know and accept, as well as that they are results-driven and not relationship-driven approaches to leadership.

Bowen *et al* (2013) who found that construction professionals encounter harassment and discrimination on ethnic grounds, and that discrimination is rooted in gender and racial stereotypes. The respondents highlighted the challenges around bullying and abuse within the industry, as well as the high levels of construction professionals, particularly women, who exit the industry because of not having the resilience to cope within the hostile environment the construction industry has been described as. The respondents who fall under the follower category also gave account of discrimination on age, describing instances of unfair treatment and abuse because they were young and inexperienced.

Ubuntu was described as applicable within an organisation, but that it would be vulnerable to abuse and misunderstanding should it be practised in a setting where other consultants do not ascribe to it. In this sense, the onus is on the part of the leader to set the terms of reference within the team, and to ensure that there is a general understanding on the part of all members to adopt *Ubuntu* in how they relate to each other.

There is a responsibility on the part of the leader to lead by example and set the tone by establishing how followers would relate to each other in project teams, as well as within organisations. When discussing *Ubuntu* as a leadership approach, respondents emphasised that leaders need to be 'awake' and 'upright', displaying integrity by honouring their word. Leaders are to exercise discernment in problem solving and show consistency and fairness in their decision making, as well as differentiation of

followers within teams. This is to ensure harmony and cohesiveness, as well as to build trust and confidence in the leader on the part of the followers. The leader, through his or her *Ubuntu*-like behaviour and personal character traits, leads by example by instilling and upholding the values of *Ubuntu* within the project team. This is in line with Ncube's (2010) 'modelling the way' aspect of his leadership philosophy framework, which puts forward that the leader legitimises his or her leadership by committing to values, as well as ethical behaviour, and in that way models the ethical values and characteristics of others.

Ubuntu as a style of leadership was explained as being relationship-driven, although the principle of honouring commitments, which is focussed on performance and delivering quality projects, was highlighted. The advantages of adopting *Ubuntu* were in the high levels of collaboration, cohesiveness and improved relations between consultants, the lack of which results in a lack of trust, as well as compromising the quality of the end product to the end user. The behavioural and character traits of leaders who practise an *Ubuntu* style of leadership are discussed in the following sections.

Discussion of Sub-Theme 1: Meaning of Ubuntu

According to the feedback received, construction professionals displayed an understanding of *Ubuntu* and its relevance in the context of business. The meaning they attached to *Ubuntu* differed from each other but were predominantly within Gade (2011) parameters of *Ubuntu* a human quality, philosophy or ethic, African humanism, worldview, and defined through the aphorism '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*'. The meaning of *Ubuntu* that came from the feedback was that:

- *Ubuntu* described as a worldview that was founded on reciprocity, collaboration and the wholeness of being.
- As a human quality: it was ascribed to leaders being approachable and caring towards their followers
- As a philosophy: it's premise was unity
- As an African humanism: it was described as an African concept that promotes one giving without expecting anything in return.

Discussion of Sub-Theme 2: Applicability of Ubuntu in the Business Context

What was of interest was how the respondents related Ubuntu to collaboration between companies and consultants in their approach to sourcing and delivering of projects. The general understanding was one practicing Ubuntu would provide opportunities to others who have the level of knowledge and expertise to deliver on project goals. The receiver of the opportunity would, in turn, be driven to deliver because of a motivation to not let down the provider of the opportunity or project team. In this sense, accountability is created. Reciprocity was ascribed in as far as the consultant or company receiving the opportunity would in turn do the same for others, and in this way the industry as a whole would grow.

The concern around this view of Ubuntu would be in opportunities being given to the limited few who are within the community of the giver. Respondents relayed how opportunities for collaboration are given to people within their networks, who they trust to deliver on projects. This approach has the potential of creating tight circles and promoting the “old boys club” which is discriminatory against members in the out-group. This would be supportive of Naude (2013, p.246) argument that when Ubuntu is interpreted in a narrow or ethnic fashion it not only is corrupted, but is reduced to the use of one’s power to benefit those close to you.

Respondents highlighted the need to incorporate Ubuntu in the policies of organisations in order to assist in its implementation. Business was described as a big driver to the incorporation of Ubuntu in organisations, as there is a need for guidance and a framework to follow. Leaving Ubuntu to be implemented by individuals is inhibiting the process of its incorporation and opens up Ubuntu to misinterpretation and abuse.

Discussion of Sub-Theme 3: Principles of Ubuntu

The main principles highlighted by the respondents included Unity and Collaboration, Honouring commitments, Kindness and Sharing, as well as Interconnectedness. Unity and collaboration was described as working together on projects and sharing of opportunities while honouring commitments was explained as delivering on projects to

good quality standards. Interconnectedness was explained as an awareness of the value of everything in the universe, and knowing that one is part of a circle of life.

The feedback supported Mangaliso's (2001) Guiding Principles of Ubuntu in as far as the aspects of treating others with dignity and respects, negotiating in good faith, providing opportunities for self-expression, understanding the beliefs and practices of indigenous people, being flexible and accommodative.

Treating others with dignity and respect, which Magaliso (2001) ascribes to a helpfulness towards others that contributes towards creating an environment of collegiality based on caring and sharing. Respondents described kindness and sharing in the context of interpersonal relations between leaders and their followers.

The feedback did not highlight the honouring of seniority, and to the contrary, described the younger generations as adequate advocates of Ubuntu due to their tenacity and ability to protect themselves against abuse.

Discussion of Sub-Theme 4: Contribution to the values within organisations

Ubuntu could contribute towards the values of the organisation by creating an environment that was conducive to open communication, empathy, fairness, accountability, authenticity, trust, training and knowledge transfer

Discussion of Sub-Theme 5: Contribution towards improving relations between consultants

Ubuntu was described as promoting cohesiveness within project teams in that it ensured that the team gelled with a spirit of working together towards achieving goals. Respect, kindness, and work together where the contributing factors in ensuring the quality of work and output. Project teams would share skills and knowledge among each other.

Discussion of Sub-Theme 6: Contribution towards effective performance of project teams

Contributing factors to performance highlighted by respondents included making sure that followers feel appreciated for their efforts in the working environment. This can be

shown through salary increases or bonuses. The feedback described this as a psychological way of influencing loyalty towards the leader, and to discourage followers from transactional relationships with the leader.

The notion of loyalty was raised as a key motivator for performance in that one would not want to let down the person offering the opportunity, and in this way the follower would ensure that their work in of high quality.

6.3 Research Question 2: Ubuntu Values Behaviours and Personal Traits

The table below draws similarities between Mbigi’s (1997) five key values of Ubuntu and the feedback on values received from the respondents. Table 7 below illustrates the ascribed and observed Ubuntu values.

Table 7: Ascribed and Observed Ubuntu values with extracts

Ascribed values	Observed values	Extracts
Community, Respect	Respect Caring about the community	<i>...we need to take care of each other... ...giving each other respect and listening to each other...</i>
	Collaboration	<i>...” you draw on other people other skills other organisations and with that you grow the circle and you build what was a singular project goal became the multiple goals, multiple projects”</i>
Solidarity spirit, Survival	Survival and Solidarity	<i>... “need tends to breed Ubuntu in today rather than just kindness.”</i>
Sharing	Sharing of knowledge and skills	<i>...transcending – help each other as a team... ...mentoring... share knowledge...</i>
Dignity	Dignity	<i>...Talking to each other as human being...</i>
Compassion	Trust, empathy, gratitude, passionate	<i>...we do show each other a certain level of kindness... ...considerate with the other teams...</i>
Harmony and hospitality	Harmony and cohesiveness	<i>...we’re able to tell each other in the sincerest way...</i>

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The observed values from the study are in line with the Mibigi's (1997) ascribed values. Collaboration was added as a value of Ubuntu based on the results of the research.

Discussion of Sub-Theme 1: Ubuntu from a deontological perspective

Guiding principles that could inform business practice

Ubuntu can be used as guiding principles that could inform business practice and decision making if it can be embraced by all. The guiding principles for Ubuntu include caring for other people, having good relationships, respect, patience, sharing, supportive of one another and be united.

Guiding principles that could inform decision making

Decision making within an Ubuntu approach of leadership was not described as collective. Leaders are to take the varying points of view of their followers, and include them in the decision making, but exercise discernment in making the decision. This would be influenced on his or her experience in their field of expertise.

Discussion of Sub-Theme 2: Ubuntu from a consequentialist perspective

Ubuntu-like Behaviour and personal qualities

Similarities were drawn between Deppe (2010) behaviours of effective leaders and those highlighted in the research. These included being engaging, approachable, having and managing emotions, motivating, communicating, choosing the right team, showing you care, listening, empowering one's staff, expressing trust and confidence in one's people, responding to situations in a flexible manner, as well as building strong teams.

Effectiveness in the workplace

Individuals' and group Ubuntu values can contribute to effectiveness and competitiveness in the workplace if the following is perspective. These include respect for one another, united or collective action, fairness, and ability to control emotions, ability to overcome defensive behaviour, accountability, and kindness to one another.

Competitiveness in the workplace

Competition in teams that practice Ubuntu was seen as positive and necessary to drive performance. However, competition was seen to be with other teams and not within teams. Teams were seen to work together to compete against other teams, and in that light built the cohesiveness of the team.

Discussion of Sub-Theme 3: Ubuntu from a virtue ethics perspective

Character Traits associated with Ubuntu style of Leadership

Character traits associated with a leader practicing Ubuntu as a leadership style were listed as friendly, attentive, honest, friendly, kind, patient, understanding, professional and respectful. They would have to have good interpersonal and communication skills. When compared to Mothilal’s (2010) “Who Leaders Are” component of the New Leadership Model, similarities exist in the Conscientiousness, Openness and Emotional Intelligence elements. However, exercising Ubuntu does not necessarily mean that one could not have the elements of drive, self-confidence and charisma, and none of the character traits ascribed to the leader practicing Ubuntu as a style of leadership are antithesis to the remaining three elements of Mothilal’s (2010) character traits. Table 8 below shows the comparison between Mothilal (2010) traits and the findings in the research.

Table 8: Comparison between Mothilal (2010) Traits and Findings in the research

Mothilal (2010) Traits	Finding from this research
Drive (energy, ambition, focus)	Positive outlook or approach
Self confidence	Fair
Openness (flexibility, adaptability, innovative)	Openness (flexibility, approachability)
Charisma (vision, inspiring, good communication skills, persuasive)	Good communication skills
Emotional Intelligence (balance of emotions, self-control, consistency, caring, empathy)	Emotional Intelligence (balance of emotions, consistency, caring, friendly, listening skills)
	Professional
	Honest

Feedback from the research study reflects that respondents believe that the character traits associated with Ubuntu can be learnt, which further advocates for the adoptability of Ubuntu as a style of leadership.

6.4 Research Question 3: Ubuntu and Leader Member Exchange

Discussion of Sub-Theme 1: Leader-Follower Relationships

Ubuntu would improve relations between leaders and followers according to the feedback received. The authoritative leadership style, that was described as being condescending and instilling fear in followers would be replaced by a leadership style that was engaging, conducive to knowledge sharing and would be beneficial to both the leader and followers. Leaders were described as being fair and kind in their treatment of followers.

The follower responses were seen to be reciprocal should a leader invest in high quality relationships with their followers, as followers were described as having a sense of loyalty towards the leader.

Discussion of Sub-Theme 2: Ubuntu and Group Dynamics

The team environment in an Ubuntu setting was described as having open communication, transference of knowledge and teaching, as well as trust. This is in line with theory on high quality relationships (Anand, Vidyarthi, Linden and Rousseau, 2010; Walumbwa, Cropanzano and Goldman, 2011). However, Ubuntu adds the dimension of team cohesiveness which is based on its emphasis on sound human relations and unity. Respondents were predominantly in agreement that Leader Member Exchange differentiation would still be present on the part of leaders, but that leaders would opt to support followers who were underperforming, and would otherwise be reduced to contractual obligation and minimal exchanges as how Leader Member Exchange differentiation theory states. Ubuntu would therefore contribute in creating high quality Leader Member Exchange relationships between leaders and all followers within a group setting.

Khumba and Kanguade-Ulaya's (2013) argument that Ubuntu is centred on collectivism and teamwork, the creation of synergies and competitive advantages through humanist

leadership styles and a consensus in team-work systems, effective communication and a community-based corporate social responsibility was supported by the feedback received. Working teams within an Ubuntu setting were described as taking each members contribution into consideration, having clear communication, knowledge sharing and respect within the. The leader would be patient to understand the differences between his or her followers. This would allow leaders to focus on their followers' strengths in assigning work tasks, which supports Liden *et al* (2006) argument around leaders making use of each follower's unique capabilities to produce high levels of performance, and assigning tasks to followers most capable of successfully completing them.

The main challenges highlighted affecting working teams in the construction industry include ego, selfishness, poor communication, a lack of respect, a lack of trust, racism, and backstabbing. These challenges were understood to be addressed through applying Ubuntu as a leadership style as it would result in the realisation of the importance of each person, respect for the members of the group, open communication, sharing of information and ideas, fairness, professionalism, understanding, patience and sharing.

Discussion of Sub-Theme 3: Ubuntu and Group Performance

Walumbwa *et al* (2011) highlight two sets of processes through which Leader Member Exchange enhances job performance and organisational citizenship. The first being the social exchange process in which high Leader Member Exchange managers encourage reciprocal obligations such as commitment their supervisors. The second is through the advancement of self-efficacy and means efficacy which then improves job performance. The feedback highlighted the leader's role in putting together the resources he or she needs within the team, being aware of his or her followers' abilities and strengths and assigning roles and tasks accordingly.

Respondents also highlighted the open and honest communication that would be in place in teams that practice Ubuntu and that it would contribute towards getting clarity faster. Respondents highlighted that in a supportive environment where communication is open, and one is able to be honest about problems they encounter followers are likely to believe in their contribution towards the goals of the team. Respondents noted

that followers can have passion for what they do, and motivation to deliver and in this way Ubuntu can be a driver of performance within teams.

Leaders create high quality relationships with their followers, leading by example and build self-efficient working teams. Through creating high quality relationships, they also create environments that foster teamwork and loyalty on the part of their followers.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

The objectives of this research study were to

1. To explore the perceptions of *Ubuntu* as a leadership style from construction professionals, and how it can, as an approach that is relationship based, be applied as a style of leadership within organisations
2. To explore the behaviour and character traits that are in line with the *Ubuntu* value system to better understand how leaders and followers interact and relate to each other
3. To explore leaders and followers' perceptions about *Ubuntu* in as far as it can contribute towards the quality of leader-manager exchange relationships within work teams.

The study explored the perceptions of Ubuntu as a leadership style from construction professionals, and how it, as an approach that is relationship based, can be applied as a style of leadership within organisations. As part of the research, it examined the behaviour and character traits that are in line with the Ubuntu value system to better understand how leaders and followers interact and relate to each other. The study also explored leaders and followers' perceptions about Ubuntu in as far as it can contribute towards the quality of Leader Member Exchange relationships within work teams.

Non-probability, purposive sampling was done and data was collected through ten in-depth interviews with leaders and followers within the construction professions. The interview sessions were recorded and transcribed. The data was then analysed in order to identify the main determinants or themes relating to the research questions. Comparisons of the findings were made with the literature search on Ubuntu and Leader Member Exchange, and the factors that were supportive and deviant were discussed.

Following analysis of the research results and study principal findings, the objectives of the study have been met.

7.2 Summary of key findings

What was of interest was how the respondents related Ubuntu to collaboration between companies and consultants in their approach to sourcing and delivering of projects. The general understanding was one practicing Ubuntu would provide opportunities to others who have the level of knowledge and expertise to deliver on project goals. The receiver of the opportunity would, in turn, be driven to deliver because of a motivation to not let down the provider of the opportunity or project team. In this sense, accountability is created. Reciprocity was ascribed in as far as the consultant or company receiving the opportunity would in turn do the same for others, and in this way the industry as a whole would grow.

Competition in teams that practice Ubuntu was seen as positive and necessary to drive performance. However, competition was seen to be with other teams and not within teams. Teams were seen to work together to compete against other teams, and in that light built the cohesiveness of the team.

Similarities were drawn between Deppe (2010) behaviours of effective leaders and those highlighted in the research. These included being engaging, approachable, having and managing emotions, motivating, communicating, choosing the right team, showing you care, listening, empowering one's staff, expressing trust and confidence in one's people, responding to situations in a flexible manner, as well as building strong teams.

Character traits associated with a leader practicing Ubuntu as a leadership style were listed as friendly, attentive, honest, friendly, kind, patient, understanding, professional and respectful. They would have to have good interpersonal and communication skills. When compared to Mothilal's (2010) "Who Leaders Are" component of the New Leadership Model, similarities exist in the Conscientiousness, Openness and Emotional Intelligence elements.

Respondents were predominantly in agreement that Leader Member Exchange differentiation would still be present on the part of leaders, but that leaders would opt to support followers who were underperforming, and would otherwise be reduced to contractual obligation and minimal exchanges as how Leader Member Exchange differentiation theory states. Ubuntu would therefore contribute in creating high quality Leader Member Exchange relationships between leaders and all followers within a

group setting. The feedback highlighted the leader's role in putting together the resources he or she needs within the team, being aware of his or her followers' abilities and strengths and assigning roles and tasks accordingly.

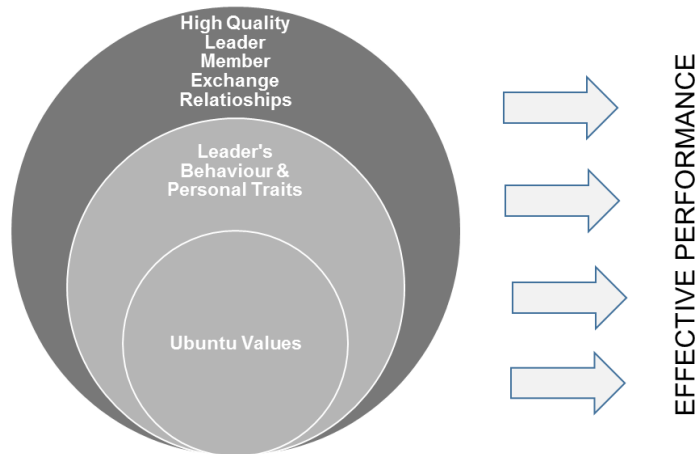
The team environment where Ubuntu is practiced was described as having open communication, transference of knowledge and teaching, as well as trust. This is in line with theory on high quality Leader Member Exchange relationships (Anand, Vidyarthi, Linden and Rousseau, 2010; Walumbwa, Cropanzano and Goldman, 2011). However, an Ubuntu adds the dimension of team cohesiveness which is based on its emphasis on sound human relations.

Respondents also highlighted the open and honest communication that would be in place in teams that practice Ubuntu and that it would contribute towards getting clarity faster. Respondents highlighted that in a supportive environment where communication is open, and one is able to be honest about problems they encounter followers are likely to believe in their contribution towards the goals of the team. Respondents noted that followers can have passion for what they do, and motivation to deliver and in this way Ubuntu can be a driver of performance within teams.

7.3 Recommendations

Post analysis, a model is proposed Ubuntu in Leader Member Exchange and group effectiveness. The model includes the values, consequentialist and virtue ethics of leaders identified in the research findings that contribute towards high quality relationships within an Ubuntu approach to leadership. The model is presented in Figure 9 below.

Figure 9: Proposed Model of Ubuntu and Leader Member Exchange



The proposed model by the researcher is recommended to depict Ubuntu values as the core of Leader Member Exchange relationships.

- By committing and upholding the values Collaboration, Survival, Solidarity spirit, Compassion, Respect and Dignity, leaders model the way for their followers.
- Leaders are to lead by example in displaying Ubuntu like behaviours and character traits:
 - Behaviour and personal qualities – being engaging, approachable, having and managing emotions, motivating, communicating, choosing the right team, showing you care, listening, empowering one’s staff, expressing trust and confidence in one’s people, responding to situations in a flexible manner, as well as building strong teams.
 - Character Traits - Character traits associated with a leader practicing Ubuntu as a leadership style were listed as friendly, attentive, honest, friendly, kind, patient, understanding, professional and respectful. They would have to have good interpersonal and communication skills.

The values, behaviour and character traits would then translate into leaders promoting open communication, the transference of knowledge and teaching, trust as well as team cohesiveness within project teams. High quality Leader Member Exchange would result. Followers would then have a passion for what they do, and motivation to deliver due to loyalty towards the leader, and in this way Ubuntu can be a driver of performance within teams.

7.4 Contribution to Body of Knowledge

The study contributes to the body of knowledge in three fronts. First, it contributes on leadership within the construction industry; secondly to Ubuntu as a leadership theory and thirdly to theory on Leader Member Exchange relationships. The aim of the study was to contribute to leaders within organisation in the construction sector who have an interest in applying Ubuntu as a style of leadership to address the challenges faced in collaboration and inclusivity within the industry.

7.5 Limitations and Recommendations

The small sample size of the research study means that generalisations cannot be made based on the findings. Due to time limitations and for the purpose of the academic exercise, a full and in-depth large scale survey could not be conducted to cover the entire construction industry. It is recommended that a large quantitative research study be conducted to test hypotheses on the efficacy of Ubuntu as a leaderships style that can promote collaboration and inclusivity in the industry sector.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Interview Guide

Interview Guide

The following interview guide has been compiled to assist the interviewer in providing clarity as well as consistency for the interviews to be conducted with interviewees of the study.

Introduction:

The interview is to be set in a comfortable environment, preferably at the work premises of the interviewee or to be conducted via Skype. To ensure that the interviewee is at ease, they will be informed up-front of the nature of the research, the purpose of the interview and of the anonymity of their responses.

1. Questions posed will be in the context of the construction industry
2. The aim of the interview will be to establish the interviewee's perceptions of Ubuntu as a leadership style among South African construction professionals
3. The interview will be in light of:

Current practices,

Ideal practices,

How Ubuntu can contribute to their improvement.

The interviewer is to assist in helping the interviewee make the distinction between the three stances at all times.

Unstructured Questions:

The researcher is to pose questions to the participants to assess:

What leadership styles are currently used

The effectiveness of leadership styles in current practice.

Probing questions are to be asked until the line of questioning seems exhausted.

3. *Structured Questions:*

3.1 Ubuntu as a leadership theory

The intent is to assess the applicability of Ubuntu as a leadership style and the understanding the participant has of what Ubuntu is. Further, the interview will probe into what value Ubuntu has or could potentially have in the business context. The

concept of Ubuntu will not be explained, but the contesting opinions within academia pertaining to its relevance in the business context will be highlighted.

Participants will be asked the following questions:

What meaning do you attach to Ubuntu?

How does it relate to the business context?

What are the principles of Ubuntu?

To what extent are these principles applied by professionals in the construction industry?

What value does Ubuntu as a style of leadership contribute to the values within your organisation?

In the context of best practice in how project teams are formulated, led and managed, do you believe Ubuntu as an approach has the potential to contribute towards improving relations between consultants?

How would Ubuntu as an approach positively contribute towards more effective performance of project teams?

3.2 Ubuntu values and behaviour

An overview of the values (survival, solidarity spirit, compassion, sharing, dignity, respect, community, harmony and hospitality, and responsiveness) ascribed to Ubuntu in theory, as well as the different approaches to how Ubuntu as a style of leadership can be applied practically will precede the questions below:

Ubuntu from a deontological perspective

How could Ubuntu be used as a set of guiding principles that could inform business practice and decision making?

Ubuntu from a consequentialist perspective

How would one practically exhibit what is understood to be Ubuntu-like behaviour and personal qualities?

In the context of working in project teams within an organisation as well as with consultants from other professions, how would Ubuntu-like behaviour and personal qualities translate into:

Interpersonal relationships,

Communication and

Decision making

How do Ubuntu-like values of individuals and groups translate to project teams in the context of effectiveness and competitiveness within the workplace?

3.2.3 Ubuntu from a virtue ethics perspective (character based)

What character traits could be associated with a leader practicing an Ubuntu style of leadership?

Are the character traits inherent or can they be learnt?

3.3 Ubuntu and the Leader-follower exchange

An overview of the Leader-follower (leader-member) exchange will be provided, particularly in the context of the relationship quality between the leader and follower or the social exchanges they engage in.

Main themes will include:

The notion of creating and maintaining high quality relationships systems with all followers to contribute towards valuable organisational results

Collectivism and teamwork, the creation of synergies and competitive advantages through humanist leadership styles and a consensus in team-work systems, effective communication and a community-based corporate social responsibility

Mbigi's (1997) five key values, namely survival, solidarity spirit, compassion, respect and dignity will be presented and the discussion will be how these five values influence team effectiveness.

The participants will be asked the following questions:

What impact does Ubuntu have in relationships between leaders and their followers?

Sub-questions to the above research question will include:

What value would be created in adopting an Ubuntu style of leadership in how one relates with followers?

What are the main challenges faced in relationships within project teams?

How would these be addressed should Ubuntu be adopted?

How would leaders create an environment that fosters teamwork?

Appendix B – Consent Letter

25 Villa Donato
Campbell Road
Craigavon
2021

To whom it may concern

I am conducting research on cross-national leadership, and am trying to find out more about the perceptions of Ubuntu as a leadership style among South African construction professionals. The interview is expected to last about an hour, and will help in understanding how Ubuntu can be applicable as a leadership style within the built environment. **Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without penalty.** All data will be kept confidential. If you have any concerns, please contact myself, Mrs Milisani Manasoe or my supervisor, Prof Lulama Makhubela. Our details are provided below:

Researcher: Mrs Milisani Manasoe
Email: 15391818@mygibs.co.za
Phone: 0823088293

Supervisor: Prof Lulama Makhubela
Email: lulama.makhubela@gmail.com
Phone: 0827282951

Signature of participant: _____

Date: _____

Signature of researcher: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C – Interview Participants

	Profession	Gender	Position	Name
1	Architect	Male	Leader	Respondent A
2	Junior Architect	Female	Follower	Respondent B
3	Electrical Engineer	Male	Follower	Respondent C
4	Architect	Male	Leader	Respondent D
5	Architect	Male	Leader	Respondent E
6	Architect	Female	Leader	Respondent F
7	Architect	Male	Leader	Respondent G
8	Project Manager	Female	Follower	Respondent H
9	Project Manager/ Engineer	Female	Leader	Respondent I
10	Project Manager	Male	Leader	Respondent J

Appendix D – Summary of Meaning of Ubuntu

Feedback	Context of Feedback	Extracts	Understanding of Ubuntu
Collaboration	<p>Working with other businesses</p> <p>Sharing opportunities with others within your community</p> <p>Working together as one team you know with the same goal in mind.</p>	<p><i>...” know what it is you start something and you sort of reach into the community or reach into a business venture with somebody that you know is good at something or has done something and you try with your skills and your resources try to make another person idea or business work and at the same time it was something you really thought was good for your business somebody else is benefiting from it.”</i></p> <p><i>“You still have those old boys’ clubs from varsity that still help each other to go to traverse. That’s why you still see them getting nice positions”</i></p>	Worldview
Spirit		<i>I attach like a spirit</i>	African Humanism
Sensitivity	Sensitivity towards communities in approaching projects	<i>“I see Ubuntu is just being sensitive just being cultured”</i>	Human quality
Being cultured			
Humility	Being humble towards others (followers) in the workplace	<i>“you don’t let in an environment don’t let your position to define you as a person.”</i>	Human quality
Being approachable	Followers should be able to approach you with personal issues/ have lunch with you	<i>“make it easy for them to approach you when they have problems”</i>	
Unity	People from different backgrounds uniting	<i>“coming together of differences”</i>	Philosophy/ ethic
Communitarian	Living life as a community	<i>“Ubuntu is more of an African concept than a western concept in the sense that</i>	Worldview

		<i>we are more in tune with living life as a community"</i>	
Communitarian	Giving back	<i>everything as you achieve or as you grow or as you do whatever you do that you take care of the next person.</i>	Worldview
Interconnectedness		<i>"holistic thoughts and emotions"</i>	Worldview
Interdependency		<i>"understand that there is a holistic-ness to achieving anything really"</i>	
Caring		<i>"its caring for the people that you're working with"</i>	Human Quality
Understanding	Understanding and being accommodative of African culture	<i>"I'm using Ubuntu I'm taking it to African, to African cultures. as African people when someone is getting married you can't just arrive on Friday you know what I mean. there's things that nje we must do as a family that. and then Ubuntu would be like understanding ukuthi uXilombe must go."</i>	Human Quality
	Treat others the way you want to be treated	<i>"how to treat people the way you would want to be treated like what the bible says, what does the bible say. Do unto others as you want done unto yourself."</i>	Philosophy/ ethic
Interconnectedness	Understanding the value/ contribution of everything and everyone	<i>higher sense of understanding that you don't live on this world alone</i>	Worldview
Being helpful/ Kind	Helping others when they are in need	<i>"its if you see someone carrying heavy things help them carry it."</i>	Human Quality
Interconnectedness	Empathy	<i>..." if you have Ubuntu you just have a certain understanding and empathy common human comradery for those around you and nature"</i>	Worldview
Interdependency	Reciprocity	<i>I'll wash your hand you wash my hand. I help you, you help me.</i>	Worldview
Relational		<i>an informal relationship with people</i>	