

**The influence of transformational leadership on the process of innovation in
teams**

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ABSTRACT

This study delves into the factors influencing the process of innovation in teams, emphasising the importance of understanding transformational leaderships' influence in an Information Technology and Communication (ICT) organisation, and applying Transformational Leadership Theory to test how specific leadership behaviours can drive creativity, collaboration, and innovative outcomes among team members. The study employed qualitative methods in a single-case study within the ICT sector, embracing an interpretivist philosophy with an inductive approach.

The findings highlight the complexities that exist in transformational leadership and the influence this has on the process of innovation in teams within a single ICT organisation in South Africa. The study underscores the importance of collaboration, communication, feedback, and customer centricity amongst other factors in the process of innovation. In addition, the study revealed the benefits associated with a leaders' actions and attributes that foster innovative thinking in teams. In addition, the study emphasises transformational leaderships' role for driving employees' empowerment, development, and motivation, driving a shared vision and goal in the workplace.

Insights are provided into nurturing collaboration with direct teams or cross collaboration in the organisation is far reaching in encouraging group thinking and buy-in in the process of innovation, placing emphasis on shared value.

The research findings enhance one's understanding of transformational leadership and the process of innovation in teams, especially in an ICT organisation, and they provide actionable guidance for effective leadership management and improved innovation performance.

KEYWORDS

Transformational leadership, transformational leadership theory, ICT, innovation, process of innovation

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.

Nokwazi Xolo

Date: 03 November 2024

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CHAPTER 1 – PROBLEM AND PURPOSE

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the research problem and the study's purpose, starting with a discussion on the background of transformational leadership and the context of the study, and the impact transformational leadership can have on modern business. It further explores the rationale of the study by highlighting the business, as well as the theoretical relevance of the research by emphasising the need to understand the relationship between transformational leadership and innovation. Finally, this chapter presents the problem statement, it outlines the research delimitations, and states the assumptions and the study's contribution to expanding knowledge on transformational leadership. The chapter also highlights the practical application and the importance of fostering innovation in organisations.

1.2 Background of the Study

This research explored the influence of transformational leadership on the innovation process in teams. The study's aim was to garner an understanding of how transformational leadership can influence the manner in which teams' approach and process innovation to improve organisational performance within the rapidly evolving Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector in South Africa.

Ting et al. (2021) report that organisational innovations are important to economic development on a local, national and international level. National-level innovation implies that a country can reinvent itself and compete in the global market (Erdogan, 2021), whereas organisational innovation can enable an organisation to obtain and sustain competitive advantage and thereby enhance an organisation's ability to survive (Volery & Tarabashkina, 2021).

While the constructs of transformational leadership and innovation have received much attention from researchers, there was still a gap in knowledge regarding the process of innovation in the ICT sector in South Africa. Both constructs, referring to transformational leadership and innovation, are vital for businesses in a highly competitive environment and they contribute toward the relevance and competitive advantage of an organisation. Identifying how transformational leadership influences the innovation process will assist in gaining an understanding of how leaders

currently lead teams and drive productive and efficient teams in the current business landscape, and optimally, capitalise on driving high performing teams.

1.3 Purpose Statement

The fast-paced and rapidly changing business environment that is characterised by the acceleration of technology development, combined with the challenge of developing and leveraging off innovative ideas and initiatives within the organisation provides a real-world problem for many organisations. Locally, this problem is more applicable when addressing businesses and teams in South Africa where there are socioeconomic factors at play that intersect with various leadership styles.

There is ample research available on transformational leadership and its links to innovation in organisations. In the South African ICT context, transformational leadership is a driving force that is said to lead to innovation of products and processes (Lee et al., 2016). According to Lei et al. (2020), researchers have suggested that transformational leadership emerges as one of the most significant predictors of innovation being shown by teams and adopted in the organisations.

However, while it is acknowledged that innovation is essential, there are many barriers to its adoption, and especially so in emerging and developing markets, where limited resources have prompted firms to reconsider their approaches to innovation strategies. (Lei et al., 2020). There is an opportunity to show that a specific type of innovation process is already active in emerging economies and may eventually spread to developed markets (Allard & Williams, 2020).

This research aimed to identify the most important factors for prospective leaders and the influence as well as the impact of transformational leadership on the process of innovation in the ICT sector in South Africa. Transformational leadership is widely accepted as the most appropriate leadership style that is linked with encouraging innovation. Therefore, the findings of this study will provide perspective into the type of leaders and skills required to drive innovation in an organisation in the ICT sector at a national level.

1.4 Context of the Study

The primary motivation for conducting this study is embedded in the need to understand how transformational leadership can influence the process of innovation in teams. In today's business environment, where constant iteration and creativity

are essential for an organisation's survival, transformational leaders play a crucial role in endeavouring to foster an innovative culture not only in teams, but also across an organisation. There are four recognised dimensions of transformational leadership, namely, (1) an idealised influence that looks at role-modelling attributes and behaviours; (2) inspirational motivation that addresses articulations of compelling and inspiring visions of the future; (3) intellectual stimulation that challenges existing assumptions; and (4) stimulating new ways of thinking and individualised consideration in attending to followers' needs and concerns (Siangchokyoo et al., 2020:31). By inspiring and motivating their teams, leaders can encourage the individual's creative thinking, experimentation in a perceived safe environment, and the pursuit of innovative solutions. This can enhance a company's innovative capabilities significantly, especially in industries that are heavily reliant on technological advancements, such as the ICT sector.

The secondary motivation for this study was based upon the need to close the gap in knowledge from the extant literature regarding the specific drivers through which transformational leadership influences innovation, especially in diverse team settings. In addition, this research set out to explore how transformational leadership can be utilised to enhance collaboration across diverse teams, a consideration that is especially important for today's organisations.

In their research on the effects of transformational leadership on organisational innovation, Setiawan et al. (2021) conclude that transformational leadership is a pivotal factor to driving organisational innovation, as it involves fostering a positive social exchange between managers and their followers in teams (Gerards et al., 2021). Multiple studies have shown that leaders use transformational leadership to encourage and drive innovation within their organisations (Kozioł-Nadolna, 2020). However, as research has advanced, the potential negative effects of transformational leadership have gradually been observed. In a study based on a secondary school setting, the researchers found that transformational leadership contributors, such as vision and inspiration, were negatively linked to the learners' learning culture as the teachers became too distracted from teaching because of their tendency to focus on the pastoral-like care of the learners. This has also been observed in a high-tech industry setting, where the individualised consideration, which stems from transformational leadership, can be an obstacle to the

development of a mutual team goal and limit knowledge-sharing and constructive feedback amongst the team members (Meng et al., 2020).

Despite the reported contrasting views by some researchers, leaders who adopt a transformational leadership style are believed to actively create opportunities for innovation by inspiring and motivating their teams to think creatively and pursue novel solutions. This would then also lead to the conclusion that to encourage innovative ideas, organisations must prioritise and promote transformational leadership in their departments and teams to drive their organisation's market edge.

1.5 Rationale of the Study

1.5.1 Business relevance of the research

Although in many countries' innovation is considered as a key contributor toward creating a competitive advantage and for ensuring the organisation's relevance, it must be noted that in many developing countries, most firms have limited resources to allocate and enhance innovation (Salazar & Avolio, 2024). Therefore, exploring alternative factors that can contribute toward innovation in a developing country such as South Africa is vital to these organisations' survival.

Recent studies have highlighted the importance of transformational leadership being a key factor to shaping innovative behaviour in organisations (Klaic et al., 2020, Singh et al., 2020, Ting et al., 2021). In a study on technological innovation typologies conducted in the ICT sector, Hervas-Oliver et al. (2021) points out that literature has not yet connected this type of innovation and the factors that support it or form a barrier to the creation of innovation in relation to small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

1.5.2 Theoretical relevance of the research

The connection between leadership and organisational innovation remains an area that requires further exploration, specifically in more diverse cultures (Bou Reslan et al., 2021). The resources required by employees from their leaders to foster innovation may vary across cultures; however, in the challenging corporate landscape, the organisations' sustainability relies on hiring, training, developing, and retaining leaders who can not only inspire their teams, but those who can also actively drive innovation by the employees beyond the organisation and into national boundaries and cultures; however, this assumption has been inadequately tested (Watts et al., 2020).

1.6 Problem Statement

Considering the fast-paced corporate environment characterised by rapid technology development and innovation, businesses have the challenge of finding and employing leaders who are relevant in such an environment, and who are the needed visionaries to drive the organisation's competitive edge. This challenge offers a compelling research problem. This problem is of specific interest because of the potential of socio-political dynamics within a work team in an ICT organisation, and especially so in South Africa. This can introduce several layers of complexity. South Africa's unique historical context continues to influence many organisational cultures, team dynamics, and the goal of workplace diversity.

Organisations across South Africa seem to realise the importance of innovation in the business. However, many struggle to become successfully innovative because of a lack of effective leadership practices that encourage innovation in their environment (Lei et al., 2020). According to Alblooshi et al. (2020), the global business marketplace is constantly facing new and previously unknown risks caused by fast-moving changes in the business landscape and an increased competitive drive in the emergence of new technologies.

In such an environment, organisations must adopt a proactive stance toward innovation and well-managed change to sustain their market position (Scheepers & Storm, 2019). However, Khan et al. (2020) points out that there needs to be more work done to understand the innovation intricacies within specific sectors of the economy, such as the telecommunications industry, or understand the innovation practices and how different organisational contexts influence innovation.

Alblooshi et al. (2020) also state that constant improvement becomes not only an important corporate strategy, but it becomes a necessity for the survival and growth of an organisation. This mindset shift requires strong leadership that fosters a culture of innovation, encourages well-managed risk-taking, and supports experimentation. From a behavioural perspective, leadership development initiatives should encompass programmes aimed at cultivating authentic behaviour by the leadership and the employees, while also fostering an innovation-friendly environment (Scheepers & Storm, 2019), one that employees experience as a safe place for risk-taking and experimentation. This could involve exposing employees to emerging market developments and encouraging them to embrace new ideas and approaches.

However, little is known about the impact of transformational leadership in fostering process-led and/or product-led innovation in ICT organisations in South Africa. Africa as a continent has traditionally received little research attention regarding innovation processes and the factors that influence them. However, recently research has pointed out Africa's innovative potential across various countries, sectors, and types of innovation (Allard & Williams, 2020).

1.7 Delimitations

Although this research explored the influence of transformational leadership on the process of innovation in the context of a singular ICT organisation in South Africa, boundaries have been recognised to the research's viability.

The research focused on one organisation in the ICT sector in South Africa. The insights may apply also to other organisations in the same sector, or to other sectors that drive innovation, but the ICT sector was the primary set for this research. This research delved into the dimensions and contributions of transformational leadership that influence the process of innovation in teams. It did not compare the influence of other leadership styles on innovation and the management of teams.

This research focused on an extensive examination of various individual inputs, which limits the scope to individual experiences as a primary measure to the influence of transformational leadership on the process of innovation.

In addition, the research assumed that the participants' responses were honest and a true reflection of their lived experiences. Despite the researcher's efforts to ensure strong authenticity and credibility, it is essential to acknowledge and address potential biases and individual subjectivity by the participants that could have influenced the findings.

This study focused on the two constructs, namely, transformational leadership and innovation, purposefully excluding any other possible influences on the process of innovation, such as transactional leadership, *laissez-faire* and external factors outside the organisation. Even though these factors may play a role in directly influencing the innovation process, this study did not explore them.

While this study's findings provide notable insights into transformational leadership, these findings may not be generalisable, transferable, or applicable to other environments outside of the ICT sector, aligning with the context of this study.

Acknowledging these limitations is essential to understand this research's focus, applicability and findings aligned with the study's objectives.

1.8 Assumptions

The researcher made some assumptions that must be acknowledged. First, the sample size consists of 14 participants, which limits the representation of diverse perspectives and may not capture the views of the entire target population. Additionally, the study was conducted within a singular organisation, and only two departments were involved in the research. Therefore, the findings do not reflect the broader organisation or other industry sectors.

Multiple assumptions were made throughout the research process. The first assumption was that participants would be unbiased, transparent and honest in their responses, especially since the researcher emphasised confidentiality and anonymity in writing and during the interviews to minimise the risk of dishonest feedback. Furthermore, it was assumed that participants fully understood the interview questions and concepts discussed. From the researcher's perspective, there was an inherent assumption that the information provided by the participants was truthful and that the selected sample was representative of the larger target population.

Lastly, the research was built on the belief that participants would act in good faith, sharing truthful accounts of their lived experiences, despite the subjective nature of this expectation. These factors should be considered when interpreting the findings.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter has laid the foundation for the research by defining the research problem and purpose of the study with the primary aim being to explore the impact of transformational leadership on innovation within teams in a specific ICT organisation in South Africa. The research problem centres on the study needing to close the gap in knowledge regarding the dynamics of transformational leadership and its influence on innovation within the unique context of the ICT sector.

The following chapters will guide the progression of this research. Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive literature review, focusing on key themes related to

transformational leadership and innovation. It also introduces the theoretical foundation of the study, which is transformational leadership theory. Chapter 3 outlines the research questions based on the literature. Chapter 4 describes the research methodology and design in detail. Chapter 5 analyses the research data and provides the findings, while Chapter 6 offers a critical discussion of these results. Lastly, Chapter 7 addresses the implications of the findings for management practices and suggests directions for future research. A Consistency Matrix, (see Appendix 2) ensures the alignment between the literature review, the research questions, the data collection tools, and the data analysis. Together, these chapters present the results of a thorough examination of the role of transformational leadership in driving innovation among and by teams. The next chapters build upon the framework established in this introduction, offering deeper insights into the relationship between transformational leadership and innovation.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter thoroughly reviews the existing literature on the identified primary focus of this study, namely transformational leadership and innovation. In addition, it unpacks transformational leadership theory, which is the theory that supports this research. The main constructs of the study start with the literature review chapter going into the definitions of leadership, followed by the definitions of transformational leadership and its associated dimensions, the concept of innovation and how it has been defined as a construct. The relationship between transformational leadership and the process of innovation is then demonstrated. To summarise, this chapter discusses the influence of transformational leadership on the process of innovation in teams.

The literature review addresses the main research question of how transformational leadership influences the process of innovation in the team. The study focuses on a case study design, concentrating on a singular organisation within the ICT sector in South Africa.

2.2. Leadership

2.2.1 *Defining leadership*

Leadership is known to be a complex and multifaceted phenomenon (Benmira & Agboola, 2021), with multiple levels (Afsar & Umrani, 2020) and many different definitions. In some respects, scholars have claimed that leadership is a being social influence that often requires an interdisciplinary lens (Banks et al., 2022). Understanding what leadership entails requires considering various disciplines. An interdisciplinary approach is essential to fully grasp its dynamics. It has gained momentum and increased attention in academia and in business circles over the years because of the rapid, technology-enabled nature of the business environment. According to Den Hartog and De Hoogh (2024:536), multiple leadership scholars from various countries state that leadership is “the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organisations of which they are members”.

Leadership has become a crucial element for organisational innovation (Wang & Rode, 2010) in organisations and specifically, effective leadership is recognised as being vital in driving innovation (Mulyaningsih et al., 2024). Thus, researchers aiming to garner a better understanding of the interactions between leadership and innovation tend to emphasise that leadership contributes a critical role as a predictor of innovation (Darwish et al., 2020), which, in turn, drives teams to introduce novel ideas in the organisation. Similarly, Fischer et al. (2023) state that people use leadership to influence others to contribute to the aim of the group. The phenomenon is greatly researched and multifaceted.

As the topic of leadership is comprised of different perspectives, this research focused specifically on transformational leadership, the dimensions linked to transformational leadership theory and the influence that this leadership style has on the process of achieving and maintaining innovation in teams.

2.2.2 Leadership vs management

To understand the multiple leadership styles presented by literature, it is critical to understand the difference between leadership and management; as the two are often considered to be the same or similar; however, that is not the case. True leaders are often seen to be visionaries who inform and drive the strategy of the business; they create direction while they are also inspiring change. This is in contrast to management who concentrate on achieving targets, overseeing performance and ensuring that the organisation's stability is maintained, or growth is achieved according to the organisation's goals and the corporate strategy (Benmira & Agboola, 2021). Management is linear, task-oriented and preoccupied with controlling everyday activities, such as planning, coordinating, and producing. Leadership is multi-directional and is future focused. It can be said that managers prioritise order, whereas leaders prioritise innovation and often even disruption (Demirtas, 2020).

Leadership can be defined in multiple ways (Simić, 2020). Even though leadership as a topic has been addressed across multiple disciplines, including psychology, sociology and political sciences, this perspective can be limiting in terms of identifying a single definition, while management is a single discipline, but it is also applied across a wide range of fields.

The contrasting definitions create challenges in forming a central understanding of either leadership or management. This presents a challenge and a level of complexity, which might lead to inconsistent application. Even though diverse perspectives add depth to the overall research on leadership and management, it can adversely hinder the centralising of a universally accepted framework.

2.2.3 Leadership styles

Leadership styles are a leader's specific behaviour or behavioural patterns that result in the directing, motivating and influencing of followers' behaviours. Colovic (2022:3) defines a leadership style as "a leader's behaviour respective to (i) decision-making patterns, (ii) the engagement of followers, and (iii) the degree of autonomy afforded to the latter".

Prior research contrasted the multiple leadership styles and the more traditional styles, such as transformational and transactional leadership, which was introduced by Bass in the 1980s. These must be compared to the more modern leadership styles of today, such as the agile leadership style, which was researched by Cinnioglu in 2020 (Piwowar-Sulej & Iqbal, 2023). Leadership styles that leaders adhere to in a consistent manner influence followers through goal setting and establishing rules (Fries et al., 2021).

Leadership styles are proven to have an impact on employees (Baig et al., 2021), where different leadership styles can play a vital role in influencing the effectiveness of absorptive capacity and therefore, of having an impact on innovation (Darwish et al., 2020). Dating back to the 20th century, extensive research is available on the different leadership styles that view leadership styles as an independent variable within a business and its various functions. However, there is little known about how sustainable leadership styles will be in the long term through learning and innovation within the organisation (Choi, 2021).

Leadership styles allow leaders to effectively drive their organisations and address challenges at different stages of development. They also play an important role in enhancing leaders' ability to recognise new opportunities to boost the organisation's performance (Akbari et al., 2021). Scholars have suggested that leadership and innovation are two key factors in enhancing competitiveness and improving the

organisation's performance. Effective leaders drive innovation, which enables businesses to adapt to changing markets and gain a competitive advantage. By fostering a culture of innovation, leaders can help businesses achieve better output (AlNuaimi et al., 2021). Part of such effective leadership is the optimal choice and application of a relevant leadership style, considering the organisation's status quo, the set goals and targets, the vision and strategies that need to be set and achieved.

Leadership styles have always presented promising opportunities for research, especially for exploring how they may affect various stages of the innovation process (Cortes & Herrmann, 2021). Much remains to be understood about the topic to determine which leadership styles are most effective in fostering innovation (AlNuaimi et al., 2021).

In as much as there are many leadership styles to choose from, Bass's full range of leadership styles will be discussed briefly, namely, the transactional, the *laissez-faire* and the transformational leadership style. The latter was the focus of this study.

2.2.3.1 Transactional leadership

Transactional leadership emphasises a framework, where followers conform to established expectations for recognition, rewards, or to avoid disciplinary actions. Both the transformational and the transactional leadership styles are known to be key drivers of innovation (Alrowwad et al., 2020) and are said to enhance organisations' level of innovation. The transactional leadership style offers followers an exchange for something a leader wants (Puni et al., 2021); essentially, it is dependent on a "give and take" principle.

Transactional leadership operates on rewards and penalties scenarios. Rewards and penalties are measured by employees' performance against set goals or targets. Such close judgement can influence innovation in both positive and negative ways. On the positive side, it provides clear structures and goals, motivating employees to meet specific targets, which can foster incremental improvements and efficiency-driven innovations. However, organisations may encourage transactional leadership in situations where employees are expected to outperform their peers (Hamstra et al., 2014), which might create company-internal competition between teams and between individuals.

By setting clear expectations and offering rewards, transactional leaders can encourage employees to achieve short-term innovation goals as the leadership style is task-oriented (Abbas & Ali, 2023), especially when focusing on optimising existing processes or products. Both the transactional and the transformational leadership styles, as well as a combination of these two styles, can have a substantial effect on creativity and innovation (Alrowwad et al., 2020). Kanungo (2001:260) argued that “transactional leaders behave morally (i.e., seeking consent to the means to achieve individual ends, rather than seeking consensus on a single collective purpose) when they bring the greatest satisfaction to the greatest number of people”.

Although transactional leadership can be effective for managing tasks, it often limits innovation because of the short-term focus and neglecting individual needs. This contrasts with transformational leadership and highlights the need for a more balanced approach in organisations that incorporates transformational leadership elements.

2.2.3.2 *Laissez-faire*

Laissez-faire leadership is often characterised as the “ultimate example of incompetence and ineffectiveness”. This leadership style is marked by a hands-off approach, where leaders provide minimal guidance or oversight to their team members (Robert & Vandenberghe, 2022).

This leadership style is often characterised by leaders (or managers) neglecting their responsibilities toward their followers as such leaders are often absent even when their support is needed the most. The hands-off approach can often create uncertainty within the teams (Ågotnes et al., 2018). This may result in team members not fully understanding their roles and they are unsure of the expectations from their leader, which can create further confusion in their work. In addition, this lack of the appropriate guidance and leadership, the absence of feedback, rewards, and engagement, can be perceived by followers as a form of systematic neglect and disregard (Skogstad et al., 2007), which, in turn, can break down trust and rapport between the leader and the followers.

The *laissez-faire* leadership style is reliant on the employees’ output, which poses a risk to the business because if the employees lack certain competencies or direction,

then their work performance will be negatively affected. Consequently, this type of leadership style is not ideal in a high-performance culture (Thanh & Quang, 2022). Most literature points to the adverse effects of *laissez-faire* leadership; however, to allow for a more balanced view, the leadership style should be approached in a more neutral manner (Ahmed Iqbal et al., 2021).

In contrast to the negative sentiments surrounding the *laissez-faire* leadership style, during the Covid-19 pandemic and the severe lockdowns and their consequences on all industry sectors through the promotion of remote working, employees were forced to work more independently, and they had to be more innovative (Ahmed Iqbal et al., 2021) and autonomous. This relates to aspects of the *laissez-faire* leadership style (Desgourdes et al., 2024). This ties in with challenging the status quo on the standard practice related to time management in the organisation as employee engagement is affected (Hu et al., 2023). Ali and Ullah (2023) support this view by stating that *laissez-faire* leadership activates employees' sense of innovation as it provides them with the freedom in decision-making without them having to wait for approval. In addition, this leadership style contributes to leaders enabling flexibility within the team, where employees are expected by the leader to reciprocate through loyalty and long service to the organisation.

2.2.3.3 Transformational leadership

Transformational leaders create a sense of purpose that helps followers align with, adopt and internalise the leader's vision. This leadership style has been a central theme in leadership studies for the past 40 years, the aim being to focus on the positive side of leadership (Xie, 2020) and highlighting its significance in driving change and inspiring others.

Bass (1999) states that within an organisation, where certain departments have a leader described as transformational, they are primarily viewed as emphasising values of support and innovation. Transformational leadership was first introduced by Burns as a term where it was initially linked to politics (Seitz & Owens, 2021) where the leaders concentrate exclusively on acknowledging and meeting their followers' current needs and motivations.

Amongst the various leadership theories, transformational leadership is currently one of the leading theories in education leadership (Berkovich & Eyal, 2021). Alblooshi et al. (2020) state that transformational leaders can elevate others from self-orientation to an enthusiasm and commitment mindset toward the organisation, the teams and the leaders. This leadership style highlights the importance of collective interests and the pursuit of shared goals by stimulating self-confidence and boosting morale and motivation amongst teams. Researchers have proposed that leadership stands as one of the significant predictors of innovation (Jia et al., 2018). Transformational leadership can serve as a pathway to achieving innovation advancements (Sheehan et al., 2020a). Xie (2020) supports this view by stating that exposure to a transformational leader has been shown to inspire team members and teams to achieve their goals and thus, the organisational performance or output across the business. Transformational leaders serve as role models; they inspire others through their actions and set the vision for the future. This adds to the leaders' capacity to craft an inspiring vision, foster intellectual development, stimulate creativity, and cultivate a sense of shared purpose and dedication amongst their team members (Chukwuma & Zondo, 2024). Transformational leaders challenge employees to think innovatively, but they also provide them with the relevant support and encouragement. By building cooperation between team members and creating a high-performance culture, transformational leaders create an environment that is conducive to innovation. Their transformational leadership style promotes diverse and innovative perspectives (Alblooshi et al., 2020). Not only can transformational leaders influence individual action, but their style of leadership encompasses leaders' interactions with followers across the spectrum of employees in an organisation (Afsar & Umrani, 2020). This implies that their influence is not just on a one-on-one employee level, but it is effective in teams and also the whole organisation, which is advantageous in the organisation gaining a broader influence.

Salazar and Avolio (2024) state that leaders who focus on achievements while they are embracing change are viewed as possessing and applying transformational leadership style attributes. In addition, individuals with a higher promotion orientation are likely to endorse and appreciate transformational leadership attributes. These attributes include emphasising achievement, maintaining a positive attitude toward change, exhibiting creativity in goal pursuit, and setting ambitious performance goals

(Avolio et al., 2022). Leaders endorse this positive attitude through creating emphasis on innovation and driving positive change (Mulyaningsih et al., 2024).

Although transformational leaders have consistently demonstrated a positive impact on organisations, their influence extends far beyond performance metrics that lead to sustainable long-term success and a more engaged workforce. However, this style of leadership is not without its shortcomings. The concept has created a debate amongst scholars, especially regarding the potential for transformational leadership to be incorrectly applied in practice.

Critics question whether leaders with harmful intentions, known as pseudo-transformational leaders, where such individuals serve their own needs and intentions instead of those of the organisation, ever raise concerns about the ethical implications of their influence (O'Reilly & Chatman, 2020). It is important to note that earlier research does not seem to place any significant emphasis on the ethical or moral aspects of leadership (Xie, 2020) or on the leadership styles.

In recent years, more scholars have begun to focus on the ethical dimension of transformational leadership. However, Jackson (2020) argues that transformational leadership involves the leaders' socialised charisma, where they are perceived as confident, which might be in contrast to the reality. This lack of confidence might then be overlaid through risky behaviour. Not only is the ethical dimension emerging as an area of concern, but the leadership style lacks conceptual clarity (Otto et al., 2021). Where replicating the four-dimensional structure, as proposed by Bass and Avolio, is a challenge, this has resulted in some researchers instead evaluating transformational leadership as a single dimensional construct. An additional observation is that Bass's earlier research on the construct of transformational leadership relied heavily on discredited, racially biased data, which was influenced by the white male perspective in informing key assumptions about leadership qualities (Ladkin & Patrick, 2022). This led to a limited view of equal representation from multiple racial groups.

Even though transformational leadership has been a central focus in leadership studies for the last few decades, highlighting its significance in driving change, fostering innovation, and inspiring collective efforts toward shared goals, scholars have raised concerns about the potential for the style being incorrectly used through pseudo-transformational leadership. Overall, while transformational leadership has

consistently shown positive organisational outcomes, its success depends on the integrity and ethical conduct of the leaders who practise it.

2.3 Theoretical Framework: Transformational Leadership Theory

The primary aim of this study was to explore the influence of transformational leadership on innovation within teams in a specific ICT organisation in South Africa. The theoretical framework guiding the understanding of this study was informed by the transformational leadership theory, which is central to examining the influence of leadership on innovation in teams.

This theory suggests that leaders who inspire, motivate, and empower their followers can also encourage an environment where creativity and innovation can thrive. In the context of the ICT sector, where rapid technological advancements and continuous innovation are vital, transformational leadership can play a critical role in encouraging employees to think creatively, collaborate effectively, and embrace change. By linking this aim to the transformational leadership theory, the study looked to understand how leaders in the organisation can drive the innovation process, align team efforts with the organisational goals and create a culture that supports and sustains innovation in the organisation.

Transformational leadership theory was deemed suitable for this study because of its influence on the process of innovation, as it aligns directly with the core focus of fostering creativity and collaboration within teams. This leadership style emphasises inspiring and motivating employees to go beyond their individual interests for the benefit of the organisation, creating an environment that is conducive for innovation. Transformational leaders drive change, they challenge the status quo, and empower team members by giving them the necessary autonomy and encouraging their initiative, which supports the development of innovative practices (Afsar & Umrani, 2020). These leaders provide a clear vision, align team efforts with the organisational objectives, and foster a culture that embraces well-considered risk-taking, while viewing failures as learning opportunities (Hawkins, 2021). By naturally complementing the innovation process, transformational leadership facilitates collaboration, idea generation, and implementation, making it a robust framework for understanding how leadership can actively shape and influence innovation within teams.

Transformational leadership can be characterised by the four dimensions of transformational leadership, which includes (1) idealised influence, (2) inspirational motivation, (3) intellectual stimulation, and (4) individualised consideration that encourages followers to utilise their strengths and take personal initiative. These encouraged actions can be considered as two behaviours that enhance work engagement and performance (Bakker et al., 2023).

Transformational leadership theory has received ample academic attention since its inception and remains one of the most actively researched leadership theories (Siangchokyoo et al., 2020). Transformational leadership is often referred to as being charismatic because followers tend to feel personally inspired by the leader's actions. In this leadership style, the leader motivates followers to utilise their abilities to their fullest potential (Khan et al., 2020). Some scholars suggest that transformational leadership may benefit employee innovation universally across varied cultural contexts (Watts et al., 2020).

The transformational theory of leadership was first coined by Bass and other scholars, who mainly outlined behaviours that leaders possess to encourage transformation, and the way leaders influence followers, which leads to the connection of results that are brought about by the relations between leader and follower (Siangchokyoo et al., 2020).

2.3.1 Transformational leadership theory: four dimensions

One of the important aspects of transformational leadership is the ability to strengthen interactions between leaders and followers by positioning and clearly communicating common motivations and values. It also entails highlighting the leader's awareness of challenges faced in the business, where leaders can delegate assignments as growth opportunities (Bass, 1999), while also providing the necessary support for personal advancement. Transformational leaders typically exhibit four key characteristics: charisma, inspirational leadership, intellectual stimulation, and attentiveness to the needs of their followers (Saad Alessa, 2021).

Siangchokyoo et al. (2020:31) report that according to the transformational theory, "the extent to which leaders are considered transformational is a function of four leader dimensions: (1) idealised influence (role-modelling attributes and behaviours); (2) inspirational motivation (articulations of compelling and inspiring visions of the future); (3) intellectual stimulation (challenging existing assumptions and stimulating

new ways of thinking); and (4) individualised consideration (attending to followers' needs and concerns)".

While many leadership styles highlight the interactions between leaders and followers at the individual level, transformational leadership operates on multiple levels. It incorporates the four dimensions of "individualised consideration" and "intellectual stimulation" at the individual level, while also utilising "idealised influence" and "inspirational motivation" at the group and organisational levels (Afsar & Umrani, 2020).

In a study on the association between transformational leadership and innovation, Al-Husseini et al. (2021) observe that the four elements of transformational leadership, namely idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration, affect both product and process innovation. These components help clarify the relationship between transformational leadership and innovation.

2.3.1.1 Idealised influence

Idealised influence refers to the personal attention a leader gives to followers, enhancing their sense of being valued (Seitz & Owens, 2021). This dimension can also be considered as being charismatic, where it drives a collective achievement through communicating important values and beliefs. A leader who displays idealised influence is most likely to be a mentor in the organisation, one who drives the business strategy in a more translatable way to the greater team. However, idealised influence fails to confirm the effects it has on the organisations' presentation, which can be seen as a more subtle dimension (Jensen et al., 2020). Not only does idealised influence improve the followers' sense of value, but it also facilitates communication and exemplifies a sense of shared purpose while driving moral and ethical decision-making (Afshari, 2022). In addition, Ting et al. (2021) state that idealised influence emphasises the leader's ability to build trust, demonstrate strong values, and uphold high ethical standards, and, in turn, encourage followers to go above and beyond, motivating them to work harder and be more innovative.

In a study on the banking sector in the sub-Saharan region, Magasi (2021) points out that although both idealised influence and inspirational motivation are widely

recognised for enhancing employees' performance, there is little research on how these factors specifically affect employees' performance in sub-Saharan countries. This contributes to the limitation of the model in the context of other regions, which might not necessarily be applicable in that environment.

Idealised influence draws strongly on role-modelling behaviour. However, this can result in dominance being utilised negatively as an influence strategy (Kwok et al., 2023). Although charismatic leaders, who exhibit idealised influence, form an emotional bond with their followers, this can be perceived mostly as an external factor that creates a sense of work satisfaction within the team rather than affecting knowledge-sharing within the teams' dynamics. This could be limiting when the aim is to create a sense of togetherness and cohesion between team members (Fauzi et al., 2021). Ultimately, this could weaken the overall team dynamic, making it more difficult to foster innovation and mutual support within the group, which contrasts with the core of what idealised influence sets to achieve.

2.2.3.2 Inspirational motivation

In transformational leadership, setting high-performance standards and goals, as well as leading with vision, are key elements that contribute to inspirational motivation (Kehr et al., 2023). Inspirational and motivational leaders can be the change catalysts who introduce a sense of optimism among the followers toward their ability to achieve the set goals and be future focused in a positive manner. Such inspirational leaders are not only optimistic, but they also provide the applicable strategy and the necessary guidelines to their followers of how to achieve their tasks and thereafter, they convince them that they can achieve their tasks (Gao et al., 2020) and at times, creatively so (Shafi et al., 2020). Inspirational motivation draws on the leaders' characteristic of being inspirational toward their followers by the leaders presenting a vision that resonates with the followers and leads to their motivation in achieving work tasks in line with that vision (Yin et al., 2020).

Effective leaders are responsible for giving meaning and purpose to their followers' work by engaging them in envisioning a compelling future and setting clear expectations that followers will be excited to meet. They also show strong commitment to the organisation's goals and the shared vision (Passakonjaras & Hartijasti, 2020). Both the dimensions of intellectual stimulation and inspirational

motivation have been known to play a vital role in driving innovation in organisations (Shafi et al., 2020), where the leaders empower followers to actively take part in shaping the vision and the shared values (Kanat-Maymon et al., 2020).

However, irrespective how inspirational and motivating an effective leader is, leaders have to remember to adhere to ethics and morally sound decisions at all times when leading and motivating a team. Ethics play a vital role in the dimension of inspirational motivation. While the leaders focus on driving the organisation's vision collectively and throughout the whole organisation, they need to ensure that this is in line with integrity, honesty, transparency, and fairness. Adhering to ethical standards at all times can produce more positive outcomes that not only enhance the organisation's reputation, but it also assists management and leaders to become ethical role models for their employees and the organisation's stakeholders. The link of inspirational motivation to ethics suggests that leaders who demonstrate a commitment to a positive, ethical, and future-focused organisational vision and who motivate their employees to follow in their footsteps are more likely to make ethical decisions (Ifeanyi et al., 2021).

Leaders can utilise this dimension to articulate the organisation's vision and their own for their followers and drive the shared value within the team by motivating them toward a common goal. Inspirational motivation also may be used by the organisation to provide regular feedback to leaders about how they lead in their daily leadership behaviour, therefore contributing to the leaders' development overall (Bakker et al., 2023). In as much as the dimension draws on the positive influence it has on anchoring the vision of the organisation and being driven toward the future of the business, inspiration motivation is a subset of charisma that deals with providing an idealised future state (Minai et al., 2020). However, such charisma and overtly optimistic future view can also be interpreted by some as being unrealistic and omitting facts of the industry's circumstances or the organisation's shortcomings by purely focusing on the current state of events or the organisation instead of taking the local and global economy into consideration. This became obvious during the past Covid-19 pandemic when many companies had to close down because their charismatic leaders had not considered any potential risks to their organisation's performance or sustainability.

2.2.3.3 Intellectual stimulation

Thuan (2020:818) reports that a leader's intellectual stimulation refers to "enhancing employees' interest in, and awareness of problems, and increasing their ability to think about problems in new ways". However, successful companies do not only focus on identifying current and potential problems, but they also encourage effective leaders to motivate and encourage employees to explore new methods (Zhou et al., 2012) and find solutions to these identified problems and challenges. Leaders who actively make use of intellectual stimulation of their followers encourage problem identification and solutions by being innovative and thinking out of the box (Khan et al., 2022), thereby supporting the employees' creativity and innovative thinking within the team. Such approach by the leader focuses on the followers' intellectual capabilities, motivating them to use their innovative and creative thinking for finding solutions and then, in turn, the leaders expect high performance from the teams.

Leaders who embrace intellectual stimulation are often pushing employees' boundaries by challenging the status quo, motivating them to think creatively, and to take advantage of opportunities that have been identified or that become available. These types of leaders have a way of coercing employees to become change catalysts and approach problems with an innovative perspective in developing solutions. In turn, this can become a key contributor to creating a competitive advantage and strategic relevance for the business (Eide et al., 2020).

Transformational leaders' use of intellectual stimulation encourages the followers' proactiveness. Teams that are exposed to such behaviours and stimulation often engage in more regular and open communication (Becker et al., 2022), which is a key component in driving a positive relationship between the leader and the followers.

Although intellectual stimulation encourages followers to challenge the status quo and assumptions and encourages them to share their ideas and be innovative, Becker et al. (2022) argue that while intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration relate positively to participation quality, they relate negatively to participation quantity in driving innovation. Intellectual stimulation could enhance followers' abilities to think critically and solve problems, resulting in feelings of increased efficiency and competence; however, raised self-determination among

employees is also reported not to contribute to enhancing competency levels in the organisation (Minai et al., 2020).

2.2.3.4 Individualised consideration

Individualised consideration concerns leaders motivating their team members by addressing their specific needs and being attentive to their specific concerns while motivating them to develop and grow at a personal level. Individualised consideration encourages dialogue and improves information being exchanged between the leader and the follower, which in turn, allows the follower to become familiar with the leader's views and reaction (Martínez-Córcoles et al., 2020). This dimension is based on leaders observing their followers' individual achievements and by being supportive (Malloy & Kavussanu, 2021) and mentoring individuals to achieve more and better by creating a learning environment for growth and development (Anderson & Sun, 2015).

By displaying this dimension by showing an interest in the individual's performance, leaders can influence the individuals' attitudes and behaviours and drive change within the team (Yin et al., 2020). This approach focuses on the uniqueness of the individuals' qualities in an effort to ensure that their contributions are not only recognised but are also cultivated positively (Al-Husseini et al., 2021). Leaders must also be cognisant of taking the individual's unique needs into account (Labrague et al., 2020) when providing the necessary support. They also have to be intentional when assigning tasks in accordance with the individual's strengths (Ding & Lin, 2021), which should lead to an increase in productivity, employees' job satisfaction, and enhanced performance or output. This will assist the leader in effectively building stronger relationships between the leader and the follower (Oswald et al., 2022).

As individualised consideration focuses on the follower more than on the leader or the organisation, this may be taxing on the leader, especially if one considers the resources required, such as time spent in translating the vision or strategy and creating buy-in with the individual follower (Stock et al., 2023). When individualised consideration is associated with intellectual stimulation, the opportunities to develop will be experimental and sometimes necessitate knowledge being sought externally as opposed to internally (Anderson & Sun, 2015). Searching expertise externally instead of among the organisation's own employees could damage the trust between

followers and the leader as it can potentially undermine their drive to enhance their own capabilities, and thereby deprive them of personal growth and innovative thinking which can be in contrast to what the dimension sets to encourage.

Despite a multitude of studies having been conducted on the topic, understanding specific transformational leadership behaviours is limited by the combination of followers' perceptions of their leader's behaviour (Farahnak et al., 2020). Although transformational leadership theory has been viewed through a positive lens, it is not without criticism. Transformational leadership operates as a double-edged sword, producing two opposing outcomes: empowerment of the individual and the team, and dependence on the leader's support and input. It has been linked to increased strain, while other researchers suggest that it contributes to general workaholism (Kwok et al., 2023). Changar and Atan (2021) point out that transformational leadership theory embraces a heroic leadership model, where the success of an organisation, team, or individual is believed to depend entirely on the leader's ability to identify the right course of action and inspire others to follow it – which can come across as being controlling and maybe at times even manipulative.

The model of transformational leadership has some key components that are missing. While the approach is relevant for evaluating the overall concept of transformational leadership, it falls short when a more detailed analysis is required. The review of research on behaviours associated with transformational leaders is needed to provide a more complete understanding (Morkevičiūtė et al., 2019) of the theory's functioning.

Transformational leadership tends to be more effective in Western cultures compared to many Eastern cultures, where individuals are more inclined to receive directives and definitive instructions from leaders rather than being involved in the decision-making process. This contrasts with the participatory style that transformational leadership encourages (Bose & Haque, 2021).

Research indicates that because transformational leadership is essential for achieving organisational excellence as transformational leaders are goal-oriented (Otto et al., 2021), this means that leaders must establish a culture of involvement to fully realise the benefits in the organisation. By fostering an environment that encourages active participation by the teams and the individuals, leaders enable a

high-performance culture (Lasrado & Kassem, 2021). To sustain such an approach, they have to train, mentor and empower employees as well as prioritise their well-being and job satisfaction. This aspect of transformational leadership has been well-researched (Hannah et al., 2020).

Transformational leaders play a pivotal role in driving and managing change and becoming change catalysts in an organisation. Leaders who exhibit transformational leadership attributes are useful especially for companies where new strategies need to be implemented. This also applies in instances where emerging technologies are rendering the organisation redundant and with no remaining competitive advantage in the market (O'Reilly & Chatman, 2020), and when large-scale change is critical for the business.

While the specific dimension of individualised consideration is beneficial in building a one-on-one relationship between the leader and the follower, Bormann and Diebig (2021) argue that this entails the potential risk of the leader applying a "favouritism" dynamic, where workplace inequalities might arise that will cause team division and reduced commitment by those team members who might feel excluded. In as much as pseudo-transformational leadership has been referred to as a critique, the negative effects on a team are that a pseudo-transformational leaders tend to incorrectly apply their level of influence through manipulation and by prioritising their personal gain and career advancement.

Current research highlights that many leaders' experiences depend on their ability to demonstrate transformational leadership consistently, even when they are having either good or bad days (Bakker et al., 2023), as this has the risk of making transformation leadership inconsistent in practice. This potential day-to-day variation will negatively affect effectively leaders' ability to inspire their followers' performance, emphasising the importance of leaders being mindful of their daily leadership behaviours and the consistency of the messages they send out in their own role modelling behaviour.

The transformational leadership theory is relevant for this study as it focuses on driving change, fostering innovation, and motivating employees, which is key in all organisations and equally so in ICT organisations. The emphasis on vision,

motivation, and long-term sustainability makes the theory especially relevant for understanding leadership's impact on innovation within an organisation.

However, criticisms raised against the transformational leadership theory include a perceived lack of conceptual distinctiveness and the potential for misuse or the incorrect use, where leaders manipulate employees and prioritise their personal gain over the collective goals (pseudo-transformational leadership). Previous research has struggled to closely and consistently replicate the theory's four-dimensional structure.

In as much as transformational leadership is viewed as being progressive and forward-thinking, van Knippenberg and Sitkin (2013) raised the argument that at times people are almost blinded by transformational leadership when they believe that the model is valid, even though there is evidence that suggests otherwise. Their criticism of the transformational leadership model identified the main problems as: (1) a lack of a clear conceptual definition; (2) theories used research fail to clarify the causal relationships between each dimension and its effects on mediating processes or outcomes; (3) the conceptualisation and operationalisation often confuse charismatic-transformational leadership with its outcomes; and (4) commonly used measurement tools are invalid as they do not align with the theoretical framework and fail to distinguish it from other aspects of leadership (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013).

2.4 Why Innovation Matters in Business

The study of innovation is closely connected to two fields: management and economics, where management focuses on understanding the internal dynamics of innovation, such as its influence and development within the organisation, while the economics section examines the impact of innovations' progression on the businesses (Taques et al., 2021). It is not enough for businesses to simply copy technological or organisational innovation initiatives from other organisations; they have to rally their own resources and reinvent their own internal capabilities (Anand et al., 2021) to remain relevant in the market. In another explanation, Ye et al. (2022) look at innovation as being a process that not only involves economic but also social value from the creation to the transformation of knowledge by enhancing both products and processes. In a highly competitive environment, this approach is crucial

for the organisation's survival as it enhances the competitive edge of the team, the organisation and any group that the organisation may belong to.

Recent literature has revealed that innovation is most often expected to include both product and process innovation; however, there is no clear distinction made between product and process innovation. Some studies compare creativity and innovation rather than investigating causal interdependencies (Möldner et al., 2020), which may overlook how the two concepts may influence each other.

When organisations are faced with the important task of examining whether they are still relevant and will remain so, and how they can create a competitive advantage, they have to confront the added pressure of adopting or adapting to new, ever-evolving technologies. This additional pressure on resources and decision-making strategies creates an added mandate for organisations to become innovative "in the age of digital disruption". With growing pressure to adopt digital technologies to renew and transform their business models, organisations often turn to innovation as a key strategy to navigate the uncertainties brought about by digitalisation and globalisation (Opland et al., 2020).

In a rapidly evolving marketplace, organisations that prioritise innovation can differentiate themselves by developing new offerings or processes that meet the ever-changing consumer or customer demands. This is vital in the environment of digitisation, where emerging technologies offer opportunities to create new business models. Ultimately, innovation not only enables organisations to stay competitive, but it also enables them to be responsive to global challenges in a digital world.

2.5 Innovation in the ICT sector

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a vast sector that comprises of multiple elements from IT equipment to communication capabilities, and software platforms. These elements have become increasingly integrated into various products and services that serve multiple stakeholders. ICT facilitates easier and faster access to knowledge and offers new ways of communicating information (Kallal et al., 2021). Over the past decades, the sector has made great strides and improved its technological and professional skills, which has contributed toward innovation.

In line with the fast-moving evolution of technology in the early 2000s, the ICT market became very competitive, given the rise of mobile phone use and rapid updates and disruptions in technology (Giachetti & Li Pira, 2022). While the introduction of such new technology gave more meaning to innovation, which was characterised in terms of process or product innovation, the true innovation behaviour implied a reinvention of the actual organisation. Generally, innovation refers to the creation of new and economically valuable ideas in the form of unique products or processes (Malerba & McKelvey, 2020). This means that products or services represent a process that subsequently delivers value to the end user, and these products and services have to ensure that they adapt to the needs and wants of the customer (Yezerky, 2007) keeping the customer top of mind.

The development of network infrastructures and socioeconomic factors have a direct influence on ICT development, where innovation is widely acknowledged as one of the primary influences of a country's competitiveness (Lee et al., 2016) within this sector. The vast increase in access to ICT products and services has been accelerated by technological innovation, which is vital in driving sustainable development of technology in a country (Adewale Alola et al., 2021).

The initial wave of practical studies concentrated on ICT's influence on economic growth in developed economies. Later, this evolved during the 1990s when researchers aimed to understand the productivity boom observed in the United States during the period, investigating whether ICT could be attributed as the driver of this growth in developed economies (Kallal et al., 2021). While the positive effect of the introduction of newly developed technologies is evident in developed countries, it is not always found to the same extent in developing economies. Lee et al. (2016) encourages future research to gather more data on this difference in effect on economies, including additional observations from developing countries to address the unique needs of those economies.

Allard and Williams (2020) also point out that the theory regarding innovation in the African context needs to be developed, and that it has to be identified what reasoning is most and least relevant regarding innovation in the African context.

2.5.1 Transformational leadership in innovation

Transformational leadership and innovation are closely related concepts. For years, scholars have researched the links of these two concepts to understand the influence

of the one element on the other in greater detail. Research has shown that transformational leadership influences innovation outcomes. Leaders who exhibit transformational behaviours are more likely to create an environment where employees feel that the organisation is well-equipped to be innovative. They also tend to promote collaboration and open communication, which are essential for generating and implementing innovative solutions.

According to Siyal et al. (2021), implementing innovative ideas can facilitate the restructuring of new and innovative options for an organisation. This extends beyond the innovation concept; it also involves leaders taking action with a future-looking orientation, and thereby contributing to the ongoing improvement in an organisation and the introduction of up-to-date technology and the adoption of innovative solutions.

The transformational leadership style can be differentiated from the conventional transactional leadership as its role acts as an agent of change and this has an influence on innovative behaviour in the workplace (Begum et al., 2022). Employees are shown by the leader's example that innovation can be achieved by creating new methods, implementing unique ideas, restructuring processes, and consistently striving for improvement. Leaders play a pivotal role in nurturing innovative behaviour amongst their employees, and this highlights the significance of leadership offering support and encouragement toward their employees. Transformational leadership, especially in Research & Development (R&D) settings in China, significantly affects innovative work behaviour, and contributes to a positive work environment and organisational innovation taking place (Siyal et al., 2021).

Transformational leadership inspires and motivates employees to exceed their normal performance levels and to think creatively, fostering an environment conducive toward innovative solutions and sustained competitive advantage (Sheehan et al., 2020b). This type of leader can challenge the status quo and disrupt the organisational norm, but this is also dependent on the hierarchical level of the leader. In this context, transformational leadership might be vital in driving innovation processes as it involves leaders who inspire followers to look beyond themselves by exhibiting: (a) charisma (comprising idealised influence and inspirational motivation); (b) intellectual stimulation; and (c) individualised consideration (Becker et al., 2022). In as much as transformational leadership has proven to be effective in stimulating

innovative behaviour in organisations, there needs to be a better understanding of the level at which it is effective and exhibited.

At the individual level, for example, transformational leadership may boost proactivity (Becker et al., 2022) through a personal sense of wanting to achieve at a personal level, and be heard (Schmitt et al., 2016). Followers of a transformational leader also tend to be more intrinsically motivated (Schmitt et al., 2016). Transformational leaders who focus on the individuals tend to increase their innovative behaviour (Li et al., 2016). Similarly, when working for and together with a transformational leader, followers tend to feel more psychologically fit and display innovative behaviour in the workplace (Pieterse et al., 2010). According to Hughes et al. (2018), leadership–innovation research points to the perception that transformational leaders can enhance both the quantity and quality of innovation displayed by followers in an organisation.

2.6 Conclusion

One of the core components for an organisation's success is its leadership complement. Leadership styles and approaches have evolved to meet the unique needs of businesses in today's modern business culture. Factors such as global events, major crises and pandemics have influenced the further development of leadership styles, for instance, the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in many organisations being forced to let their employees work remotely by using technology. The growing technological advancements have added pressure on leaders and businesses to become more innovative in their thinking and approach to business – which has both advantages and disadvantages. Most leadership and management styles paint a very positive image of how leaders engage with their followers, ultimately leading to a competitive advantage and advancing the goals of the organisation. However, it is important to remember that although leadership and management may be similar, these two constructs play very different roles. Leadership lends itself to the leader being a visionary who is future-focused on driving strategic intentions; in contrast, management is centred on task-related deliverables on a day-to-day basis.

Leadership styles are important not only from an academic perspective, but also from a business perspective as the leader's style applied to the overall functioning of the organisation is at the pulse of the company. In exploring various leadership styles,

namely the transactional leadership style, the *laissez-faire* leadership style, and transformational leadership style, it becomes evident that leadership goes beyond the leader, and it influences the success or failure of an organisation. Leadership introduces not only the creative element, but it also drives innovation directly and indirectly with the effect on teams and individuals. However, leadership spreads its own challenges and its impact onto followers, and an inconsistent application of positive leadership styles, or leaders misusing their influence through manipulation of their followers for their own personal gain has led to the ethical dimension being an area of concern.

The focus of the discussion has been on transformational leadership and its influence on the process of innovation in teams. When managed efficiently, transformational leadership can stimulate the organisation's performance and productivity. Also, the efficiency of transformational leadership is driven by its four dimensions of idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration in driving innovative behaviour within the teams and achieving the organisation's strategic objectives. Transformational leadership stands out as a primary factor of influencing organisational innovation and determining the extent of support allocated to innovation within a company. However, there are gaps in the literature regarding the leaders' influence and the elements that cause the appropriate reaction and innovation among the followers that still need to be researched in more depth. The relationship between transformational leadership theory and innovation has been stated by some researchers to have notable effects where leaders who display transformational leadership behaviours are more likely to create an environment where employees feel equipped to innovate and contribute their ideas. This provides an interesting view on how team dynamics are influenced through role-modelled behaviour by leaders.

The literature review has revealed that bias can steer toward highlighting the positives of transformational leadership theory, whereas some researchers have stated that the theory can be overly optimistic by focusing on the current state of events in an organisation rather than the future. In the context of South Africa, the ICT sector can add more complexity as technology has shown positive evidence of being a driver of growth in a country. However, further research needs to contribute to this assertion by including additional observations from developing countries such

as South Africa to address the unique needs of the country, where socio-political dynamics might also influence the ICT sector.

The core of this research explores how transformational leadership influences the process of innovation within teams. It is important for organisations to actively drive transformational leadership to ensure genuine implementation in teams and change that positively contributes to the business' well-being and sustainable growth.

In summary, this research serves to purposefully expand academic knowledge, bridging the gaps in the collective understanding of transformational leadership theory, and provide insights to ICT professionals, ensuring leaders and followers are equipped to navigate the ever-evolving business environment. With the foundation of the literature review, the subsequent chapters will develop the exploration by supporting the blend of academic relevance and business application in practice.

CHAPTER 3 – RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research study explored how transformational leadership influences the process of innovation in teams, specifically focusing on a single (ICT) organisation in South Africa. The research questions were formulated based on the reviewed literature.

Research Question 1: What are the factors influencing innovation in teams?

This question aimed to explore the subjective experiences and perceptions of team members regarding how leadership influences the team's innovation culture and to understand how the existing processes and organisational frameworks affect the team members' views on innovation.

Research Question 2: What are the behaviours and actions leaders' possess to encourage innovation in teams?

This question sought to identify the leadership behaviours and actions that team members find most conducive to promoting innovation. It further sought to identify particular leader behaviours and actions that team members find most supportive of innovation and the leader's involvement in securing and allocating resources that facilitate innovation. The question also examined how the recognition and rewards provided by the leader affect the team members' motivation to pursue innovative ideas. Lastly, it examined how the leader/s promote collaboration and the sharing of ideas and knowledge, which are critical components of the innovation process.

Research Question 3: What challenges are encountered when trying to create an environment of innovation in teams?

This question aimed to uncover the difficulties teams might encounter while they were trying to innovate. In addition, to gain an understanding of the strategies used by the leader/s or the followers to overcome these challenges and to examine how limitations in the organisation's resources have affected the team's innovation capabilities. Lastly, the question aimed to identify the difficulties team members face in securing backing from the leader/s for their innovative projects and suggestions.

CHAPTER 4 – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology and design of the research study. An interpretivist philosophy was applied, with an inductive approach. In addition, the population, unit of analysis, the sampling method and the sample size, the measurement instrument, the data gathering process, the necessary quality control measures, and any identified methodological limitations are presented in this chapter.

4.2 Research Design

The study applied a case study design with the inquiry being qualitative for data collection. In utilising this design method, the understanding of how transformational leadership influences the process of innovation in teams was examined. For social research, a case study research design is most common (Priya, 2021). The case study design was used to help in focusing on a specific space, time, and organisation, as well as providing the opportunity for multiple methods of data collection through interviews and publicly available company documentation (Schoch, 2020). The selected research design was chosen to provide an in-depth understanding of the targeted organisation. The mixed method qualitative research made use of semi-structured interviews and secondary source data that was publicly available (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The chosen design method was ideal for capturing the experience of the identified population (Thompson Burdine et al., 2021), which aimed to contribute to the body of knowledge.

The selected research design specific to this study was a single case study strategy. The research aimed to make observations within the real-world context through an all-encompassing method (Yin et al., 2018), with the approach being appropriate to understand the dynamics within a single setting (Creswell et al., 2007). The study achieved this by examining teams within an organisation, which contributed to extrapolating themes and results to answer the research questions posed. The application of the research design explored the influence of transformational leadership on the process of innovation and outlined the challenges and possible affirmed propositions (Alam, 2021) through the in-depth interviews.

Through the constructs of the transformational leadership theory and innovation, the influence that these two aspects hold was supported by the theory to explain a central

phenomenon (Eisenhardt, 2021). Eisenhardt developed an approach known as the “Eisenhardt Method”, for which the theory was built from multiple cases, emphasising the theoretical arguments. However, in this study, the focus was on a single case study as only one ICT organisation was selected with the aim of addressing the research questions posed.

The case study strategy was used to garner an understanding of the “how” and “why” questions. This is applicable when the researcher does not have control over the participants’ responses and where the focus of the research is based on an existing phenomenon (Yin et al., 2018). In this specific case, the phenomenon referred to the transformational leadership theory. The case study strategy was suitable to be utilised as there was the need to describe a social phenomenon, such as transformational leadership theory and in-depth research was required.

This study investigated multiple teams within a specific (ICT) organisation by considering transformational leadership factors or characteristics amongst leaders, which were assumed that they could influence the process of innovation within the respective teams.

4.3 Research Philosophy

The interpretivist research philosophy was applied in this research study. The chosen philosophy sought to understand the lived experiences of multiple teams by making use of the team members’ subjective views in an organisation regarding the behaviour of their leader/s. Researchers making use of the interpretivist approach are seeking to understand factors beyond a subjective view; instead, they also seek to identify behaviour and the culture in an organisation (Ali et al., 2021). This was an important consideration as the study focused on the individualised lived experiences (Jansen, 2016). The choice of the interpretivist research philosophy was based on the study’s aim to contribute to a better understanding of the influence that transformational leadership has on a team member, as well as on teams and the organisation.

The application of an interpretivist approach aimed to contribute to a better understanding of this social phenomenon (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). In so doing, the perceptions of the participants regarding the process of innovation in their teams were also examined (De Bruin & Graupner, 2024).

4.4 Research Approach

The study adopted an inductive research approach, meaning that the patterns, themes, and categories were drawn from the data itself, emerging naturally rather than being predetermined or premeditated before the data collection and analysis (Lester et al., 2020) in a bottom-up manner (Woo et al., 2017). Aljaroodi et al. (2020) state that induction is more generalised, whereas a deductive approach or reasoning rely on concepts by nature.

Saunders and Lewis (2018:218) state that “in both inductive and deductive qualitative analysis, one can use propositions to develop theory. This involves looking for patterns in one’s data and testing alternative explanations for these patterns by using one’s data”. However, in this study, the aim was to gain an in-depth understanding of how the participants attached transformational leadership to the process of innovation. It also aimed to establish how this contributed to developing the theory of transformational leadership (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

The study explored the theory of transformational leadership to examine the influence of the four dimensions (Siangchokyoo et al., 2020:31): “(1) idealised influence (role modelling attributes and behaviours); (2) inspirational motivation (articulations of compelling and inspiring visions of the future); (3) intellectual stimulation (challenging existing assumptions and stimulating new ways of thinking); and (4) individualised consideration (attending to followers' needs and concerns)” on the process of innovation.

4.5 Research Methodological Choice

The research made use of a single case study research methodological choice. The case study focused on a single ICT organisation, with employees being chosen across predetermined teams and departments in the organisation. The choice of semi-structured interviews was useful in obtaining an authentic understanding of the experiences as all interviewing was conducted in natural settings (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

4.6 Research Strategy

The main research strategy for this study was the use of interviews, which was the primary data collection method (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The interview questions were semi-structured to allow participants to respond in a manner that avoids certain

elements not being represented (as would be the case in structured interviews) and further, it allowed the researcher to follow up questions with in-depth probes where more information was needed. By utilising a case study design for this research, the real-life context was able to be drawn also by using publicly available secondary sources of evidence to support or triangulate the findings. The online interviews were recorded by the researcher during the time of interaction, which were considered the 'superior gold standard', as they make use of the exact space and time (Saarijärvi & Bratt, 2021).

4.7 Research Time Horizon

The research adopted a cross-sectional time horizon. This type of design provides a specific view as a "snapshot" of that period within a predetermined time (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). This design was advantageous to this research as the data was collected and assessed simultaneously on the independent and dependent constructs (Schindler, 2022). In this study, transformational leadership was an independent variable and innovation a dependent construct. Cross-sectional design can provide more value than a longitudinal time horizon as this does not necessarily provide evidence of causation, in both time horizon designs, alternative possibilities can be ruled out (Spector, 2019). The data collection period took place over 8 weeks, during which information was collected that was relevant for this study.

4.8 Population

A population is a full group of targeted members that the research study focuses on (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The identified population for this research were individuals working at an identified, single ICT organisation. The targeted participants included employees, middle managers, senior managers, and executives who are involved with teams that are responsible for product development or marketing of such products across the organisation.

The study endeavoured to obtain a comprehensive record of the individuals' lived experience by involving both leaders and team members in the target population.

As the researcher was employed in the chosen organisation, to maintain objectivity and avoid any potential conflicts of interest, the research was conducted in departments or areas of the organisation where the researcher has no direct

involvement or influence. The organisation is large enough to have been able to provide these options.

4.9 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis that was utilised for this study comprised employees within a single, chosen ICT organisation. The team members who were interviewed were those who had been innovative – whether in the form of process, product, or systems innovation, as the research aim was to understand how transformational leadership has influenced these individuals to perform, drive, and execute in a way that is innovative and thus, link back to the main research question posed. The testament of such innovation was obtained through secondary data, such as the company's documentation that was available to the public. The identified individuals represented the population that was asked to be interviewed. In a similar study conducted by Gomes et al. (2021), the researchers used managers as the main unit of analysis as they were the key informants for assessing the organisation. However, this research was open to all levels of employment and therefore, it included managers and senior management. Korcu and Kaya (2023) state that they had aimed for their entire study population to be included, which comprised of middle to low-level managers. As this research relied on a case study of a single organisation, this approach supported the validity and reliability of the research findings.

4.10 Case Selection

In line with the aim of the study, the departments that were identified for inclusion in the study were those that directly related to the research goal of understanding the influence of transformational leadership on the process of innovation. The departments identified were the marketing and product departments. These two departments are often expected to devise innovative ways of producing products or ways of selling these products. In each department, a sample of three team members and one team lead or manager were identified. The identified sample population was reached via email to request and invite them to take part in the interview. The selected employees had to be permanent staff, having been employed in the organisation for a period of more than six months, with team leaders or managers having had to be employed for a period of more than two years.

The identified participants were thoroughly briefed in writing on the purpose, scope, and intended outcomes of the research. To obtain a more stable analysis, the study focused only on teams and team members in the same teams in two separate departments. This approach encouraged common experiences that might be central in influencing the team dynamics (Eisenhardt, 2021). The identified organisation has multiple departments; however, the analysis was based only on two departments; namely, marketing and product development as these departments work closely on the process of innovation. Since the core purpose of the organisation is to create value through customer engagement, the enterprise's two fundamental functions are marketing and product innovation. A selection of individual team members was identified in line with a role-based selection. This included the team leads or managers who were able to provide insights into leadership practices and the team dynamics, as well as the team members who had a diverse mix of roles, tenure, and expertise.

The close connection between the marketing and product functions arises from their overlapping nature. Innovation begins by identifying a problem or unmet customer needs, leading to the development and marketing of a solution. This process encompasses market research, invention, product development, commercialisation, and ongoing product refinement (Purchase & Volery, 2020). Product development was viewed as being a highly contested space for the organisation as it creates a competitive advantage in the market. According to Schubert and Tavassoli (2019), new-to-market products are novel, with no prior market presence, which is vital for product development teams to keep in mind when wanting to differentiate their organisation in the market, especially during the idea generation phase of innovation.

The population of this research was predetermined, in line with the specific requirements to align further with the aims of the study. Theoretical sampling was applied for this study with the purpose of evolving throughout the course of this research. This sampling method was concerned with collecting data to build and refine the theory (Conlon et al., 2020). In this study, the transformational leadership theory was expanded on. Theoretical sampling works to generate comparative data for building themes as the study evolves through interviewing the participants (Foley et al., 2021).

For the composition of the teams, an average of three team members in each team were sampled across two teams within two departments, resulting in 12 employees

participating in the study. At least one team lead or manager were also sampled in each department, resulting in two team leads or managers from each of the two departments, therefore 14 respondents were sampled in total.

Table 1 depicts the selection process that was applied to the interviews for this study.

Table 1: Selection Process and Total Number and Data Points

Department 1	Team 1	Team member 1	Team lead or manager 1
		Team member 2	
		Team member 3	
	Team 2	Team member 1	
		Team member 2	
		Team member 3	
Department 2	Team 1	Team member 1	Team lead or manager 2
		Team member 2	
		Team member 3	
	Team 2	Team member 1	
		Team member 2	
		Team member 3	
Total departments = 2	Total teams = 4	Total employees = 12	Total team leads or managers = 2

To provide further details about the selected sample and indicate their individual years of service or tenure and in which department they were working, Table 2 was created.

Table 2: Details of interviewed sample

Reference Code	Years of service/ tenure	Department
P1	12	Product
P2	26	Product
*P3	7	Product
P4	10	Product
P5	14	Marketing
*P6	2	Marketing
P7	20	Marketing
P8	5	Marketing
P9	13	Product
P10	34	Product
P11	9	Product
P12	14	Marketing
P13	14	Marketing
P14	15	Product

*Team leads

Once the data was collected and analysed, it was stored safely via the repository provided by GIBS faculty, where it will be stored for 10 years.

The case study selection was deliberate in aiming to draw on research insights to build on existing literature about the transformational leadership theory. Similarly, in selecting the teams and team members, the research deliberately focused on employees in one ICT organisation to enhance the focus on the lived experience to contribute to the transformational leadership theory and the innovation process. This enhanced the validity and trustworthiness of the findings on transformational leadership theory.

4.11 Measurement Instrument

The research made use of semi-structured interviews as a measurement instrument. to encourage participants to contribute their lived experiences and to provide the researcher with an opportunity to probe for better understanding (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Semi-structured interviews are best suited for case selection, and when the researcher has already situated the questioning based on some theories, such as

the transformational leadership theory, this can be easily expanded as the interviews progress (Conlon et al., 2015). This approach was further supported through the use of public domain organisational documents from the identified ICT organisation, serving as secondary data to support the case study design with additional information. An interview guide was utilised as a data collection tool (see Annexure 3). Participants were provided with an assurance of their anonymity to encourage comfortable responses (Leavy, 2022).

4.12 Data Gathering

Data gathering was implemented by conducting online based in-depth interviews with the identified participants. The researcher also used the applicable organisational documents to investigate the individual and team dynamics that existed in the process of innovation in the identified ICT organisation. Participants were required to sign a voluntary consent form prior to partaking in the interviews (see Annexure 5).

To gather data, purposive sampling was applied, where the researcher used judgement to identify the final sample members for this study (Saunders & Lewis, 2018), constructed on team size and the likelihood to be innovative, based on business needs. Two teams were sampled from two chosen departments for this study; the selected teams were made up of a minimum of three members per sub-team.

Online based interviews were conducted in the Gauteng region via the online platform MS Teams. The necessary permission was obtained from the participants prior to recording online.

4.13 Analysis Approach

The study made use of a thematic analysis approach. This approach was appropriate in seeking to understand the lived experiences, thinking, and behaviours of a specific data set (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). At the core of this qualitative thematic analysis approach was data coding and data examination, used to create themes that will form the foundation of creating new theoretical views (Grodal et al., 2021).

The use of an inductive thematic analysis approach for this study allowed for the writing of themes in real time while the research was conducted (Saunders & Lewis,

2018). This analysis approach also allowed for themes to develop from the data rather than themes being predetermined prior to the data collection taking place (Lester et al., 2020). Through an inductive approach, the aim was to link the themes to the data, as the data was collected specifically for the research study through interviews as the primary data collection method. Therefore, the themes that formed during the data analysis may or may not have been related to the specific questions posed to the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In a similar study on transformational leadership (Ferreira et al., 2020), process analysis resulted in thematic categories linked to transformational leadership. As the themes were generated through induction to understand the sentiments and experiences of employees in teams in an ICT organisation, this linked well with the thematic analysis approach.

Qualitative research needs to be reflective, with the researcher being introspective about their investigative journey. Researchers can better understand what they are doing, how they are doing it, and why as they designed the original purpose of the study. Exploring the phenomenon or culture of qualitative inquiry through the lens of their own experiences can provide valuable insights (Saldaña, 2018).

The qualitative data analysis was carried out by using Atlas.ti software with a methodical step-by-step approach.

4.14 Data Saturation

Reaching data saturation means that enough information has been collected to adequately address the research questions, ensuring that the findings are relevant and reflective of the study's identified population (Fofana et al., 2020). Data saturation is reached when new data no longer contributes additional insights, indicating that the sample size is sufficient to fully address the research objectives (Alam, 2021). For this study, the saturation was reached at respondent 12, out of the 14 respondents. Thus, the new information was less than 5% with no new themes emerging after the 12th interview. Data collection was finalised on the 14th interview, with no additional codes to add resulting in saturation.

4.15 Quality Controls

Multiple validity and credibility control measures were implemented to maintain the integrity of the research findings (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Cloutier and Ravasi (2021:2) define trustworthiness as “the degree to which the reader can assess whether the researchers have been honest in how the research has been carried out and reasonable in the conclusions they make”. To increase the trustworthiness of this study, the data was treated in the following manner, where the researcher: (1) organised and managed the large amounts of data by conducting interviews through a data inventory, which was organised into relevant criteria, such as employees’ roles or concepts; (2) analysed the data by transforming it from raw data into findings through multiple iterations in analysis to ensure that useful and relevant insights were drawn; and (3) displaying findings in a clear and conclusive format that represents the research claims well (Cloutier & Ravasi, 2021).

For this study, the selected participants had to meet the stipulated requirements, such as being employed for more than six months, with team leads or managers having to be employed for a period of more than two years in the identified ICT organisation. Prior to conducting the interviews, participants gave their consent in writing for the online conducted interviews. The interview sessions were recorded and stored confidentially via the repository provided by GIBS faculty for a period of 10 years.

To gain deeper insights into the study, the research involved diverse employees’ lived experiences to gain multiple perspectives, and the study included vital and relevant company documentation to contribute to the triangulation of the data collection (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). To maintain consistency in the interviews, an interview guide (see Appendix 3) was used to ensure comprehension of the questions through obtaining verbal confirmation of understanding of what was asked and giving the participants the chance to ask for clarity where necessary.

4.16 Limitations

First, the identified limitation of this study was potential researcher bias. As the researcher is familiar with the organisation, this might have compromised the objectivity of the research process. Second, having utilised a cross-sectional time horizon opened up the potential for temporary factors to bias results where, for example, the participants’ mood might influence their response at that point in time

(Spector, 2019). Third, the study focused only on participants who form part of a single organisation and only two departments being engaged with, which is restrictive in the variety of participants and can lead to generalisation (Eisenhardt, 1989). Fourth, the study was limited to a very small sample of 14 participants selected from one organisation. This means that the findings are not generalisable to other organisations or other industry sectors.

4.17 Ethics

All participants received a clear written description outlining the purpose, scope, and intended outcomes of the research. The information required for the study was stated, along with the policy regarding anonymity and confidentiality to ensure transparency and protect the participants' privacy (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). To begin, a permission letter from the identified ICT organisation (see Appendix 1) was obtained and the necessary ethical clearance protocol was adhered to (see Appendix 4) before collecting the data.

CHAPTER 5 – FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The proceeding chapter will present and analyse findings that directly address the research questions outlined in Chapter 3, providing insights into the studied phenomena of transformational leadership theory. The results were organised through a thematic analysis of the primary data obtained from interviews with the identified participants, together with secondary data sourced from publicly available organisational documents. Through triangulating these data sources, this chapter will offer an interpretation of the themes that emerge, allowing for an in depth understanding of the research problem. Findings will not only respond to the research questions but also provide a deeper context and validation, contributing to the existing body of knowledge.

5.2 Details of the Interviewed Sample

The participants were selected across different employment levels to encourage a wider reflection of attitudes held and behaviours shown. They include three team members in each team; namely, marketing and product development employees were sampled across two teams each within two departments, leading to 12 employees. In addition, two team leads or managers were selected from the respective departments (see Table 2 in Chapter 4). The sample was intentionally identified to ensure representation. This included a variation of years of service or tenure, experience and responsibilities, which was applied in an effort to mitigate a potential bias and at the same time, enable the researcher to draw more in-depth insights.

5.3 Data Cleaning and Screening

All interviews had been voice/video recorded with the participants' prior permission being granted. After the completion of the interviews, the researcher transcribed every recorded interview and listened the recording again a few times to ensure that the transcribed data accurately reflected the recorded interviews. The researcher then cleaned the transcriptions, screened them, and anonymised all transcripts by removing all personal identifiers to ensure the participants' confidentiality and maintain the ethical integrity and credibility of the research. Once this process was completed, the anonymised transcripts were uploaded into the qualitative analysis

software, Atlas.ti, for systematic coding and analysis. The first step involved applying first-order (open) coding for this research, which resulted in 96 codes. Thereafter, initial categories were generated by breaking down the data's multiple codes based on emerging patterns. This was followed by second order (axial) coding. This study had ten code groups, where relationships between these initial codes were identified, connecting them into more sub-theme or categories. Finally, the process moved to selective coding, where the key themes were identified. This research consisted of four themes that were refined and developed to derive at a deeper understanding of the research findings.

5.4 Results for Research Question 1

Research Question 1:

What are the factors influencing innovation in teams?

Research question 1 set out to explore the factors that influence the participants' perceived idea of innovation in their teams. Such innovation could have included the team devising new concepts of how to address customer needs or the role that leadership plays in the process of innovation in the various teams. This chapter reflects the insights that were discovered into the factors that the team members believe influence innovation or prevent innovative ideas from emerging in multiple teams.

Table 3 below outlines the themes, categories, and codes relating to Research Question 1. Appendix 6 refers to the complete table of codes.

Table 3: Research Question 1 – Themes, Categories and Sample Codes

Theme: Innovation development	Sub-themes	Codes
	Innovation in teams	Collaborative innovation Driving innovative thinking Encouraging digital innovation in teams Shared value creation for multiple stakeholders Collaborative and collective growth strategy Leadership support Market disruption
	Sub-themes	Codes
Customer centricity	Customer experience Customer relationship building Customer-centric innovation Making a difference in the life of the customer Customer-focused product development	

5.4.1 Innovation in teams

The participants' responses reflect that there are several factors influencing their perception of how innovation takes place in their organisation. Multiple contributions emerge, such as the team's collective thinking and managers or leaders driving innovative thinking in teams. This provides a firsthand reflection of the role of transformative leaders playing a role in innovation.

Within our process for managing a portfolio, each and every portfolio manager and product manager has to be in tune with how their portfolio is performing internally. (Participant 3)

... is any new technology or improvement on those technologies in the future, but we're mainly guided by the market in terms of those ... services. (Participant 4)

The participants' views of innovation tend to be linked also to their personal attributes and perceived contributions, and the claim that they "think strategically", which can be influenced by their proximity to their other team members or other internal stakeholders. They believe that this brings about a sense of shared value. Their idea of collective thinking is also related to the value they attach to collaboration which they believe drives innovation in the team dynamics. The organisation's integrated

report stated cross-functional teams as being part of their values in driving collaboration and revenue growth for all stakeholders. In addition, over and above the internal collaboration, the organisation also drives industry collaboration through knowledge-sharing and learning from the broader telecommunications industry through conference participation. The organisation also highlighted that as part of building a high-performance culture, collaboration, communication, and strong leadership capabilities are encouraged.

... even if you want to have something innovative, you know, if that thing works, everybody in the team wins. (Participant 5)

... so you need to actually convey the vision ... also what we want to achieve and obviously with the vision comes also our expectations of what we actually need to provide to our customers, as well as from a shareholder's perspective. (Participant 9)

In addition, participants believe that digital innovation is a vital influencer in driving the innovation process as it aligns with the technological advancements that have taken place in the industry. These technological advancements are claimed to lead to organisations creating a competitive advantage and to disruption in the market. This also ties in with the individuals' ability to accept and adapt to innovative thinking driven by the adoption of digitalisation in the organisation.

So yeah, a lot of our focus primarily is ... has actually been moving things towards the digital space. It can be reused, reskinned, changed and stored online, and it can be shared. It's shared with multiple people within multiple different teams. (Participant 13)

Such adoption of the digital space is believed to be brought about through a collective understanding of the business' growth strategy.

So, I think the first thing is that we as a collective fully understand our strategy and the business's strategic intent. (Participant 3)

The most important thing was the strategy that we followed. The business had a strategy based on that we want to lead with data and we want to be innovative, based on what we actually offer to our customers. (Participant 9)

These findings highlight that the organisation's strategy plays a very important role and the fact that everyone in the team has to know this strategy and understand the importance of digitalisation regarding the data offering to their customers. This reflects the complexity of what factors influence innovation within multiple teams. It also intensifies the importance of understanding the factors that influence the actual process of innovation as these can be of significance to the team and the organisation. The codes linked to the subthemes are not limited to a few, however the more significant codes based on the frequency from respondents on collaboration, collective thinking and digital innovation were called out to better contribute to understanding the findings in relation to the interview questions posed.

5.4.2 Customer centricity

Interestingly, most of the participants from both teams, 11 out of the 14, and both team leads show commonalities when it comes to the customer-centricity factor in the process of innovation. This shared view contributes strongly to keeping the customer central at all times when developing innovative initiatives. It also means that the teams or their leaders do not only propose solutions to their customers' needs, but they are also intentional in solving the customers' problems in an innovative way. This creates accessibility between the teams and the customers, and it further produces the opportunity for the team to make a difference in the lives of the customers.

... an idea of ... you know ... how you want them to be presented into the market, offering the customer a certain set of services. (Participant 2)

... a price point for every customer and so, what we really wanted to do was make that accessible to all South Africans. Leave no South African behind, regardless of the segment that they were in. (Participant 3)

... we look for services that are going to help or assist our customers to take advantage of our network or use our services. (Participant 4)

... we then went back into the context of the South African market again. What our South African customers actually need ... and we try to simplify that as far as ... as far as possible in order to provide them with the best value on that. (Participant 9)

One participant refers to how the digital innovation initiatives can make it easier for customers to communicate with the organisation and also allow such communication to take place at the customer's convenience. This speaks to flexibility in innovation and to freeing up the retail sales channels to be able to concentrate on selling, instead of having to handle the bulk of the customers' queries. While it is clear that such digital innovations make it easier for the organisation and the teams and staff members to concentrate on the specific primary functions of creating an income, the benefit to customers is largely assumed as being easier and convenient. Some customers might find it more challenging to deal with online digital options and they might miss the personal interaction with a knowledgeable person. However, digitalisation is a global trend, and innovative companies cannot afford to stay behind such developments.

... companies are pushing their customers for self-service to apps, to portals so that they can get the support out of the stores, out of the shops and in order to make it simpler for customers and easier for them. (Participant 10)

This view is reflective of the teams' changing mindset towards customer centricity and the role that innovation can play when focusing on the customer. It suggests that the more customer centric the organisation is, the more they will have to adopt digital interventions driving the ease of accessibility and efficiency. At the same time, customer centricity has to ensure that the full range of customers is being "*brought on board*", meaning that the systems must be clear, easy to use for all customer categories and not result in additional queries. Customer centricity that can be achieved through the integration of digital innovation is seen by most participants as the way forward.

However, one participant expresses caution regarding the expected financial cost savings on digital innovation if one were to compare the cost saving of fewer employees being needed to address customer queries, compared to the expense of fully digitising the whole systems process. At the same time, the long-term benefit of having fully digitised systems are obvious.

I think we've seen in some of these cases that we needed to be more flexible on how we execute and how we engage with our customers. As well as ...

you know ... cost cutting. Producing a mechanical element or a 'life element' is more costly than executing a digital element. (Participant 13)

5.5 Results for Research Question 2

Research Question 2:
 What are the behaviours and actions leaders possess to encourage innovation in teams?

The objective of this research question is to identify the leadership behaviours and actions their leaders exhibit and that are supportive of innovation. It also aims to identify the teams' respective leaders' involvement in securing the necessary support and resources to encourage innovative ideas and initiatives. Additionally, the question aims to establish whether are any reward and recognition elements that might be in place or lacking that the participants feel would motivate them to "*think out of the box*". Participants were requested to draw on their personal experiences with their direct leader, as well as their interactions with their team and other departments in the organisation where collaboration and knowledge-sharing exists.

Table 4 below outlines the themes, categories and codes relating to Research Question 2. Appendix 6 refers to the complete table of codes.

Table 4: Research Question 2 – Themes, Categories and Sample Codes

Theme: Workplace engagement	Sub themes	Codes
	Employee empowerment	Individualised support to address the unique needs of the individual Coaching and mentoring Leaders encourage independence
	Communication and Feedback	Open communication Direct communicator Constructive criticism from leaders
	Encourages cross functional collaboration	Leader empowers team Leader open to learning Leader encourages knowledge sharing
	Employee Development and Motivation	Low employee morale

		Positive internal relationships Identifying opportunities Burnout due to lack of resources and time Corporate entrepreneur mindset Fear of failure
Theme: Leadership actions	Engaged leadership	Challenge the status quo Self-motivated leader Ethical leader Accessible leader Knowledgeable leaders Bottom up approach

5.5.1 Employee empowerment

Half of the respondents (7 out of 14) expressed that individualised support that their leader offered addressed their unique needs in the workplace. This contributes as being part of empowering them to tap into their strengths and ultimately encouraging innovation, collaboration, and knowledge sharing. The individualised support came out strongly as code across the respondents, lending to the dimension of transformational leadership on individualised consideration, where a team members' individual attitudes and behaviours can be influenced by the one-on-one interaction and consideration with the team manager or leader.

... she also does one-on-one sessions not only with me as a direct report, but also with my team members, which this is new for me. (Participant 6)

... like the identification in looking at the strengths of each team member. We all have different strengths, right? So, I think identifying the different ... the strengths to get projects done. (Participant 12)

... being humble at the same time and understanding that now you can't treat all the people the same way ... (Participant 10)

... so, he's always there to listen to people. (Participant 14)

The participants' responses show that their leaders seem to be transformational as they interact individually with the team members to identify strengths and areas that need to be developed. There is no indication or any transactional leadership as no

special rewards are offered for better performance. Also, the leaders are extremely hands-on with the team members, contrary to what a *laissez faire* leader would do.

5.5.2 Communication and feedback

Most of the participants (9 out of 14) express that effective communication and feedback are critical in driving the individuals and the teams to be more innovative, collaborative and share their knowledge with other team members. The participants are very intentional about open communication, and especially so as they regard open communication as being a positive contribution in providing a clear vision.

... like I said, they communicate often. They communicate clearly. They've got a clear vision. They are inclusive, they do it with empathy. (Participant 10)

... it's a style of ... you know, open and if you need something or you need direction that can happen. (Participant 11)

... respect is reciprocated, and communication is open. Flowing and no restrictions essentially. (Participant 13)

... very often, very often we're able to communicate openly. (Participant 8)

... he's just the most welcoming and open person that I've ever worked with. (Participant 14)

... an open form of communication really does help to foster people's willingness to challenge the status quo. (Participant 3)

Again, such regular and open communication is reflective of transformational leaders. In relation to feedback given to the participants by their line managers, three participants point out that constructive criticism offers them a unique opportunity to not only learn, but also to bring out the best in them. Such feedback challenges them to think further than what they already know as they endeavour to be more innovative in their work and extend the expected deliverables. Constructive criticism also contributes to the individuals being able to identify problems more efficiently and come up with solutions, which can be attributed to the intellectual stimulation provided by the transformational leaders.

I'd say they provide constructive criticism, right, which helps me grow in a way because it's not always looking at the bad, but looking at how you can improve all the missing elements in what you've ... what you're trying to build. So, it's like leading you to the right direction. (Participant 8)

... and then also it's normally based on constructive feedback, meaning it's, say for instance, if there are not maybe alternatives, how we can actually do it better. (Participant 9)

5.5.3 Encourages cross functional collaboration

Participants agree about their feeling that cross-functional collaboration is paramount in driving them to share knowledge, as both departments – namely product and marketing – work with internal stakeholders, who include the sales and pricing department. Thus, the teams have to consider the inputs of these teams when they aim to build informed products and campaigns that will bring value for multiple stakeholders. Interestingly, nearly half of all participants (6 out of 14) link their drive to collaborate cross-functionally with their leaders' ability to empower them, giving them the confidence to interact with other teams and other departments in the organisation. Such empowerment is again a sign of transformational leadership.

... empower the team to be responsible for their areas to engage other departments. (Participant 3)

You empower them. So, I would try to get that ... remind them to say that this is not just for you, it's for the other person and you will benefit in the end. (Participant 4)

So, those are the things that we need to break ... when the senior manager is sent to one of their members in their teams, trust that the person is capable enough to come back with feedback, instead of having me in one meeting. (Participant 6)

We have ... like team building sessions, where we get to collaborate and work on one project. But we sort of share our duties right at the end of the day, we come together. (Participant 8)

We learned that combined as a team ... in order to actually see the benefit for the greater good. (Participant 9)

Participants also point out that the leaders sharing their knowledge with them is a contributor worth noting when it comes to their open communication and giving feedback, which is generally perceived as being a part of the feeling created in the teams that they can openly communicate and share knowledge.

... and you can come back and share that knowledge. I think that's how my leader has tried to influence the innovativeness in the teams. (Participant 6)

So, we have a little WhatsApp group for the team, and everything is shared on this. My leader loves to share everything on this. If anyone does anything, he will immediately recognise them on the group and make sure that everyone knows about the effort that went into the whole thing. (Participant 14)

5.5.4 Employee development and motivation

Most of the participants are very vocal about how their transformational leader develops and motivates them to be more innovative and collaborative in the workplace. Nearly half of all the participants (6 out of 14) regard the positive internal relationships as being a key contributor behind their personal development and motivation. This positive response is based on the leader's support and input as well as the individual development of the team members, which can be linked to the positive cross-collaborative environment. Here's what some of the participants state:

Someone who you would not ordinarily have a conversation with and just be humble. And then, when he receives you warmly, he just spills the beans, and he says let me show you how this works. (Participant 1)

You need to build that rapport with your manager. You know, just to keep on engaging and making sure that you know one of the items that you do look at is just ... (Participant 2)

It's important to encourage and foster those relationships, whether it be in channel or within your customer base or within the competitive landscape and

then to use those as inputs to ... to hopefully form something that you know that could be something we could take to market. (Participant 3)

Everything that we do, it has to touch other teams. So, it's important to establish relationships with other teams and ensure that you are getting the best out of it from those teams. It's not about us achieving what you want. We want to get the other teams to support us. (Participant 4)

I drive it for me, for myself. I think one of my strengths is that I'm a great relationship builder and it's easy for me to speak to people and to talk to people. I find it very easy, so I won't wait for my boss. (Participant 6)

When you have a solid understanding of your internal clients' needs and wants and you have an understanding of what their deliverables are, you know you can better plan to help them reach that. We're talking from a support role. (Participant 13)

However, despite all the positive responses towards their leaders' input and support, the collaboration and feedback or development, there are several concerns that participants raise about factors caused by the organisation's actions, which resulted in low staff morale and limited skilled human resources. There seem to be some financial constraint in the organisation as retrenchments took place and despite the loss of skills, these are not being replaced. The remaining staff have to double up their functions to cope with the skills shortage. These factors are seen by the participants as making them feel over-stretched and experiencing burnout. These are believed to be important factors that lead to employees feeling stressed. An interesting observation is that the participants who highlight feelings of burnout are female participants, who carry the extra burden of domestic responsibilities. Below is how the participants express these concerns:

... it would also be advantageous to get people that are not working to get experience, you know, ... these people can come in and help you with your workload. (Participant 5)

You know, you have a lot on your plate for your current job because of the lean structure. (Participant 5)

The environment is not conducive enough for me to be innovative. It doesn't create that platform for me to sit silently and come up and think because everybody is busy. (Participant 6)

I get home. I'm making supper. Let me look at my emails while I cook. Then I see the presentation. It's such a mess. I had to literally pause everything. My kids were crying for me. I had to say guys, I'm gonna close the door now, and Mommy has to work. I'll call the agency. We worked until 12 midnight to fix the presentation in preparation for Thursday. So it becomes very hard as a mom. It hits hard. (Participant 6)

5.5.5 Engaged leadership

As this study is underpinned by a specific leadership theory, namely transformational leadership, it is befitting to explore the leaders' actions and behaviours that have an influence on the process of innovation in the teams they lead in the workplace. Most of the participants (9 out of 14) are quite vocal about how their leaders are “*going against the grain and challenging the status quo*”, which contributes to them being change catalysts who drive a different way of thinking, interacting with their teams and ultimately bringing about innovation. Thus, while the participants have already stated that their leaders are excellent communicators and collaborators, they also believe that these leaders thrive on a challenge to outperform themselves and motivate the teams to do the same.

... a character of a doer. I act and I ask for forgiveness later. (Participant 1)

... step on people's toes because they want to be challenged, because when you see like, OK, this is an obstacle and that prevents me from being innovative in this environment... (Participant 4)

... to say: Do not conform ... and I think it was also because of the boss that he had, he did not like conforming to stuff. (Participant 5)

... I don't wait like, let me ... let me go engage. Whether a person is an executive or not. You'll find me sitting with an executive and I'm there because he's the main decision-maker. I want a person that's going to make decisions

now with me. Not that I need to wait for someone who's gonna say no. They can go speak to my boss. No, I need the decision now. (Participant 6)

I'll actually do ... to stir up the market, to offer something different. He challenged us to go and find something that would delight the customer and come and tell me without the known constraints that we work with in ... so that forced us to be creative and to think out-of-the-box. (Participant 10)

We've always had to push the boundaries and I think it's the backing of leadership to say, look, this is the vision. And this is what we need to do. So it's very important. (Participant 11)

... remove people from their comfort zone. (Participant 12)

... challenges your thinking. (Participant 13)

... that is just enabling everyone to think clearer and out-of-the-box at the end of the day. (Participant 14)

The organisation had recently stated that as part of their ethics and communicated values, they believe in continuous improvement, so that they can be more customer focused and innovative in responding to the market. This ties in with the sub-theme of challenging the status quo as the leaders' endeavour to embody the intrinsic ethics and values into every facet of the organisation.

For many participants, an accessible leader is a key factor in that the leaders' ability to drive and give guidance to the team contributes to driving collaboration, knowledge-sharing and innovation. The factors that contribute to a leader's ability to be an open communicator rely on individualised interaction on a one-on-one basis with the various team members and it encourages collaboration in teams. As these leaders seem to be transformational, they are always accessible to the teams.

... open-door policy that is welcoming new ways of working. (Participant 5)

... what I've appreciated is that this year, she introduced what is called inspiration sessions, where all of us are in one room and that for me made us. (Participant 6)

I would say that our leaders are always approachable. I think that's one of the most important points. Also, if you've got any questions or concerns, you can always approach them. (Participant 9)

5.6 Results for Research Question 3

Research Question 3:

What challenges are encountered when trying to create an environment of innovation in teams?

This question aims to uncover the difficulties teams might encounter while they are trying to be innovative and to understand the strategies used to overcome these challenges. It also aims to identify how any limitations in resources affect the teams' innovative capabilities and lastly, identify any difficulties the team members face in securing backing from their leaders for their innovative projects and suggestions.

Table 5 below outlines the themes, categories, and codes relating to Research Question 3. Appendix 6 refers to the complete table of codes.

Table 5: Research Question 3 – Themes, Categories and Sample Codes

Theme:	Sub-themes	Codes
Organisational growth	Organisational constraints	Lack of innovative thinking Lack of motivation, rewards and recognition to innovate Lack of resources Skills shortage Ineffective IT systems Silo mentality Lack of agility Budget constraints External stakeholder influence
Theme: Cultural and ethical considerations	Sub-themes	Codes
	Ethical leadership and fairness	Environment of accountability Safe space to work in Favouritism in the team Lack of boundaries

5.6.1 Organisational constraints

Interestingly, most participants attribute the challenges they face and hinder them from being innovative in the organisation to the constraints that are caused by the organisation and its structures, and they are not attributed to the team leaders. Most of the participants (11 out of 14) believe that there is a severe resource constraint regarding the availability of skilled people, and this is a real concern for them. The recent retrenchment cycle resulted in a skills drainage and some employees having to take on additional responsibilities. Employees who were given such extra tasks and responsibilities feel that this has a negative influence on them as they now feel inundated with the bigger workload, and therefore, being innovative is not always possible, as the everyday deliverables take priority.

It's too much for us and you know, given the number of resources that we have, we are very thin. (Participant 2)

... I think, collectively within the business, people are battling with capacity. There's a ... there's a lot of work on their plates. (Participant 3)

We tend to have a lot of work, operational work and we don't get much time and ... or enough time to focus on strategic things and that is a challenge for us. We face a challenge in terms of the resources. (Participant 4)

Cutting resources ... then it becomes a problem to rotate because ... even your work, it becomes more because you are the only person doing that thing. (Participant 5)

But also, I think lack of resources is also part of something that I can say it impact us in actually exploring new ideas. (Participant 6)

"A loss of skills within the organisation. Due to scaling down, we've lost a lot of knowledge. (Participant 10)

Then ... because there has been an exodus of staff leaving with a lot of knowledge. (Participant 11)

Retrenchment, people go. People don't get replaced. (Participant 12)

How do you turn that on when you have an IT department that's fully ... you know, snowed in with work and you can't outsource the developer. (Participant 13)

And that is a bit of a challenge at this stage. We are just bogged down by meetings and business as usual. So there is no time to actually be creative and innovative and come up with ideas. (Participant 14)

Human resource constraints and skills shortages can hinder the organisation's ability to execute creative ideas that drive innovation. Skills drainage increases this dilemma by depriving the organisation of the vital knowledge the departing employees took with them. Without some new skilled human resources through appropriately skilled staff, innovative ideas are in danger of stagnating, which limits the business' ability to be competitive in a fast-paced market.

In tandem, half of all participants (7 out of 14) believe that the internal systems are outdated, and this has an influence on how responsive the organisation is and can be in implementing innovative ideas, solutions, or initiatives. Participants comment on the challenges they experience:

IT architecture work ... to getting approvals ... to moving into product development, these things can take a long, long, long time. (Participant 3)

Our systems ... we don't have systems in place ... especially for, I mean, something as simple as a project management tool. (Participant 6)

The one is actually from our system technologies, meaning that we don't always have the ability to provide products the way that we envisage them from the beginning. (Participant 9)

... resource constraints in terms of skills, very limited IT skills left, so it takes longer to do something because we haven't got those skills anymore and in physical system constraints. (Participant 10)

How do you turn that on when you have an IT department that's fully ...you know, snowed in with work and you can't outsource the developer.

(Participant 13)

So, I think the biggest challenge we all face is the IT system. (Participant 14)

Thus, the lack of financial resources to hire more skilled staff or to invest in up-to-date technology is a negative contributor and a barrier to innovation. Even the most transformational leaders cannot overcome this limitation. However, there is another barrier to innovation that can be addressed by the organisations' leaders, and this is one that would rebuild trust and support among the teams. The influence on the organisation and the team by external stakeholder is the other emerging theme regarding the organisational constraints that employees experience. The participants feel that the external influence creates a lack of trust in the capabilities of the internal team members.

We have external stakeholders, vendors that seemingly have a great influence and they are listened to almost with impunity ... in effect, you'll actually realise that the external stakeholder or vendor actually has the influence ... the greater influence and they will therefore come up with what is referred to as the innovative ideas and then ultimately, you're like, what's the point then? Let the external stakeholder run the show then. (Participant 1)

We are encouraged to use reports from consultants in terms of the industry trends and you know, we are encouraged to look at those. (Participant 2)

To have everyone there because we have different learning and listening ... Because ... if you might sit in a session ... because we also rely on outsource partners in terms of getting knowledge and then training as well. (Participant 4)

From a process point of view, I think there's a lot of engagements that I've introduced in the team itself with our external suppliers. (Participant 6)

Thus, this indicates that team members would prefer it if innovative ideas were to come from the internal teams and not from external input, which makes them believe

that external stakeholders' views are seen as being more important than their own. Linking back to the ineffective IT systems, the lacking skills, and human resources constraints, the organisation's perceived lack of flexibility also influences the teams' efforts to be more innovative in the business. Most of the concerns around the lack of flexibility are attributed to the lack of frameworks, rigid policies, and a certain level of bureaucracy.

We don't have a framework for this. Oh, let's quickly try and put something together. In my opinion ... has the run-of-the-mill policies for doing the course core stuff, but the non-core, we are always caught off guard. (Participant 1)

I think that's probably one of the things, I think, it would be like the inflexible organisational culture. (Participant 6)

I said that's definitely at the turn currently because ... just say for instance, like a rate change can take up to two or three months. Just to do a tariff change and that is already ... it can set you 2-3 months down the line and that is purely from a configuration element that actually takes ... in order to actually do that change. And now you just need to think about ... if you are going to create a new product from the building blocks ... that can even take much longer than that. (Participant 9)

5.6.2 Ethical leadership and fairness

Ethical leadership emerges as a sub-theme that about a quarter (4 out of 14) of the participants feel has a bearing on the constraints they experience in the workplace, pointing out that accountability and a safe working space is important to them.

I think it's based on accountability. So everybody's accountable for certain things, and that in order to get your things done, you need to work with and collaborate with the rest of the team. And I think it's just, you know, making sure that everybody knows, you know, that you don't send ... as an example, you don't send an e-mail and then you, you know, you've done the work. (Participant 11)

I think it's all about trusting your people, so he trusts us with information, and it doesn't fault the information when he gives it to us. So, we actually know the real stories and the real challenges and the real facts, so that enables you to take accountability for your area and to make sure that you actually achieve results. (Participant 14)

The organisation has stated that at a group level, accountability and transparency are important to the business. The group governance framework supports effective decision-making. In aligning with the organisation's strategic objectives, the framework clarifies the various roles, responsibilities, and decision-making powers, which are meant to create shared values across the group. However, this is in contrast to what the participants seem to experience at an operational level.

5.7 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to present the findings that are linked to the research questions outlined in Chapter 3. The findings were drawn from the participants responses to the three research questions and thorough probes to provide in-depth insights as the participants shared their lived experiences. Appendix 3 refers to the interview guide that was utilised by the researcher in conducting the interviews. The themes presented in the research were informed by the interviews and presented in a manner that accurately represents the voice of the participants. The findings answered all the questions and clearly demonstrated that the organisation's leaders were seen to be transformational and positively influencing innovation. However, organisational problems (such as financial constraints, retrenchments and a loss of skills, outdated technology, and inflexibility) were clear barriers to innovation. Secondary data in the form of the organisation's documentation was used to affirm or contradict the findings. In the next chapter, the findings will be integrated and discussed in depth, underpinning the literature review in order to make the connection to what is already known in academia.

The study identified the key contributors that are linked to transformational leadership and the influence that this leadership style has on the process of innovation in teams. The observations from the findings show that transformational leadership and its associated dimensions are linked to influencing the process of innovation in teams, but that they cannot override the challenges caused by the organisation's

constraints. These constraints include (1) the recent retrenchments and thus, the loss of important IT skills, (2) not being in a position to replace these skills and thus, overburdening the remaining staff, leading to burnout and (3) not being in a position to fully upgrade the current technology. The research revealed that the transformational leadership dimensions are evident in the teams, but they are limited to be fully effective in driving innovation in the organisation as the staff members have to concentrate on coping with the workload rather than being free to innovate. However, these leaders, who seem to be performing very well under challenging circumstances, have to guard against taking the input by vendors and other external stakeholders as being more important than the suggestions and innovative ideas provided by internal employees, as this would erode motivation and trust.

CHAPTER 6 – DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss and interpret the results obtained from Chapter 5, which will be done in tandem with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. This chapter will also link back to the methodology discussed in Chapter 4, the research questions as per Chapter 3 and the problem statement presented in Chapter 1. The insights gathered will contribute to understanding the influence of transformational leadership on the process of innovation in teams.

This analysis integrates the empirical findings with existing literature to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how transformational leadership influences innovation in teams, adding clarity to the theoretical and practical connections. The results are based on a single organisation that was selected as the context of the study to obtain conceptual depth in a real-life context. The significance of this study is that it closes gaps in knowledge regarding the application of the transformative leadership style in an ICT environment in South Africa. Effective leadership was assumed to be a driver of innovation in organisations and an enabler for businesses to adapt to challenging, evolving market conditions and gain a competitive advantage.

6.2 Discussion of the Results – Research Question 1

Research Question 1:

What are the factors influencing innovation in teams?

Research question 1 aimed to explore the factors that influence the teams' idea of innovation, for example, customer needs being addressed and the role that leadership played in the process of innovation in multiple teams. Insights were discovered into what the team members believe constitutes innovation.

6.2.1 Collaboration

In understanding the process of innovation, the study has cast a light on what team members perceive innovation to be. Innovation is more than just the result related to processes, products or service; it includes the value it is perceived to have in the ICT sector. Individual team members' views can be linked to multiple factors, such as the

department they work in, or whether the organisation is believed to be flexible. These factors can influence how innovative a team will be. The findings confirmed that collaboration is a key driver in collective thinking, where the vision is shaped by both the leader and follower (Kanat-Maymon et al., 2020), delivering on shared value in a team and creating disruption in a highly competitive market (Kanat-Maymon et al., 2020).

Interestingly, the research findings revealed that individuals feel more innovative when they are operating as a team and work collaboratively, or when they engage in group thinking. Naturally complementing the innovation process, transformational leadership facilitates collaboration, idea generation, and implementation, making it a robust framework for understanding how leadership can actively shape and influence innovation in teams. This finding is a new insight that has not yet been reported in literature collaboration, while this study identified collaboration as a key component that drives innovation in teams.

The leaders' orientation was portrayed as being an important element in creating an environment where the team is allowed to be creative through open communication and dialogue. This would include the team leader creating and building an innovative mindset in challenging the team. It can also include the leaders using their position to influence internal buy-in in launching innovative initiatives in the organisation. The organisation stated cross-functional team collaboration as part of the values in driving revenue growth for all stakeholders. These contributing factors were associated with one of the transformational leadership dimensions, namely intellectual stimulation, where it was noted that leaders who actively make use of intellectual stimulation with their followers encourage problem identification and solving by being innovative and thinking out of the box. This leadership approach also capitalises on the followers' fullest potential (Khan et al., 2022); therefore supporting creativity and innovative thinking within the team.

The research findings also confirmed that the two included team leaders or managers understood the vision and strategy linked to innovation at a group level, and that they experience positive leadership collaboration with their own leaders than their subordinates. This can be expected in a hierarchal organisational structure. While the leaders had a positive influence on the teams and successfully motivated innovation, the research findings also highlighted that the participants' views regarding the source of innovation were often linked to their own personal attributes,

stating that they were thinking strategically. This can also be attributed to their proximity to other team members or internal stakeholders bringing about a sense of shared value.

The findings confirm that transformational leadership operates on multiple levels in the organisation though the dimension of intellectual stimulation that facilitates ongoing, open communication and feedback and creates a shared purpose (Becker et al., 2022).

An additional observation was made that the product development team believed to provide more input to the creation of innovative ideas. This is to be expected because the ICT organisation is challenged to process complex information that is critical to innovation. Therefore, there is ongoing pressure on that department to create new products in noteworthy numbers to be competitive and able to respond aggressively in the market (Xie et al., 2020). However, there is often no clear distinction between product and process innovation (Möldner et al., 2020), which has the potential to create ambiguity in the organisation.

Open communication, good feedback and intellectual stimulation are important factors influencing the innovation in teams and they are linked to transformational leadership in the literature, where transformational leadership is seen as a pathway to achieving innovation advancements (Sheehan et al., 2020).

The organisations' integrated report and ethics handbook does not sufficiently address whether innovation in teams is a strategic imperative for the business, nor does it sufficiently address customer centricity as a core pillar that should lead innovation in their business. In addition, there is not clear alignment of the team members' key performance indicators (KPIs) to innovation or customer centricity, which might not create the necessary level of urgency or traction at a team level.

Compared against the existing literature, the findings highlight the importance of understanding what team members believe to be the need for and the implementation of innovation in the various departments, as this could indicate the level of focus placed on the individuals' level of innovative input, based on the departments' deliverables and expectations. This understanding is important for fostering better collaboration in teams towards a common goal.

6.2.2 Leadership orientation

Digital innovation and the organisation's strategy are key factors to consider when aiming to identify the teams' perceptions of innovation. Many participants felt that digital innovation was key to accelerating market disruption and that the business growth strategy must be collectively bought into by the teams, where digital innovation would form a significant role. Through embracing digital innovation, organisations can tap into new opportunities in addressing sustainability issues, leading to a more integrated approach in the business. This also creates an opportunity for the business to focus on value creation and to drive their competitive advantage (Ye et al., 2022). Studies have shown that transformational leadership has an impact on an organisation's competitive advantage through the introduction of key innovations (Lee et al., 2016).

The sustainability and the growth of a business are also dependent on the positive relationships employees have with multiple stakeholders. The participants in this study emphasised that securing internal buy-in and rallying the support from senior decision-makers empowered them to support business growth through the process of developing their innovative initiatives and ideas. It also included the important focus on external stakeholders and the internal department team members having to be effectively responsive in driving customer-focused product development.

6.2.3 Customer centricity

It was apparent especially among the product management team that customer centricity is key to how they innovate and the process they take in producing products that have the customer in mind. Customer centricity is based on close interaction with and feedback from customers to gauge changing trends and behaviours, which leads to innovative propositions that are designed to the customer's needs and wants (López-Cabarcos et al., 2020). It also involves being aware of what can be customised by amplifying technological innovations that are economically valuable and interest the customers (Malerba & McKelvey, 2020).

Relationship building with the customers is key in being innovative in developing new products that are built with the customers' specific needs and wants in mind. It was interesting to note that customer centricity was viewed as the organisation and its teams building products as well as offering services that create accessibility and make a difference in the customer's life.

Leaders who exhibit transformational leadership attributes are known to facilitate a culture of customer centricity in the business through innovation and employees' empowerment, leading to a more positive and stronger relationship between the leader and the followers (Oswald et al., 2022). While the transformational leaders' attributes have an impact on customer centricity, the findings revealed that the customer centric approach can also be linked to the teams and the organisation making a difference to customers, which is added value orientated. This points back to the organisation's view that stated in its integrated report of being an enabler that fulfils the telecommunication needs of many South Africans. Based on how accessible a product or service is can influence the customer to communicate about that specific product or service in either a positive or a negative manner.

The finding confirmed that internal relationships are key in building not only collaboration, but also driving the customer centricity agenda internally with key stakeholders that can influence decision-making and the realisation of innovative ideas and initiatives. This can lead to an enhanced competitiveness (Eide et al., 2020) and improved customer satisfaction. Therefore, the study confirms that the growth of a business is dependent on the relationships the employees of an organisation hold with multiple stakeholders, both internally and externally.

6.2.4 Summary of discussion for research question 1

Addressing research question 1, the purpose was to understand the factors that influence a team members' perception of what constitutes and leads to innovation in a team. This is an important aspect of creating alignment in a team to feed into the shared values of the organisation. Innovation was perceived as either a process, or to result in enhanced products or services. Innovation provides organisations with an opportunity for teams to introspect on the factors that go into the process of innovation, which is needed to create a competitive advantage and value for multiple stakeholders. Previous studies have shown that different aspects of organisations' innovativeness positively drive business' performance (Oswald et al., 2022) through innovative contributions to processes, products and service.

The findings indicated that innovation itself or the process leading up to being innovative is not simple. There are multiple factors, including intrinsic elements and others being developed because of the organisational structure and dynamics. While an innovative environment encourages team members to be collectively innovative, many individuals are driven by their own set of perceptions that are influenced by the

organisation. The findings highlighted the idea of collective behaviour or collaboration in teams as being important in building a unified understanding of innovation. Being cognisant of these factors should assist organisations in moving beyond the legacy concept of innovation and include collaboration and customer centricity as key components that create a dynamic intersection between innovation and transformational leadership.

The research revealed multiple mechanisms that individuals relate to regarding customer centricity. Some individuals align with building relationships with customers based on understanding what value can be created and what needs are being addressed in making a difference in the life of the customer. This kind of behaviour resonates with transformational leadership, where the individual is influenced by collaboration. This aligns directly with the core focus of transformational leaders fostering creativity and collaboration within teams.

Literature suggests that transformational leadership complements the innovation process through collaboration, idea generation, and implementation. This means that it makes it a robust framework for understanding how leadership can actively shape and influence innovation within teams in driving well-considered risk-taking and viewing failures as learning opportunities (Hawkins, 2021). There must be an interplay between the transformational leaders, the motivated and supported team collaboration leading to innovation in teams and the customer centricity throughout the organisation.

6.3 Discussion of the Results – Research Question 2

Research Question 2:

What are the behaviours and actions the leaders possess to encourage innovation in teams?

Research question 2 explored the role of the leaders' behaviours and actions in encouraging innovation, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing in the organisation's teams. The study aimed to identify the team leaders or managers' traits as seen by

the team members' perspective that encouraged or would encourage innovation in their teams.

6.3.1 Employee empowerment

The findings obtained from this research question expanded on the benefits that team members were exposed to from their team leaders, based on the behaviours and actions they displayed in the workplace. These attributes were seen to act as a stimulus for innovation in the teams. The findings were aligned with existing literature that highlights that transformational leaders use their initiative to enhance the employees' work engagement and performance, leading to the employees' development (Bakker et al., 2023). Teams that are led by transformational leaders tend to feel more empowered, as they are giving the tools to thrive freely and take the initiative (Afsar & Umrani, 2020), which cultivates innovative thinking. The teams from both departments, namely product development and marketing, agreed that their leaders displayed actions and attributes that encouraged the teams to innovate and feel empowered.

The research also identified that the participants appreciated that their leaders engage them on a one-on-one basis, which made them feel valued and acknowledged for their own personal contribution. They also confirmed that they received active coaching, as well as mentoring and constructive feedback, leading to the employees' development and motivation. This finding tied in with literature that confirms that the leader's individualised influence plays a vital role as a role model for the follower (Kwok et al., 2023). The literature confirms that the dimension of individualised consideration is beneficial in building a personal relationship between the leader and the followers, and this creates buy-in to communicated messages between these stakeholders (Stock et al., 2023).

A surprising finding was that most participants did not feel that rewards and/ or recognition contributed in any way to making them feel more empowered or that it influenced their motivation to be more innovative. This confirmed that their leaders were transformational, building the teams' feeling of empowerment and freedom to innovate. A transactional leader would have needed rewards and recognition to motivate the teams. The findings revealed that participants saw rewards and recognition as being unrelated to them being innovative. Perhaps this is by virtue that fulfilment in achievement is more desirable to them than rewards (financial, recognition or social). Therefore, if the organisation were to use rewards and

recognition initiatives to encourage innovative product development or marketing might be futile, which supports the findings in literature (Skogstad et al., 2007).

6.3.2 Communication and feedback

The findings also unveiled that constructive criticism contributes to intellectual stimulation in team members through problem identification and problem solving. This was exhibited through the leader encouraging the followers to be problem solvers, and the followers learned in the process to think out of the box or be creative in solving the identified problems. Literature supports this view as leaders who nurture individuals' skills to problem solve advance the individuals' agility and learning capabilities (Lasrado & Kassem, 2021). Literature also confirms that leaders who display intellectual stimulation build the employees' confidence by supporting the team members to problem solve (Khan et al., 2022).

The study findings also highlighted that in the endeavour to empower employees, open and direct communication facilitates feelings of empowerment. Part of an organisations' innovation efforts must be to have supportive leaders who drive a culture of learning, open communication and who provide the necessary resources to enable employees to innovate (Alblooshi et al., 2020).

6.3.3 Encourages cross functional collaboration

Regarding the cross-functional collaboration internally, the findings suggested that a cross-functional approach in the teams encouraged knowledge-sharing and a learning experience for multiple team members, which contributes toward the sustainability and growth of a business. However, it is also important to note that at worst, cross-functional collaboration can also lead to some cliques forming in an organisation, where some decision-making is controlled by a few team members. This can have an adverse effect on the teams' collaborative efforts. At best, cross-functional collaboration enhances knowledge-sharing and expertise and leads to a more innovative environment.

The collaborative efforts that the team members from the two different department experienced and facilitated created room for learning and knowledge-sharing. This finding aligns with literature, where the leaders' ability to lead with vision and encourage collective concern is related to the dimension of inspirational motivation that a transformational leader exhibits. Through the guidance of inspirational motivation, a leader encourages the followers to share their personal knowledge with

fellow colleagues (Yin et al., 2020). Some authors believe that transformational leadership is charismatic, being rooted in inspirational motivation (Minai et al., 2020). The research findings reinforced the importance of developing, empowering and motivating employees to value collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and communication. As companies grow, strategise, and evolve, it is important to recognise the significance that these factors have on the employees to collaborate and innovate. The organisations need to equip their leaders with the necessary tools and guidance to foster the elements of transformational leadership, such as intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation, which are the two dimensions that are known to drive innovation in teams (Shafi et al., 2020). They also create vision and shared values (Kanat-Maymon et al., 2020). Transformational leaders who want to create a positive change in teams need to create a shared vision, mobilise commitment and institutionalise the change (Eaton, 2022). The findings of this study indicate that the organisation's leaders are already implementing these elements.

6.3.4 Employee development and motivation

Taking into account the positive factors surrounding employees' empowerment by their transformational leaders, the findings also indicated that the organisation experienced resource constraints, which had led to retrenchments and non-replacement of skilled staff. The extra work burden caused feelings of burnout among some team members, a low employee morale and lack of innovative thinking in the teams because of no time being available for creativity. Another interesting observation made in relation to the feelings of burnout was that all those who experienced such burnout were female participants, who expressed that they were unable to achieve a work-life balance.

6.3.5 Engaged leadership

By design, the study focused on the transformational leadership theory and as such, explored the actions and behaviours of leaders that was considered most effective in encouraging innovation, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing among the teams. Through their attributes and actions, leaders have the opportunity to energise their followers in the workplace. The factors that added most positively to encourage

innovation among the teams were those attributes that led to the team members' empowerment and motivation towards their work (Watts et al., 2020). The participants expressed how vital their leaders or managers' action and behaviours are, which included individualised attention, feedback and coaching, one-one-one relationships and the proximity of the leader-follower dynamic. This meant that both, the employees and the organisation, benefit from the constructive relationship between the leader and the employees, creating a sense of togetherness (Fauzi et al., 2021).

In understanding the leadership actions and behaviours, one of the main findings that followers observed about their leaders was their ability to challenge the status quo, which ultimately gave the followers the confidence to be vocal and do the same. This is important for the corporate climate that was described as open and leaders communicating with the employees. Such open communication can lead to better opportunities for innovation and a creative environment, where the norm is challenged, and new initiatives emerge. The collective effort in driving change through challenging the status quo and being the change catalysts works towards building a future for the individuals as the organisation becomes more innovative (Ahmed Iqbal et al., 2021) and relevant in the marketplace.

In these findings, it was evident that followers valued having access to their leader as this enabled input and feedback. However, it was also noteworthy that the top leadership's lack of flexibility in decision-making was seen as a barrier to innovation. Accessibility was important because leaders' inaccessibility can create a "bottle neck" in the business, especially so if a decision is pending before certain deliverables can be executed. Many participants felt that their leaders were fairly accessible with their time and talents, which resonated positively with the wider team.

The organisation was described as being hierarchical and thus, some more senior decision-makers might be less accessible or less open to make speedy decisions and the team leaders might have to wait for such decisions. Literature points to accessibility being linked to leadership behaviours and actions, where a leader facilitates individualised interactions with their team members and encourages collaboration. This was reported as taking place in the organisation between the direct team leader level and the team members.

Lastly, ethical behaviour was raised by the participants as being important as it provides a safe environment for them to operate and thrive in. Participants reported that leaders who were ethical in their behavioural practices created trust and accountability in the respective teams.

6.3.6 Summary of discussion for research question 2

The results from research question 2 displayed the diverse views on the influence that the leaders' behaviour has on the innovation process in teams. A leaders' actions and behaviours are made up of multiple factors, with the important ones being those that made the team members feel empowered. The leaders' actions and behaviours that are exhibited in the workplace build effective collaboration and knowledge-sharing amongst team members. The research highlighted the benefits that the transformational leaders' attributes have on a team. In team leaders achieving the optimal mix between intellectual stimulation and constructive criticism, followers are able to be agile with their decision-making. This will also enable them to execute on deliverables that might steer them to be more innovative in their thinking and delivery in the workplace. This view is in support of existing literature that emphasises collaboration and knowledge-sharing to be linked to the transformational leadership dimensions of idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration, which has been known to contribute to driving innovation in teams. In addition, open and direct communication between the leaders and the followers builds a positive rapport between the dyads promoting a culture, where a safe environment to be explorative and creative exists. Participant where passionate about the factors surrounding their personal development and motivation, which they believed were the result of the leaders' actions and behaviours. This is the keystone to building not only individuals', but also that of the teams' overall success.

While these transformational leaders are successful in their motivational approach and examples set through role-modelling, they also should be cognisant of not overloading the better performing team members with work as it may come across as performance punishment to the follower. In as much as the resource constraints are experienced by multiple organisations, being able to delegate and divide the work fairly among all team members is important. Creating this environment in the team

can aid in smoothing out tensions that might arise in the team dynamics and can present the leader as being a fair.

Regarding the team leaders' attributes and actions as observed by the team members, a leader that challenges the status quo, is accessible to the team and is ethical seems to play a positive role in the way the team perceives the leader. In committing to these types of behaviours, the team lead can enhance the followers' confidence in the leader, foster a culture of trust, collaboration and motivation, resulting in more innovative efforts, better performance and commitment to the shared values of the team.

In summary, through the research findings, the importance of employees' empowerment, open communication, accessibility, constructive feedback and individualised interactions all foster a culture that is innovative. This exhibits that the process of innovation is not just dependent on the publicly known four dimensions of transformational leadership's idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration but also includes other complex factors, such as collaboration and empowerment. In recognising the importance of employee empowerment and collaboration, organisations can connect the full potential of the team for better innovative thinking and a collective growth strategy mindset, which can work in the organisation's favour. Transformational leadership serves as a catalyst that inspires individuals to be actively innovative, create that competitive advantage in the market (O'Reilly & Chatman, 2020) and exceed their own capabilities in setting meaningful goals and a greater sense of purpose in the organisation.

6.4 Discussion of the Results – Research Question 3

Research Question 3:

What challenges are encountered when trying to create an environment of innovation in teams?

The aim of the research question was to investigate the challenges and difficulties the teams experience, while they try to be innovative and to understand the mitigation plans that teams have in place to overcome the challenges. The probing aspect of the question aimed to identify how the limitations in resources affect the team's

innovation capabilities and lastly, the difficulties team members face in securing backing from leaders for their innovative projects and suggestions.

6.4.1 Organisational constraints

The research highlighted the significance that the organisation's constraints have on the process of innovation in teams as well as the leaders' influence on such limited resources. Existing literature does not exclusively discuss the challenges that organisational constraints have on the process of innovation in teams. Therefore, it is important to note that this organisation's top leadership has to be aware of the challenges caused by the retrenchments and the fact that lost skills were not replaced in the teams. The remaining team members experienced the extra workload burden, which limited their opportunity to be creative or innovative. While the team leaders were successful in actively mitigating some of the impact by creating an environment that allows for collaboration and knowledge-sharing, they were not able to create the time needed for all team members to be creative and innovative.

It was interesting to observe that the majority of participants expressed that recognition or rewards were not a catalyst for them to be innovative, clearly indicating that they were not working in an environment that was controlled by transactional leaders. However, despite these team members stating that acknowledgement was not a motivating factor for them to be innovative, managers or leaders should still consider applauding followers for their efforts when they were creative or presented innovative initiatives or plans as this will contribute to creating a sense of fulfilment, which can be a positive source of motivation in teams (Mulyaningsih et al., 2024).

Resource constraints linked back to the concerns raised by participants regarding burnout. Team members expressed that the organisation's resource constraints are a barrier to them being able to be innovative as they do not have the time or capacity to be creative given the day-to-day responsibilities they must address. Literature supports these findings in that limited resources and low absorptive capacity pose significant barriers in an organisation, and in order for organisations to be responsive, rallying of their internal resources and capabilities is vital to remain relevant in the market (Anand et al., 2021). Resource constraints and the loss of important skills can hinder an organisation's ability to implement creative ideas essential for innovation. This loss of expertise strips the organisation of critical knowledge that employees

possess. Without these skilled resources, innovative ideas risk stagnation, restricting the organisation's competitiveness in the market.

Coupled with the lost skills and budget constraints, participants highlighted how the interaction and consulting of external stakeholders can lead to friction among the team members. The participants expressed that it contributes to a lack of trust in the internal capabilities of the team members in the organisation. Some literature argued that interacting with external stakeholders was beneficial (Anderson & Sun, 2015) in that it can create opportunities to be experimental and being innovative in a learning environment. However, if external input of innovative ideas is regarded as being more important than the input by internal team members, then the trust in the leadership is diminished or lost and internal creativity or innovation efforts are dampened. External stakeholder influence can have an impact on the reputation of an organisation, where their expectations about what a company prioritises can directly impact the image of the business, so the organisation needs to be mindful of how relationships with external stakeholders are managed internally, for short, medium and long term gains.

The study also revealed that the business's hierarchical approach, lack of flexibility, rooted in ineffective IT systems, poor project management systems, limited skills, and resource constraints, also hamper the teams' efforts to drive innovation. Much of this inflexibility is tied to the absence of frameworks, rigid policies, and a degree of bureaucracy. Lee et al. (2016) state that a robust network infrastructure has a direct influence on the development of the ICT sector, where innovation is key in driving not only the organisation, but also the country's competitiveness. Thus, while the organisation is in the positive position to have motivating transformational team leaders, and committed but overworked team members, innovation remains hampered as long as the senior management does not find ways to address the identified organisational challenges.

As literature indicates that innovation is the implementation of new ideas, processes and products, the nature of "innovativeness" involves first, the acceptance of these new ideas and processes. Second, there has to be the capability that indicates there is a way to come up with and implement new ideas. This capability places the responsibility on the organisation to be able to gather external information and

integrate that with new-found knowledge into existing procedures as external stakeholder input can positively contribute to the organisation.

6.4.2 Ethical leadership and fairness

Ethical leadership and fairness are crucial in transformational leadership's influence on the teams' innovation as they create the foundation of trust, psychological safety, and open communication in teams. When team members perceive their leader as being fair and ethical, they feel more secure in sharing new ideas and taking creative risks without fear of judgement or bias. This promotes an inclusive atmosphere, where diverse perspectives are valued, enhancing collaboration, and encouraging creativity. Ethical leaders also set standards for integrity and responsibility, which inspires team members to align their efforts with shared values and goals, driving more impactful innovation in the organisation. Literature supports this finding as the dimension of idealised influence places emphasis on the leaders upholding strong values and ethical standards (Ting et al., 2021) that are in the best interest of the organisation.

In relating to ethical leadership and fairness, participants expressed that the level of accountability from the leaders has an influence on the challenges they face in the workplace. When the leader is seen to be accountable, this is exemplary for the followers to follow the role model. However, any lack of accountability can adversely affect the team and trust is reduced, the morale is low and productivity decreases. This lack of accountability can result in followers feeling devalued, which can have an impact on the level of motivation and collaboration in the team. In addition, where there is a lack of accountability, the team is at risk of also settling into mediocrity, which stifles creativity and innovation. Literature supports this view in that research suggests that leadership has a vital role to play in managing the effects of tangible accountability on how followers think and act, and in so doing, the leaders show a strong commitment to the goals and the shared vision (Passakonjaras & Hartijasti, 2020). In relating back to the organisation's documents, the group governance framework supports accountability. In aligning with the strategic objectives, the framework clarifies roles, responsibilities, and decision-making, creating a shared value across the group.

Fostering a successful culture of accountability leads to building a more collaborative team that is transparent and prioritises value creation. Literature confirms that

collaboration creates room for innovation in the face of multiple changes in the business landscape. Hawkins (2021) confirms that collaboration embraces well-considered risk-taking that results in learning opportunities for the collective and the mutual benefit of multiple stakeholders.

Interestingly, the research revealed a consistent perspective regarding the team members feeling safe, referring to psychological safety particularly in the workplace. The sense of feeling safe was important to participants as it allowed for creative freedom and reduced the fear of failure, meaning they can be more innovative in their thinking, knowledge-sharing and in the cross-collaborative efforts in the organisation. Research unveiled that when psychological safety is present in the workplace, employees are more inclined to take calculated risks. Feeling psychologically safe encourages individuals to engage in behaviours that promote learning and positive change, as they feel secure in sharing ideas, voicing concerns, and experimenting without fear of negative backlash. Hannah et al. (2020) supports this view in literature, where well-being and job satisfaction must be prioritised in order to empower employees. This highlights the significance of psychological safety in enhancing innovative thinking, confirming the principal view in the literature.

When referring to fairness displayed by the leaders towards the team members, some participants stated that visibility to some key information in the business was not uniformly shared among all team members, leading to a view that favouritism could be at play in the teams. However, literature encourages the close interaction between leaders and followers as contributing to the dimension of idealised influence, where the personal attention from the leader gives the followers a heightened sense of being valued (Seitz & Owens, 2021), while the risk of perceived favouritism (Bormann & Diebig, 2021) might create unnecessary conflict in the team and discourage employees' commitment. A participant from the marketing team expressed this concern as an obstacle to feeling more empowered in the team. However, empirical studies have shown that leaders have various degrees of relationships with followers and that followers value a personalised relationship (Anand et al., 2021).

6.4.3 Summary of discussion for research question 3

The aim of this question was to explore the challenges and difficulties that the teams experience while trying to innovate, how these limitations in resources affect the team's innovation capabilities and to understand the mitigation plans the teams have

in place to overcome these challenges. The finding suggested that organisational constraints have a major role to play in shaping what challenges are faced by team members from an operational and strategic perspective in the workplace. The day-to-day encounters that employees face contribute to how collaborative and creative they are in the teams. When employees feel motivated and the business' resource support what they do or are endeavouring to do, then shared value and a sense of cohesion is created and their input in the team is strengthened.

The concept of organisational constraints required participants to be honest about the bottle necks they experienced when trying to be a change agent in the team as this can have a negative effect on the group culture. A positive organisational culture creates commitment from the team members and aligns their goals to that of the company at a strategic level. Essentially, the organisation and its limited or constrained resources, its current hierarchical structure and lacking updated technology and other factors suggest that despite these shortcomings, there is an element of inspirational motivation, where leaders are motivated to make ethical decisions (Ifeanyi et al., 2021). Governance also has a significant role to play in how agile they team members are in executing their responsibilities in an efficient manner.

Findings on the one-on-one interaction between leaders and followers, where – what the study revealed – some favouritism was perceived, literature argued that this is a natural occurrence in the workplace where team dynamics exist. The study also uncovered the noticeable negative and limiting effects the resource constraints in the organisation have on the teams' reduced ability to be innovative, despite the best efforts by the transformational team leaders to encourage creativity and empowerment, leading to some team members feeling demoralised and stifled in the organisation.

The study highlighted the critical role that external stakeholders, such as suppliers, vendors and customers have in the process of innovation. Although external stakeholders can bring a fresh perspective and insights into the team, their demands might not be in line with what the leaders prioritise in the organisation. At the same time, external stakeholders' influence has the ability to propel leaders to be more creative in their innovation efforts and ensure that the organisation is competitive. However, if not properly managed and weighed up against the motivation of the internal team members to be innovative, close to the customers' demands and needs, then the fact that external stakeholders are believed to be more important

than the internal stakeholders' views can erode the trust between the leaders and the followers. It also demotivates internal stakeholders and team members to be innovative or to seek customers' input.

In addition, accountability from the leader is important in setting the foundation of trust, being an example for positive change and instilling responsibility in the team. In so doing, transparency is built in the team, where shared feelings of adhering to standards and values are evident, and motivation is high. Accountable leaders also have the ability to create a space where mistakes are a learning opportunity, encouraging continuous improvement where innovation thrives, and a high-performance culture is created. Magasi (2021) confirms this view in literature by stating that the dimensions of both idealised influence and inspirational motivation in transformational leadership is known to enhance employees' performance. This finding is not only applicable in sub-Saharan Africa, (Bose & Haque, 2021) but even in Eastern cultures, where the leadership tends to be more authoritative rather than collaborative.

This research conducted an in-depth view into the challenges and factors that contribute to fostering an environment of innovation in teams within a singular ICT organisation, where challenges have a direct influence on the participants' work environment. In realising the challenges, organisations and leaders alike can endeavour to promote a safe space for employees to flourish and teams to collaborate, ultimately leading to a better work culture for an organisation where innovation is encouraged.

Although the team leaders exhibited the transformational leadership style in their actions and behaviours, actively encouraging their teams to adopt innovative approaches, the organisation faces challenges in driving innovation due to financial constraints and skills shortages caused by rounds of retrenchments. Delayed digitalisation efforts and these resource constraints notably have an impact on the organisation's innovation capacity. Leaders should be cautious not to overlook internal skills and capabilities in favour of external stakeholder inputs, as doing so could weaken the organisation's core competencies and long-term innovation potential.

6.5 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to explore the research findings drawn from the data collected and analysed through the process of thematic analysis. This discussion has placed the findings in a broader context, showing its relevance by linking the finding to existing literature. It addressed the research questions and explored how transformational leadership influences the process of innovation in teams, focusing on a single ICT organisation as a case study.

As a leadership style, transformational leadership is known to be linked to innovation and as such, the ICT sector acts as a conduit that facilitates the communication of information and access to knowledge (Kallal et al., 2021), making it a sector of robust innovation development. The type of leadership has a bearing on how teams' function and are supported to be innovative and ultimately being relevant in making a difference in the lives of their customers. This confirms that transformational leadership can amplify the quality and the quantity of the innovation output of an organisation (Hughes et al., 2018).

The final chapter will summarise the key insights and their importance to stakeholders, including organisations, leaders, team members, and researchers. It will also note any limitations faced in the study, ensuring transparency in the research, and suggest future research directions to further explore this important area of study.

CHAPTER 7 – RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

The concluding chapter of this study will look holistically at the existing literature and the key findings of this study to answer the research questions. In addition, the academic relevance of the study will be highlighted, as well as the relevant recommendations to leaders and in the ICT industry, which were guided by the research findings presented in chapters 5 and 6. This chapter will also acknowledge the limitations and suggestions on expansion of this field of study through future research.

The study's aim was to explore the interactions and influence that transformational leadership as a leadership style has on the process of innovation in teams within an organisational context, more so focusing on a single organisation in the ICT sector in South Africa. Central to this study was the objective of identifying the factors of transformational leadership that influence the process of innovation in these teams and to identify the tactics used by managers or leaders for overcoming barriers or limitations to innovation while managing teams and aiming to enhance innovation for the organisation. This research is important as businesses place emphasis on creating a competitive advantage in this fast-paced market and an economy, where innovation is a key part. Therefore, understanding how transformational leadership can influence the process of innovation is essential. For organisations or ICT organisations in particular that want to understand the complexity of the connection between transformational leadership and innovation, these findings will help to improve their performance, innovation efforts and competitiveness as long as they take the important factors into consideration. It is equally important to consider the context of this research as it highlights the obstacles and possible opportunities that organisations or ICT organisations can apply when leading teams with the emphasis on innovation in team dynamics.

Understanding the factors that were identified to play an important role, such as empowerment, individualised attention and interactions, coaching, open communication and constructive feedback, accountability and ethical/fair leadership, role modelling were all presented as being essential in aiding organisations to

implement effective strategies for managing teams, creating collaboration, fostering knowledge-sharing, and implementing innovative initiatives.

The research was conducted in the context of the ICT sector and South Africa as the ICT sector plays an important role in economic growth in the country. This emphasis allows for localised innovation that addressed the unique needs of the South African market.

An in-depth literature review was conducted to further define what is already known in this field of transformational leadership theory and innovation. It was evident from the literature review that transformational leadership is complex in its dimensions and the unique influence that each leader offers to followers. Similar to all leadership styles, transformational leadership has both positive and negative attributes that have an influence on the team dynamics. More work needs to be done on developing strategies and measures for effective implementation of transformational leadership and driving the culture of high performance when the organisation, where such leaders work, are faced with financial or human resources constraints or other specific circumstances that limit the effective conclusion of the transformational leaders' input.

The study highlighted the need for further research to be conducted to address the knowledge gaps, ranking order of the identified factors that influence the team members to be more innovative. Transformational leadership theory was utilised as the underpinning theory contributing to the theoretical framework to investigate how transformational leadership influences the process of innovation in teams. The research questions were informed by the transformational leadership theory as the predetermined theory.

The qualitative research methodology was utilised for this research with the single-case study design strategy focusing on an ICT organisation. An interpretivist approach was applied to contribute to a better understanding of the social phenomena that is transformational leadership. The main method of collecting data was achieved through semi-structured interviews and in-depth probing to avoid misinterpretation in understanding of the questions being asked to the participants. Secondary data in the form of publicly available company documentation was used to supplement the qualitative data.

This final chapter will focus on concluding on the research finding obtained from the data collection method applied. The conclusion is presented to address the significance of the findings by emphasising the academic and business context. Lastly, the chapter will also address any limitations presented by the study during the research process and make recommendations for future research.

7.2 Research Findings

7.2.1 Research question 1

What are the factors influencing innovation in teams?

The findings from research question 1 addressed the factors that team members believe influenced their perceived idea of innovation. This question highlighted how individual team members viewed innovation from their personal perspective and how that translated into the team dynamics in the workplace.

The research revealed that the transformational leadership approach is a complex construct beyond the expected associations of diversity and culture. The research presented that team members perceive innovation based on a wide range of factors, including their leaders' orientation, the collaboration that is fostered in the organisation and how customer centric the organisation is. The individual factors that contribute to team members being innovative were empowerment, individualised attention and coaching, constructive feedback, open communication, collaboration, ethical and fair dealings, motivation, and positive role modelling, challenging the status quo. This finding challenges companies to reconsider their business-as-usual approach to ensuring that there is shared value created in understanding innovation and how it is actioned in teams. This finding further emphasises the need for organisations to understand the association between a transformational, inclusive leadership approach and innovation, as it increases engagement and innovativeness (Vladić et al., 2021) and builds a safe environment that inspires creativity (Shore & Chung, 2022).

One significant contribution that the findings presented is that although there is a strong association of transformational leadership on innovation, its impact is limited

when confronted by the organisation's financial and human resources constraints. It also highlights that team dynamics and the closeness that team members feel towards each other as a unit, which encourages them to collaborate and share knowledge with each other, and having the customer top of their mind is a priority when aiming for innovation in an organisation. However, collaboration is closely linked to the transformational leadership dimension of inspirational motivation that encourages a shared vision and drive towards a common goal (Yin et al., 2020), which leads to collaboration in teams.

The findings placed an emphasis on understanding the layers that lead to the various factors that are important for fostering a transformational and inclusive leadership approach in a highly competitive innovative space. As the findings for this research question were based on the individuals' encounters and not those of the combined teams, various factors influenced the individual members' perspective. The study emphasised the need for efforts to be put into addressing some possible biases by individuals that can influence the teams' overall perception of what influences innovation; therefore, organisation might benefit from training employees to reflect on and address their biases (Bouschery et al., 2023), which will benefit the teams and drive a common goal aligned with the business objectives on innovation.

It was surprising to identify the team members' emphasis on customer centricity being key to how they perceive innovation in the workplace. The idea of developing products and services that is at the root of keeping the customer in mind was of importance, especially considering that data-led decision-making is at the forefront of decisions being made about innovation. This leads to innovating with data, which is more valuable than traditional methods (Parkinson et al., 2020). It also suggests that the teams are cognisant of being innovative in an effort to address the customers' wants and needs, therefore aligning their collaborative teams' efforts toward that common goal.

Tying in the factor of customer centricity, the study also revealed that a leader' orientation is considered when team members take into account how they perceive innovation in the workplace. Leadership support, being cognisant of the organisation's growth strategy and intentional market disruption are vital in communicating a message of innovation in teams. It was noted that the factors that

contribute towards a climate of innovation include support for innovation from leaders and an atmosphere of excellence (Bosselut et al., 2020).

To conclude, the research provided an understanding of the factors that influence innovation in teams. The connection of collaboration, leadership orientation and customer centricity added to the theme of inclusive transformational leadership, which shapes the team dynamics. To improve team performance, it will be important for the organisation to address the individual biases, drive collaboration, and data-led decision-making that is focused on the customer.

7.2.2 *Research question 2*

What are the behaviours and actions leaders possess to encourage innovation in teams?

Research question 2 explored the specific actions and behaviours that followers believed their leaders exhibited to encourage innovation in the teams. This research question was the foundation of being able to provide valuable insights into how these actions and behaviours can feed into the theory of transformational leadership, which is known to traditionally be a key leadership style that fosters employees' collaboration through motivation, role modelling and a range of other identified factors to lead to innovation in the workplace. The findings uncovered varied perspectives on the influence that the specific behaviours and actions have on team dynamics.

The findings placed emphasis on the positive outcomes that can emerge from a leader who exhibits attributes that are geared towards encouraging teams to be empowered and innovative. Various actions and behaviours that a leader practises can act as a conduit for driving a culture that is deliberate about being innovative in the organisation. Employees' empowerment, effective communication and constructive feedback, cross-functional collaboration, as well as employees' development and motivation all lend to the workplace engagement that facilitates a culture of innovation in teams. The research also revealed that an engaged leader, who exhibits traits of being self-motivated, challenging the status quo and being accessible to the team means that such as leader encourages a climate of innovation in the organisation. This finding aligns with existing literature that places emphasis

on organisations becoming more innovative and relevant in the market (Kleine et al., 2019), creating future value for the business.

The study emphasised that employees' engagement fosters an environment of innovation through a number of factors that relate to the dimension of individualised consideration, which in its origin, is made up of a developmental and individual one-on-one interaction with and constructive feedback from the leader (Arnold & Loughlin, 2010), the developmental elements being associated with coaching and mentoring that the research findings highlighted.

Regarding communication efforts that the leaders exhibit, the research revealed that communication and feedback are multifaceted and perceived differently by the individual team members. This highlighted that communication that is direct and open from a leader to followers creates an impact not only at an organisational performance level, but also with the team members (Alsayyed et al., 2020). The research illustrated that cross-functional collaboration accelerates innovation in teams as diverse ideas, creativity and positive debate are facilitated, which can further influence collective problem solving.

A surprising factor linking to the discussion on communication was that the findings highlighted constructive criticism as a contributor to how team members become intellectually stimulated to problem solve, which attributes to the said dimension of transformational leadership.

The element of the employee development and motivation in relation to the themes that were developed also highlighted a negative consequence of the organisation's retrenchments, loss of skills and non-replacement thereof and the financial and human resources constraints. The consequences were that many team members were overworked and felt a sense of burnout and no work-life balance, which, in turn, negatively affected the morale of the employees, leading to a call to action for managers to be aware of how they allocate tasks as to not overburden certain employees. However, the findings presented positives in the form of being empowered by the leader to identify opportunities to be innovative and also fostering positive internal relationship, which has already proven in the context of this study to encourage varied thinking with a boost in creativity and innovation.

As research question 2 was primarily focused on the specific actions and behaviours that leaders possess that encourage innovation in teams, the findings highlighted that an engaged leader is vital in driving innovation. An engaged leader was attributed to factors that point to the leaders' abilities to be a change catalyst, inspirational and bring about optimism in the team (Eide et al., 2020). Leaders who lead with ethical behaviour both in the interests of the team and the organisation, ultimately contribute to being concerned about future-proofing the company (Ifeanyi et al., 2021).

To summarise, research question 2 highlighted that the leaders' behaviours and actions are not linear in how they are received by the team and more so, how those factors contribute toward encouraging innovation in teams. It places emphasis on workplace engagement, where support, open communication, collaboration, employees' development, empowerment and motivation are important, and where the leaders are engaging with the team, multiple stakeholders, the customers and the organisation.

7.2.3 Research question 3

What challenges are encountered when trying to create an environment of innovation in teams?

Research question 3 aimed to uncover the difficulties teams might encounter while innovating and to understand the strategies used to overcome these challenges, as well as examine how limitations in resources affect the teams' innovation capabilities and lastly, difficulties team members face in securing backing from leaders for their innovative projects and ideas.

The research highlighted the importance of organisational stability as a contributor to the how innovative teams can be in their work environment. The day-to-day interactions encountered by team members play a critical role in supporting how they are able to execute their work innovatively.

The organisation's team leaders exhibited all the transformational leadership style attributes, fostering an environment where teams can be creative and have the freedom to be innovative. However, whether caused by inefficiencies, a lack of formal project management tools, the limited resources available in the organisation, or the hierarchical structure of the business, in-house organisational challenges were experienced and can present delays and bottlenecks in the innovation value chain. These delays in the business being able to be more agile and responsive to a highly competitive market calls for greater efforts or solutions in an ICT organisation. In addition, leaders should be intentional in capitalising on the internal teams' capabilities before actively pursuing external stakeholders, which can have implications on the organisation's core competencies and future innovation potential. The study revealed emphasis placed by team members on ethical leadership and fairness by the leaders. Teams need to feel safe in their work environment for trust to be established and to thrive in the workplace.

To summarise research question 3, there are factors that are beyond the leaders or managers' scope to foster a culture of innovation in teams. Insights highlighted that the organisation's resources and capabilities have a major role to play in the team members' efforts to execute innovatively. Understanding these dynamics will help team leaders address and perhaps timeously mitigate them with the support from the senior management and within the capabilities of the organisation.

7.3 The Study's Academic Contribution

This research study adds valuable insights to the ongoing discussion among scholars about the influence of transformational leadership on the process of innovation in teams. This research's key contribution is the in-depth analysis of the complexity of transformational leadership. It shows that transformational leadership goes beyond its traditional four dimensions, with factors such as customer centricity, the leader's business orientation, employees' engagement and empowerment, and organisational growth all playing a role in connecting transformational leadership with innovation. This perspective challenges conventional views on transformational leadership and innovation, emphasising the need for organisations, especially in the ICT sector, to recognise and address the intricate relationship between these concepts to create greater business value by challenging the status quo.

In addition, the research highlights that team members have varied perspectives of how they view or perceive innovation in their environments, challenging the organisation to align the vision around innovation, which can be executed through transformational leadership to create a common vision and shared value for all stakeholders.

The study emphasised that when employees feel empowered by their transformational leaders, innovation flourishes. This confirms the view of existing literature; however, it is still not clear how transformational leadership can overcome organisations' constraints that limit the teams' abilities to innovate. This will need to be assessed in other contexts that experience resource constraints.

This research provides a deeper understanding of how transformational leadership drives team innovation and offers practical insights for academics aiming to identify how teams' full potential can be unlocked.

7.4 Recommendations for Organisations Leaders

Although management and leadership are concepts that are often thought to be interchangeable, it is important to note the difference, where leaders have to be visionaries in their approach where they create change, as opposed to purely managing the day-to-day tasks, fostering a culture that encourages collaboration, where customer centricity is at the heart of innovative initiatives and efforts of the business. Such leaders have to investing in data-led decision-making metrics or innovations that are able to provide insights on the specific customers' needs and wants to contribute toward a customer-centric approach.

These leaders should make a concerted effort to drive and prioritise regular open communication and constructive feedback with their team members to encourage collaboration with the teams and other internal stakeholders and create a shared vision. Developing and motivating employees by applying individualised consideration, attention and relevant constructive criticism or feedback will further strengthen individual relationships that will make employees feel valued and appreciated at a one-on-one level. It will also enable leaders to identify necessary coaching or mentoring, not just as a collective. When leaders make

recommendations to the organisation's senior management for the individuals' development, this has to be based on informed knowledge by the leader. Leaders should also be aware of the role ethics and fairness play in the team dynamics and ultimately innovation in the business. It is paramount that leaders are ethical, set clear standards for the team, making them more accountable, and that they create an environment of trust and psychological safety.

In order to effectively implement transformational leadership in the workplace, managers can benefit from developing metrics that are able to measure the effectiveness of the dimensions of leadership in action, thereby closely linking theory with practice. Lastly, leaders could benefit from capitalising on the internal assets more in order to tap into the organisation's core competencies and drive innovation for long-term potential.

7.5 Recommendations for ICT Organisations

As technology advances, it is important for ICT organisations to adopt the technological developments to remain relevant in the market. Innovation offers organisations the opportunity to be or become market leaders in the products or services offered to customers, which should aim to deliver value to the end users, with the needs and wants of the customer being at the core of all product and service decisions. Investing more aggressively in infrastructure that can realistically support customer centricity would be beneficial but might be challenging under the currently constrained situation.

Organisations need to be clear on what elements of transformational leadership can be driven, implemented, and measured to create a more tangible application among their leaders in order to align with the goals of the organisation being innovative and competitive.

Lastly, organisations should actively and regularly address their internal and external challenges in a transparent manner to keep employees better informed as to the organisation's abilities to upscale or acquire more skilled personnel, which will help ensure that the employees are aware of constraints which directly affect their efforts to innovate. At the same time, all employees could also then jointly in teams look for

opportunities as to how to solve the problems caused by the constraints and still be able to innovate.

7.6 Research Limitations

In as much as the research has contributed to the field of study of transformational leadership and their role in teams being able to innovate, it is however important to highlight some limitations that are applicable for this research.

The first limitation is the restriction created by the small sample size of the identified population, which makes it difficult to apply the findings to a broader population. In addition, the fact that the research design was a single case study creates a limitation where the findings might not be applicable to other organisations in the same sector, or organisations in different sectors or different countries. Added to this is the limitation that only the one organisation in the ICT sector was included, which implies that the findings might be very different in other sectors. The same limitation applies that only one specific location was used, thus not being transferable to other cities, provinces or countries. Qualitative research, and especially small-scale samples, mean that the results are not generalisable.

Second, using a cross-sectional time horizon introduced the possibility that temporary factors could have had a bias on responses. For instance, a participant's mood or recent experience at the time of the study might have influenced their answers, affecting the accuracy of the results (Spector, 2019). In addition, researcher bias, the researcher's familiarity with the organisation could have had an impact on the objectivity of the research process.

Lastly, as the data collection method primarily depended on semi-structured interviews, where findings were dependent on the participants' lived experiences, the possibility of bias could have been presented where the information shared was one-dimensional, resulting in subject bias (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

7.7 Recommendations for Future Research

As literature has already pointed out, future research could benefit from conducting studies pertaining to transformational leadership and innovation research in more countries outside of the Western countries or culture. This future research could provide valuable insights into how different business practices influence the relationship between transformational leadership and innovation, therefore making it applicable to more countries and societies globally.

In addition, the research in literature on transformational leadership could well be racially biased in that data tended to be obtained from the perspectives of white males, which can lead to racially biased assumptions about leadership qualities (Ladkin & Patrick, 2022), resulting in a limited view. Future research could expand to various racial groups, where representation of diverse racial groups is covered.

Measuring the tangible effects of transformational leadership in organisations is difficult. Future research could expand on how the effects it has on organisations' management is measured. Also, it would be useful if the identified factors of transformational leadership influencing innovation in teams could be quantified and ranked in their order of importance in a quantitative study. This would be especially useful if such a study could compare different gender, races, age groups and industry sectors.

Lastly, as a single ICT organisation was chosen for this study based on the single case study design in South Africa, future qualitative study can expand on the influence of transformational leadership across a number of ICT organisations or different sectors.

7.8 Conclusion

To conclude, this study explored the complexities that exist in transformational leadership and the influence this has on the process of innovation in teams within a single ICT organisation in South Africa. The findings highlighted the importance of employees' empowerment, collaboration, open communication, constructive feedback and customer centricity among a number of other factors in the process of innovation. The study highlighted the limitations presented to suggest areas of improvement in future research. In implementing the recommendations provided for leaders, organisations and academics, improvements can be made to positively affect the organisation's innovative efforts and to expand on the body of knowledge on transformational leadership and innovation in academia.

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APPENDIX 1: ORGANISATION CONSENT LETTER

24 July 2024

Gordan Institute of Business

University of Pretoria


APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: Misiwe Xolo

Dear Sir/Madam

Approval is hereby given that Misiwe Xolo, employee No. [REDACTED] may conduct research within the [REDACTED] Consumer Small Business, as follows "*The influence of transformational leadership on the process of innovation in teams*".

The research may not make direct reference to [REDACTED] and/or any of its subsidiaries and information is subject to clearance by [REDACTED] External Reporting and [REDACTED] Top Management in the area of study.

Yours sincerely,



APPENDIX 2: CONSISTENCY MATRIX

TITLE: The influence of transformational leadership on the process of innovation in teams	LITERATURE REVIEW SECTION	DATA COLLECTION TOOL	ANALYSIS
Research question 1: What are factors influencing innovation in teams?	Section 2.2.1 Defining Leadership Section 2.2.2 Leadership vs Management Section 2.2.3 Leadership styles	Interview Guide Questions 3.1 – 3.3 Organisational Documents	Thematic Content Analysis
Research question 2: What are the behaviours and actions leaders possess to encourage innovation in teams?	Section 2.2.1 Defining Leadership Section 2.2.2 Leadership vs Management Section 2.2.3 Leadership styles Section 2.3.1 Transformational leadership theory: four dimensions Section 2.5.1 Transformational leadership in innovation	Interview Guide Questions 4.1 – 4.8 Organisational Documents	Thematic Content Analysis
Research question 3: What challenges are encountered when trying to create an environment of innovation in teams?	Section 2.4 Why innovation matters in business Section 2.5.1 Transformational leadership in innovation	Interview Guide Questions 5.1 – 5.4 Organisational Documents	Thematic Content Analysis

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW GUIDE

The following interview guide will be used for participants to draw similarities and differences from multiple perspectives.

1. Introduction and Participant Background

- a. Researcher welcome and introduction
- b. Explain the purpose and scope of the interview
- c. Assure confidentiality and inform participants that their responses will be anonymised and used for research purposes only
- d. Seek participants' consent to record the interview

2. Warm-up Questions

- a. How long have you been employed by the organisation?
- b. How long have you been working in your current role?
- c. Which department or division are you part of in the organisation?
- d. Can you briefly describe your role and responsibilities within the organisation?

3. Research Question 1: What are the factors influencing innovation in teams?

1. What innovation has the team or you as an individual created in the last 3 – 5 years?
2. How did those innovations come about? Explain the process you followed as a team or an individual.
3. What role did leadership play in the innovation process within your team? Or in supporting you to innovate

4. Research Question 2: What are the behaviours and actions leaders possess to encourage innovation in teams?

1. Can you describe specific behaviours or actions your leader exhibits that you believe significantly encourage innovation within your team?

2. How does your leader's communication style impact your team's ability to generate and develop innovative ideas?
3. What role does your leader play in providing resources and support for innovative projects, and how does this influence your team's innovation?
4. In what ways does your leader recognise and reward innovative efforts, and how does this impact your motivation to innovate?
5. What specific actions does your leader take to promote collaboration among team members, and how do these actions impact your team's innovation?
6. How does your leader create an environment that encourages open communication and the sharing of ideas within the team?
7. Can you provide examples of how your leader has facilitated knowledge sharing within the team and the impact this has had on innovation?
8. In what ways does your leader support cross-functional collaboration, and how does this influence the team's innovative capabilities?

5. Research Question 3: What challenges are encountered when trying to create an environment of innovation in teams?

1. What specific obstacles do you face in fostering a culture of innovation within your team?
2. How do organisational policies and procedures impact your ability to create an innovative environment in your team?
3. In what ways do resource constraints (e.g., time, budget, technology) hinder your team's ability to innovate?
4. What challenges do you experience in gaining support from leadership for innovative ideas and initiatives?

APPENDIX 4: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

GIBS ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPLICATION FORM 2024/25

RESEARCH PROJECT INFORMATION

NAME:	Nokwazi Misiwe Letheni Xolo
STUDENT NUMBER:	23991390
PHONE NUMBER:	
E-MAIL ADDRESS:	23991390@mygibs.co.za
PROPOSED TITLE OF STUDY:	The influence of transformation leadership on the process of innovation in teams
RESEARCH SUPERVISOR:	Gloria Mbokota
E-MAIL OF SUPERVISOR:	Mbokotag@gibs.co.za
RESEARCH CO-SUPERVISOR	
E-MAIL OF CO-SUPERVISOR	

The purpose of this Research Ethics process is to ensure that all research conducted under the auspices of GIBS is done so in an ethical manner, in accordance with the University's policy and in such a way that the rights of all stakeholders associated with the research are protected.

In order for the GIBS Research Ethics Committee to assess your application, you are required to submit a description of your Research Methodology that must contain sufficient detail to ensure that the required steps have been taken to achieve this purpose, in the research design, data collection, analysis and storage of data used in the conduct of this research.

Please indicate the nature of the output your research is aimed at producing (mark one box only):

- ABP Applied Business Project
- MBA Research Report
- MBA Project Publish Article
- MBA Teaching Case Study
- MBA Entrepreneurship Stream Portfolio
- MBA Consulting Stream Portfolio/MBA Health Stream
- MPhil Research Report

GIBS Ethics Policy distinguishes between FOUR main types of data and THREE main types of methodology. Please complete the table for ALL the data types that you plan to use. Note that all applications must be accompanied by a description of the methodology to be used in the study. Initial all sections that apply to your research

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

Ethical Clearance
Approved

Dear Nokwazi Misiwe Letheni Xolo,

Please be advised that your application for **Ethical Clearance** has been **approved**.
You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.
We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.

[Ethical Clearance Form](#)

Kind Regards

APPENDIX 5: INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

I am currently a student at the University of Pretoria's Gordon Institute of Business Science and completing my research in partial fulfilment of an MBA.

I am conducting research on **"the influence of transformational leadership on the process of innovation in teams"**. The interview is expected to last about an hour and will help us understand how transformational leadership influence team members, teams, and leadership when it comes to the process of innovation. **Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time without penalty.** All data will be reported without identifiers. If you have any concerns, please contact my supervisor or me. Our details are provided below.

Researcher name : Misiwe Xolo

Email: 23991390@myqibs.co.za

Supervisor name: Dr Gloria Mbokota

Email : mbokotaq@qibs.co.za

Signature of participant: _____

Date: _____

Signature of researcher: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX 6: THEMES, CATEGORIES AND CODES

RESEARCH QUESTION 1

Theme: Inclusive leadership approach	Sub themes	Codes
	Collaboration	Collaborative innovation Collaborative and collective Shared value creation for multiple stakeholders Encouraging digital innovation in teams Driving innovative thinking
	Leadership orientation	Growth strategy Leadership support Market disruption
	Customer centricity	Customer experience Customer relationship building Customer-centric innovation Making a difference in the life of the customer Customer-focused product development

RESEARCH QUESTION 2

Theme: Workplace engagement	Sub themes	Codes
	Employee empowerment	Individualised support to address the unique needs of the individual Coaching and mentoring Leaders encourage independence
	Communication and Feedback	Open communication Direct communicator Constructive criticism from leaders
	Encourages cross functional collaboration	Leader empowers team Leader open to learning Leader encourages knowledge sharing
	Employee Development and Motivation	Low employee morale Positive internal relationships Identifying opportunities Burnout due to lack of resources and time Corporate entrepreneur mindset Fear of failure

Theme: Leadership actions	Engaged leadership	Challenge the status quo Self-motivated leader Ethical leader Accessible leader Knowledgeable leaders Bottom-up approach
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RESEARCH QUESTION 3

Theme: Organisational growth	Sub themes	Codes
	Organisational Constraints	Lack of innovative thinking Lack of motivation, rewards, and recognition to innovate Lack of resources Skills shortage Ineffective IT systems Silo mentality Lack of agility Budget constraints External stakeholder influence
	Ethical leadership and fairness	Environment of accountability Safe space to work in Favouritism in the team Lack of boundaries

APPENDIX 7: EDITING CERTIFICATE

Barbara Wood

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cell: 082 9022 571

E-mail: woodlandsmedia@gmail.com

8 Suikerbossie Street

Bergsig, George 6529

Western Cape, South Africa

To whom it may concern

Editing Certificate

I, Barbara Wood, hereby confirm that I am a registered professional researcher and editor and have edited the following academic document:

The influence of transformational leadership on the process of innovation in teams

A research project 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

Student number: 23991390

November 2024

Signed:

Barbara Wood

