

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

**Leadership of state-owned enterprises in a volatile environment:  
a case study of Eskom**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**Graduate School of Business and Leadership  
College of Law and Management Studies**

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**Co-Supervisor: Dr E Mutambara**

**2021**

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“

*Whether an organization dies, survives or thrives is greatly determined by its leadership - before, during and after a crisis.”*

GAIL BORDEN - President  
Benchmark Communications

Source: <https://www.benchmarkcom.com/when-all-hell-breaks-loose-winning-crisis-leadership-strategies/>

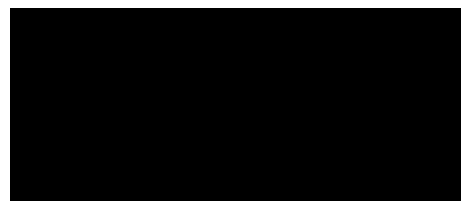
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**SHAMOLA PRAMJEETH**

**29 April 2021**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to my late supervisor, Prof Kriben Pillay, Lecturer, Graduate School of Business and Leadership (GSB&L), University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), for his guidance, support, and inspiration to pursue my research goal despite the numerous challenges I faced. His brilliance, knowledge and thoroughness must be commended. It is ever so sad that he was unable to see my completed thesis. Thank you, Prof. May your soul have eternal peace.

I would also like to thank Dr Emmanuel Mutambara, for volunteering to see me through the final stages of my thesis upon hearing of the death of my supervisor, Prof Kriben Pillay. Your kindness, understanding and support, I genuinely appreciate it. Without your guidance and support, I would not have been able to complete my thesis. I thank you.

I would like to thank Eskom for allowing me to conduct my study. A special thank you is extended to Rubendree Paideya, Allison Seckle, Dorca Moloi, Minister Ayanda Dlodlo and James Dlamini for their assistance in obtaining the ethical clearance documentation and distribution of my surveys. To all the participants, thank you for helping me reach my research goal.

To the IIE Varsity College and Dominique Nupen, I extend a sincere thank you and gratitude for affording me the time to complete my studies. Dominique Nupen and Jayseema Jagernath, you have been my pillar of strength during a very challenging academic journey. Thank you for the supportive words and for motivating me to persevere.

To my wonderful, loving husband, Velesh, and my daughter, Viaksha and son Rayith thank you for giving me the time to focus on my studies and all the hugs and kisses when the days were very dark and challenging. You never let me give up. Thank you so much for believing in me. This thesis is for you... You are my end, my beginning, my everything. I love you so much.

Durban, South Africa

29<sup>th</sup> April 20201

## DEDICATION

This thesis would not have been possible without the divine grace of the Lord All-Mighty. I dedicate this thesis to:

- ❖ My merciful, loving Lord Ram, Lord Krishna, The Divine Mother Durga and my Gurudev;
- ❖ My wonderful, loving and ever so supportive husband, Velesh Pramjeeth, my two amazing and beautiful children, Viaksha and Rayirth;
- ❖ My parents, Mr and Mrs Gobindnarain

and

In memory of my late big-father and mother, who has always been my role models and my baby girl, Heidi, my loving grandparents and Prof Kriben Pillay. May their beautiful souls have eternal peace.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ACRONYMS

<b>ANOVA</b>	Analysis of Variance
<b>BSE</b>	Black Swan Event
<b>CEO</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>CFA</b>	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
<b>CLT</b>	Complexity Leadership Theory
<b>CAL</b>	Complexity Adaptive Leadership
<b>DPE</b>	Department of Public Enterprise
<b>EBITDA</b>	Earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortisation
<b>EFA</b>	Exploratory Factor Analysis
<b>ESKOM</b>	South African electricity public utility
<b>EQ</b>	Emotional Intelligence
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Profit
<b>IR</b>	Industrial Revolution
<b>IT</b>	Integrative Thinking
<b>KMO</b>	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
<b>LDC</b>	Leadership Development Centre
<b>MIT</b>	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
<b>MDG</b>	Millennium Developmental Goals
<b>MSForms</b>	Microsoft Forms
<b>NDP</b>	National Development Plan
<b>NERSA</b>	National Energy Regulator of South Africa
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>PFMA</b>	The Public Finance Management Act (Act of 1999) PFMA
<b>PRASA</b>	Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa
<b>PRC</b>	Presidential State-Owned Entities Review Committee
<b>RARE</b>	Responsible, Accountable, Relevant, Ethical
<b>SA</b>	South Africa
<b>SAA</b>	South African Airways
<b>SoE</b>	State-Owned Enterprise
<b>SPSS</b>	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
<b>SCAILES</b>	Strategic, Complex, Adaptive, Innovative, Learning, Emergence and System
<b>SM</b>	Senior Manager
<b>UNGC</b>	United Nations Global Compact
<b>USA</b>	United States of America

<b>VUCA</b>	Volatile Uncertain Complex Ambiguous
<b>WAI</b>	Work Ability Index
<b>WELSPITL</b>	Working with people; Emotional Intelligence; Leadership; Self-Care; Problem-Solving & Strategy; Innovation & Creativity; Technology; Learning & Development

## ABSTRACT

To lead a complex SoE like Eskom with its myriad of challenges during a volatile environment, like the Covid-19 pandemic, calls for a very different leadership approach. Research focusing on leading in volatile environments is limited, with no specific studies focusing on SoEs in South Africa. This gap gave impetus to this study to explore the leadership of state-owned enterprises, namely Eskom in a volatile environment.

The study adopted an exploratory research design guided by the interpretivist and post-positivist paradigms. Based on the mix-method approach, using random sampling, the study targeted 183 employees, 183 senior managers and 7 executive members out of a total population size of 7526. A total of 113 participants at Eskom responded to the online survey. The study explored if the leadership qualities perceived to be important by Eskom leaders aligned with the leadership qualities required for a VUCA environment and assessed if the leaders possessed the required leadership traits to succeed in this environment. Also, Eskom leaders described how they had changed their leadership approach during the pandemic.

The study found that Eskom leaders possessed traits relevant for leading in a volatile environment; however, they lacked key strategic, problem-solving, emergence and innovation/creativity traits. The leadership qualities identified by Eskom leaders aligned to the qualities for a volatile environment; however, the five qualities that managers perceived as most important, namely: honesty, integrity and trustworthiness; being able to set a clear vision and direction; being able to embrace diversity and change; being able to think clearly under pressure and communicate effectively and being able to think conceptually, holistically and strategically, do not align fully to the leadership qualities found to be successful in leading through the pandemic. Leaders at Eskom changed their leadership approach to be more empathetic, supportive, understanding, trusting, agile, flexible and adaptable. Based on the findings, a feasible leadership framework and process was developed.

The recommendations proposed, namely the creation of creativity brainstorming pods, the application of LEAN tools, creating an enhanced managerial development programme, and creating a knowledge information system, to help support the implementation and effectiveness of the proposed framework and process.

**Keywords:** Eskom; Leadership; Qualities; Senior Managers; Traits; VUCA



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## **CHAPTER 1:**

### **INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

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*“Change is the law of life. Those who look only to the past or the present are certain to miss the future.”*

(John F. Kennedy, n.d.)

## 1.1 Introduction

State-Owned Enterprises (SoEs) worldwide have been founded on the premise to promote economic growth, develop the economy and aid in accelerating the delivery of public services to the people of the country. SoEs have contributed exceptionally well in China, Russia, South Korea and Malaysia, while others have found to cripple the economy, like in South Africa (DPE, 2019). In 2019, 14 SoEs in South Africa (SA) failed to obtain a clean audit result and show a healthy return on profit (DPE, 2019). Like in 2017 and 2018, key issues cited again in 2019/2020 were around Irregular Expenditure; Governance, Leadership, Financial and Performance Management (DPE, 2019; SCOPA, 2021). The SoEs in SA, especially Eskom, are crippling economic growth, investor confidence, compromising on service delivery, and playing a pivotal role in contributing to the downgrade ratings of the economy by the likes of S and P Global Ratings, Moodys and Fitch (Laing, 2017). Goldman Sachs declared in 2017 Eskom as being the "biggest risk to South Africa's economy (Bloomberg, 2017). Eskom, with a net loss of R27.5 bn and R450bn debt and another bailout of R59 billion on the government's cards, one has to ask are the drivers of this complex entity are of the right fit and skill to lead the organisation in a complex, volatile environment?

Today's workplace is confronted with constant disruption in technology, super-diversity and mobility, rapid, unpredictable economic and political conditions, changing social and natural environments, and working and living structures. Business models are becoming increasingly digitalised and more disruptive, workforces being more augmented, hierarchical organisation structures are a thing of the past with an increasing shift to team-based decision making and work practices with boundary-spanning collaboration being the new norm (Volini et al., 2019; Kok and van den Heuvel, 2019). Black swan events like the Covid-19 virus pandemic has disrupted and changed business models, modes of communication and work. These influences are forcing organisations (both public and private) into a new era embellished with complexity and uncertainty (LDC, 2016). The shifting business landscape changes the roles and responsibilities and decision-making processes of CEOs, C-Suite Executives, and line managers. CEOs are now required to hold a stance on social issues and where an organisation's mission is not only on revenue generation and profitability but also on taking into account the needs of the environment and its network of stakeholders. C-Suite Executives need to collaborate within and across roles while line leaders need to work in teams within a network of teams, forming a collective leadership. However, organisations, both public and private, are still advocating traditional leadership models and mindsets but expect their leadership to employ new leadership skills and capabilities without developing the skills required to assist leaders to adapt and respond quickly to change, to engage and collaborate across networks and the ability to navigate uncertain, complex ambiguous situations more easily (Volini et al., 2019).

The leadership models adopted in South Africa are often Western leadership theories or influenced by Western leadership theories taking very little into account how different South Africa is from Western economies.

Further to the complexity and uncertainty that organisations face, the endless quest for growth, bottom-line profitability, reduction in costs, customer satisfaction or competitive advantage is often a non-negotiable objective for organisational success. To achieve this, leaders and managers at the most senior levels of the organisation need to regularly review, adapt, renew and reinforce their leadership qualities, skills, knowledge and competencies to successfully face the rapidly volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous (VUCA) and changing business conditions. VUCA situations/events often bring about radical change. Change often brings about uncertainty and anxiety. People are often resistant to change due to their ingrained mental models, the fear of the unknown, the unknown impact it may have on their job and personal lives (Proches, 2020). This is normal; however, in the VUCA environment, the role of the leader is to manage this change effectively so that it reduces anxiety and fear becomes critical. They need to maintain “self-control and discipline in all situations.” (Lampinen and Fifield (2020, p. 2 citing Patel 2017)

Organisations both public and private operating in a VUCA environment require a new genre of leaders that are required to use different skill sets and techniques to lead, manage and grow their people while creating an environment that is conducive to innovation, creativity, collaboration and development (LDC, 2016; Kok and van den Heuvel, 2019; Volini et al., 2019). Today's leaders must be able to adapt his/her leadership approach quickly to fit the situational context, the organisational culture, the changing external environment and the position they hold while maintaining a balanced professional and personal life.

A profound example of a VUCA environment is the Covid-19 virus pandemic. This black swan event was not predicted, and neither did managers, government or healthcare know how to address this virus and the resulting challenges it presented. It was a situation that no one planned for or could have ever thought of planning for. The Covid-19 pandemic tested leaders and healthcare systems worldwide. It exposed the inherent weaknesses and gaps in crisis management, leadership, communication, and preparedness (Beilstein, Lehmann, Braun et al., 2020). During the pandemic, logical and rational thinking was compromised due to the high levels of stress and urgency of required actions. Leaders flexibility, the ability to adapt quickly to the very fluid environment and change processes, systems, working structures and communication were put to the test. The pandemic further tested the human side of the leader. The extraordinary speed the virus travelled globally had forced leaders to change their game plans and create new plans that were also very fluid due to the environment's volatility, often mirroring “military leadership” characteristics (Geerts, 2020, p. 1). A mindset change had to occur to

confront the new world. Connor (2021) wrote that the year 2020 was like no other, requiring leaders to be empathetic, award greater inclusivity, trust, accountability and control to their employees, engage in sensitive, controversial issues, employ a more holistic view of the business and society and speedily respond to a fluid changing environment. These skills and qualities were predominately held by the minority of leaders.

Years back, Peter Drucker made a very philosophical statement that is showing its real impact now in 2020. He said,

*“The greatest danger in times of turbulence is not the turbulence; it is to act with yesterday’s logic.”*  
(Drucker, n.d.)

As this new world’s future unfolds, some leaders and their organisations will be more resilient while it will be calamitous for others. Many organisations' fate lies in their leadership and followers' decisions and actions that are taken now amidst the Covid-19 crisis. Suppose the thinking behind those decisions resulted in an organisation entering into difficult times. How can those same thinking be used to find opportunities and take the business to safer ground? Based on this insight and VUCA characterising the corporate world, it is apparent that the traditional leadership models and skills based on the frameworks created during the industrial era will prove to be redundant in a VUCA environment as it was developed in an era that required those particular skills set, thus calling for a leadership approach relevant to the current environment. The concept of VUCA and Theory U were the guiding theoretical frameworks that the study was premised on.

This chapter presents a preamble to the background of the study, an overview of leadership in a volatile environment, thereafter providing a brief overview of the leadership at Eskom. Further to this, the chapter explains the rationale of the study and the problem statement, highlights the aim of the study, lists the objectives of the study, significance of the study, the scope of the study, delimitation of the study, as well as the structure of the thesis.

## **1.2 Background to the study**

The growing importance of SoEs worldwide spans many decades, with many nations performing exceptionally well due to SoEs like in South Korea, Australia, Russia, China and Malaysia cited by Kaunda, 2010 in Dartey-Baah (2014) while others have been found to cripple the economy, like in South Africa for instance, Eskom, South African Airways (SAA), Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA) and Denel have contributed negatively towards the economy of South Africa (DPE, 2019).

The mandates of SoEs have changed over the years, serving different needs of the country's economic policies, namely: development, growth, poverty alleviation and employment creation. Chilenga (2016), likewise Dartey-Baah (2014) and Kikeri and Kolo (2006), cited in Amin, Besim and Ul Haq (2019), have highlighted that despite SoEs importance in sub-Saharan Africa towards contributing to the economic policy objectives, SoEs have displayed a trend of underperformance dating back to the 1970s (Nellis, 1988) with many SoEs in South Africa falling under scrutiny by government and the public (DPE, 2019).

The quantified reasons for such underperformance given the several players involved in the SoEs oversight and management have not been documented well, with critics often arguing along the lines of inefficiencies inherent in government's involvement, lack of accountability, failure to comply with the policies on delegation of authority and rules and regulations, ineffective public sector governance policies, corruption, fraud, inept leadership, mismanagement, negligence, high senior management turnover, insufficient oversight and inconsistent or conflicting objectives and management strategies (Nellis, 1988; Chilenga 2016; LDC, 2016; OECD 2016; Cohen 2017; DPE, 2019).

According to The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in South Africa, over the past few decades, the government has intensified their efforts to elucidate SoEs' financial and non-financial objectives, performance evaluation measures to make this information public, to encourage better performance, sustainability and contribution of SOEs to the country's economy (OCED, 2016).

Despite the existence of pertinent frameworks that guide the operations of SoEs to make them efficient and effective in South Africa, namely: The New Public Management approach as well as Good Corporate Governance (Chilenga, 2016), a major SoE like Eskom, is still falling short of fulfilling its mandate. As the entity grows and the complexity, interdependence and interconnectedness increases, the possibility of failure and malfunctions occurring grows; it can cause a torrent of subsequent challenges (Tourish, 2020). This begs the questions: Does this entity's leadership have the required skills and knowledge to manage such a complex organisation in an environment plagued with uncertainty, political, global, environmental and social-cultural challenges, as well as a catastrophic pandemic? Can they lead and manage effectively in this height of uncertainty, fluidity and pace? With all the policies and regulations that govern Eskom's decision-making, can they make quick, immediate choices regarding restructuring, restrategising and resource allocations? Do they have the skills and qualities to future plan with various contingencies for the next crisis and to guide the employees of Eskom on the most probable eventual outcome as they navigate the pandemic? (McNulty and Marcus, 2020)

## 1.2 Overview of Leadership

Leadership models over the twentieth century have been characterised as top-down leadership that is effective for a production-oriented economy and not the best fit for an economy that is knowledge and conceptually oriented (Uhl-Bien, Marion and McKelvey, 2007; LDC, 2016). They go on to say that organisations management and governance systems are relevant to the industrial era and not aligned to the knowledge and conceptual era we are in, where knowledge is the foundation of all decision making with the creation of knowledge and innovation happening at an astronomical rate as it is critical to the organisation's survival. Lichtenstein et al. (2006), cited in Daigle and Matthews (2017) with LDC (2016), sharing similar sentiments, argues that the traditional top-down approach to leadership becomes less and less useful based on the complexities and uncertainties of the current environment. Twenty-first-century companies operate in a volatile, complex, competitive time with myriad challenges, forcing companies to move vigorously from conditions concentrated on completing things through micro-management of staff toward environments where participation, collaboration, engagement, coaching and empowerment are emphasised and encouraged. In the book *Leading in a VUCA world* by Kok and van den Heuvel, 2019, authors Kok and Jordaan (2019, p. 1) emphasise the importance of skills like “diversity management, social cohesion, mediation and negotiation” in a VUCA environment. The notions of servant leadership with continuous discernment, responsible leadership, and adopting a consciousness decision-making model with the infusion of spirituality constantly come through for leading in a VUCA environment.

According to the Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends Survey (2019), the majority (81%) of the respondents indicated that leadership for the 21<sup>st</sup> century require skills that will help them lead through complexity and ambiguity, followed by the ability to lead through influence (65%). Leaders also need to be able to work across networks and the ability to lead more quickly (Volini et al., 2019).

Leadership plays a core role in determining whether organisations can meet and address these challenges and meet organisational goals (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007; LDC, 2016). Researchers (Amanchukwu, Stanley and Olulube, 2015; Senge, 1990 cited in Koech and Namusonge, 2012; Ojokuku, Odetayo and Sajuyigbe, 2012) have highlighted that leaders play a distinct role in influencing, directing, motivating, and incentivising employees to perform specific tasks whilst also inspiring team members to achieve the organisation's objectives through efficient performance. They indicate further that leaders adopt specific leadership styles when providing direction to the team, which affects the entire organisation and its performance. Mullins (2013) recommends that successful authority is a dual process between leader-follower, where leaders inspire subordinates by creating a vision that employees can align with.



Researchers (Murschetz, 2005; Muchiri, Cooksey, Di Milia and Walumbwa, 2011; Araujo-Cabrera, Suarez-Acosta and Aguiar-Quintana, 2016; Solomon and Steyn, 2017) have purported that leaders are a crucial element to an organisation's success; therefore, it is paramount that they are effective in performing their duties. However, there is a lack of certainty as to what can be construed as being an effective leader deliberates Rosete and Ciarrochi (2005), cited in Solomon and Steyn (2017), while Mesterova, Prochazka, Vaculik and Smutny (2015) cited in Solomon and Steyn (2017) highlight concerns that in terms of defining or approaching leadership effectiveness, there is no standard accepted stance. Solomon and Steyn (2017) postulate that leadership effectiveness is established as a comparable decision based on both description and evaluated attributes as cited by Oyinlade (2006), with little agreement on how to measure leadership effectiveness (Harris and Kuhnert 2008; Shalhoop and Sanger, 2012). Scholars Lowe, Kroeck and Sivasubramaniam (1996) suggest leadership effectiveness can be measured through subordinate perceptions and organisational measures, with Hogan and Hogan (2001) and Kang and Jin (2015) claiming that employee evaluations were the preeminent method for evaluating leaders. However, authors Hansbrough, Lord and Schyns (2015) highlight concerns in using follower ratings, namely, common method bias. Thus, how does one measure a leader's effectiveness in a VUCA environment characterised by black swan events? Is it their ability to adapt and mobilise their team to respond quickly to the new normal, or is it their ability just to survive the storm, or their ability to redesign the business model amid chaos and uncertainty while leading the team through the darkness to not only to survive but thrive in the new normal?

### **1.2.1 Leadership in a Volatile Market**

Changing business condition elements and powers and the macro and micro-environment changes impact how leaders think and go about as they interface with groups to accomplish positive and supported hierarchical execution based on the organisation's vision, mission and procedure. LDC (2016, p. 3) defines an organisation as "a complex system made up of multiple variables. The interdependencies of these variables mean that when a small change happens to one area of the system, it can have large effects elsewhere in the system". Apart from organisations being complex and working in uncertain, unpredictable conditions, the issues that leaders now face within these organisations are now even more complicated. Head and Alfred (2008), cited in LDC (2016, p. 8), terms these complex issues as "wicked problems" as there is no one cause to the problem, neither is there only one solution to address it. Often with the state of the environment being so fluid, planned changes may change in a second.

These wicked problems include (LDC, 2016, p. 8; Wahl, 2017):

- Problems that cannot be clearly defined
- Numerous interdependencies and multi-causal facets
- Proposed interventions may have unforeseen effects – positive and negative

- Problems may be unpredictable, unbalanced and not be static
- No clear or correct solution
- Problems that are never completely solved
- Problems are socially complex with many stakeholders involved
- Responsibility spans across numerous levels and organisations
- Solutions may require more than process or system changes but that of behavioural changes
- Linear policies and frameworks
- Rapidly changing internal and external environmental conditions
- Multi casual, multi-scalar, and interconnected
- Straddle organisational and disciplinary boundaries

The catastrophic disruptions and challenges the Covid-19 pandemic had created can be characterised as a wicked problem as it met most of the above-stated criteria, and it required immediate action because it disrupted the stability and continuation of society globally (Geerlof, 2020). The key to addressing issues in the era of complexity is by leaders assisting team players at various levels to collaborate and engage collectively to understand the problem, the underlying drivers and possible coherent actions to address it. Brainstorming sessions within and across teams to create various scenarios and possible mitigation strategies are required. Learning, then unlearning, followed by relearning, creating new ways (often termed design thinking) is required in the VUCA environment. Leaders and organisations that are complacent and set in their old ways will not survive this turbulent environment. It requires leaders to be present both mentally, emotionally, conceptually and physically while at work.

Collins (2012), cited in LDC (2016), postulate that there are numerous drivers of internal complexities in the public sector, depicted in Figure 1.1.



**Figure 1.1: Drivers of Internal Complexity in the Public Sector**  
Source: Collins (2012 cited in LDC, 2016)

In a fluctuating complex business landscape, there are numerous ways to lead organisations. Successful leaders often use unique and a combination of styles in different situations for different purposes and outcomes. Leadership can pose to be a critical contributor that will determine the success or failure (Aalateeg, 2017) of an SOE like Eskom. SoEs operating in this current market require leaders who are agile, decisive, flexible, collaborative, responsible, accountable, ethical, visionary, proactive, innovative, strategic and team orientated whilst also displaying integrity and humility with the ability to motivate teams to a shared vision to deliver on the SoEs mandate to gain a competitive advantage in the market they are operating in. Failure to do so will result in the inability to meet the organisation's mandate; decrease in profits and increase in debt; job losses; decrease in sustainability, customer service and competitive advantage; a decline in stakeholder confidence and collaboration in the market as well as governance issues (Murschetz 2005; Muchiri, Cooksey, Di Milia and Walumbwa, 2011; Dartey-Baah (2014); Araujo-Cabrera, Suarez-Acosta and Aguiar-Quintana 2016; Gqaji, LDC, 2016; Proches and Green, 2016; and Steyn; 2017; Hendrikz and Englebrecht, 2019).

Leaders continually empower themselves with new knowledge, skills, and new and improved means and ways to manage their organisations. An organisation can only be successful if it has leaders who are accountable, ethical, innovative, and have the foresight and a shared vision whilst motivating directors, managers and lower-level employees with a common purpose of delivering on the organisational goals. A motivated workforce is crucial a factor that could impede or enhance the commitment, determination, interest, and passion of the employees in the organisation (Veliu et al., 2017). However, employees respond differently to the diverse styles/behaviours of leadership; thus, it is paramount for leaders to identify their leadership behaviour and understand its impact on employees and the organisation.

Veliu et al. (2017) indicate that successful leaders communicate openly with their teams, inspiring them to share a shared vision for the organisation. The authors' displaying similar sentiments to that of other researchers (Bass & Bass, 2008; O'Reilly, Caldwell, Chatman, Lapid and Self, 2010; Ngambi, 2011; Ojokuku et al., 2012; Baillie, 2016; Hendrikz and Engelbrecht, 2019) further postulate that successful leaders display integrity, ethics, reliability, responsibility, fairness, caring, trustworthiness, citizenship, accountability, the ability to set clear specific goals, and motivate employees towards them. However, Veliu et al. (2017) denote that leadership must not be construed as a "one size fits all" notion and that successful leaders display varying leadership styles among them. Proches and Green (2016) assert that the public sector, as well as SOE leadership, are often held accountable by members of the community, with Herbst and Conradie (2011) advocating that the underpinning component of "constructive social transformation in any public sector", is leadership.

To this end, the theoretical framework that guided this study was VUCA and Theory U, which are premised in the post-positivist and interpretivist paradigms, respectively. Moore's SCAILES

Framework, a leadership framework for the VUCA environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, was the conceptual framework that guided the study and data collection. This framework was the lens through which the material presented in this study informed the constructs tested in the research instruments. The data were analysed through the lens of Theory U, namely: presencing, absencing and VUCA. The SCAILES framework is a composite of various new generation leadership frameworks, namely: Complexity Adaptive Leadership, Systems Thinking, Integrative Thinking, Mental Model and Theory U. Dr Moore is the Director of Strategy at the United States Department of Navy (Research, Development, Test and Evaluation Department) supporting the Department of Navy. He is remarkably familiar with strategising for a VUCA environment, namely: war. When in war, plans and tactical decisions change every minute, if not within seconds, with the leader having to adapt and change strategies due to sudden changes. Making quick decisions free of emotion and bias, often with limited information and time to survive, is the order of the day. Thus, Moore (2015) postulates that the SCAILES framework is critical for leaders to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century environment, categorised by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. The seven (7) key concepts in this framework form a system of thought, highlighted as being: Strategic, Complex, Adaptive, Innovative, Learning, Emergence and System (SCAILES) are truly relevant and applicable to the business and public sector environment amidst a global virus pandemic. Chapter 2 discusses the framework in detail.

### **1.3 Rationale of the Study**

Organisations, both public and private, fail primarily because of ineffective leadership, poorly conceptualised and implemented strategies, inefficient service delivery, lack of accountability and corruption, to name a few, notwithstanding the impact of external forces (Gqaji, Proches and Green, 2016; Englebrecht and Hendrikz, 2019). Ochola (2007) and Everest-Philips (2012), as cited in Dartey-Baah (2014), assert that inept leadership as being the cause of Africa's low and declining economic development despite its abundant supply of resources. Strong leadership is paramount to determining and controlling an organisation's performance direction and coping with constantly changing environmental forces. Changing business condition elements and powers impact how leaders think and go about as they interface with groups to accomplish positive and supported hierarchical execution based on the association's vision, mission and procedure. In this way, a solid, compelling initiative is a vital part of an association's endurance and continued development in the current political, financial, technological and social condition. While leaders are influential and conclusive in their contemplations and activities, they set the pace by stimulating their group of directors and lower-level representatives to adequately meet organisational objectives through affecting, coordinating and encouraging them (Bass 2008 cited in O'Reilly, Caldwell, Chatman, Lapiz and Self, 2010; Ojokuku et al., 2012; Hendrikz and Engelbrecht, 2019).

Hendrikz and Engelbrecht (2019) argue that despite the key lessons of the Enron debacle in 2001, which was the maleficence of unethical and corrupt business practices, leaders both in public and private organisations continue to miss-use their powers, for example, the Steinhoff scandals, Volkswagen and in SA, the issue of state capture, failure to comply with the delegation of authority policy and governance, lack of accountability, corruption, miss-use of government and tax-payer funds, which have been dominating South African news headlines.

In today's continually evolving, highly competitive, complex, and volatile market, leadership can be a critical contributor in determining the success or failure of an organisation, entity or an SoE like Eskom. SoEs in South Africa are complex entities that are influenced and impacted by various stakeholders as well as macro and micro environmental and social-cultural forces. Over the years, the underperformance of various SoEs, like Eskom, has had a negative effect on public finances, economic growth, investment, public service delivery, and the attainment of developmental opportunities.

SoEs operating in this current market require leaders who are agile, adaptable, flexible, decisive, responsible, accountable, ethical, visionary, proactive, innovative, and strategic whilst also displaying integrity, empathy and humility with the ability to motivate teams to a shared vision to deliver on the SoEs mandate to gain a competitive advantage in the market they are operating in. Leaders with the right skills, experiences, knowledge, and education in strategic positions are vital to address the current challenges Eskom faces (LDC, 2016; Volini et al., 2019; Kok and van den Heuvel, 2019). Leaders must be trained in the presencing perspective; otherwise, they will continue to repeat behaviours that were not fit for purpose and are dysfunctional.

Yukl (2010); Hamid and D'Silva (2014); Maslow 1943, cited in Kotler and Keller (2016), and Muenjohn and McMurray (2016), proclaim that effective leadership is the driving force in achieving organisational goals and motivating employees and managers, however, for leadership to be effective, the leadership style must be aligned with the motivational needs of employees, the organisation's mission and vision and societies and the environment's needs (Veliu et al., 2017). They must be present on all fronts. While concentrating on authority, accountability, and responsibility from the board level, the senior, mid and operational level leadership is predominately one of the greatest effects on service delivery and meeting a SoEs, like Eskom's, mandate across the public sector.

There have been numerous challenges plaguing the power utility Eskom, namely: rising debt levels, mismanagement, corporate governance issues, coal shortages, disgruntled employees demanding higher salaries and damaging power plants and disrupting services, poor staff performance, and ageing as well as failing plants resulting in load shedding and increased costs, that have resulted in many stakeholders questioning the sustainability of the state-owned entity (MJO, 2018; Omarjee, 2019a; du Toit, 2019; No Author, 2019; Modise, 2020; White 2020). The then Chief Executive Officer of Eskom in 2019,

Phakamani Hadebe, spoke openly to Eskom employees in an internal memo on corruption and the enablers of this corruption being staff members and the disconnect experienced by staff due to the organisational challenges (Omarjee, 2019a). Further to this, Minister of Public Enterprises, Pravin Gordhan, under whom the auspices of Eskom falls, expresses the dire state of Eskom as being “a company that seems to be in terminal decline”. He further indicated to parliament that “the crisis is the cumulative effect of years of mismanagement and corruption. If the power utility continues its present trajectory, it will cease to exist in less than three months” (du Toit, 2019).

Leadership at Eskom is guided by responsible and ethical leadership frameworks, forming the foundation of effective corporate governance. Given the governance issues of mismanagement, corruption and fraud, a new Board of Directors were appointed in January 2018 to address the critical governance gaps, namely: rooting out corruption and graft, that was experienced over the years to re-establish a culture of ethical behaviour and ethical leadership as well as restore investor and public confidence in the SoE (Eskom Integrated Report, 2018).

Taking into consideration the discussion above and the fact that a new board of members, new CEO and Restructuring Officer have been appointed to improve the organisational efficiency, effectiveness and financials of Eskom as well as rooting out corruption, there is a need to look at what a leader should be like to manage a complex entity like Eskom in a dynamic and constantly changing environment as the current leadership framework of Responsible and Ethical leadership is not working and does not have the key constructs required to manage and lead in a VUCA environment like that of the SCAILES framework.

The Covid-19 virus pandemic in 2020 that brought the global economy to a near standstill, with stock markets crashing and pushing economies into situations worse than the Great Depression of 1929, is an ideal example of the uncertainty surrounding businesses and leaders in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The current leadership models had proven to be archaic as they were not created, taking into a black swan event like the Covid-19 pandemic (Proches, 2020). Public and private organisations found that their business models and strategies became outdated as they weathered the storm. Leading through this prolonged crisis of such a large magnitude resulted in leaders and society “feeling a loss of control, disorientation and severe emotional disturbance” (D’Auria and De Smet, 2020). If we can use an analogy to describe business and leadership during Covid-19, the researcher would say that business leaders did not have to repair the plane in mid-flight 20 000 feet off the ground; they had to redesign and rebuild the plane in mid-flight at 20 000 feet of the ground in an electric hail ridden thunderstorm. Traditional leadership approaches did not suffice in this pandemic. Scharmer purported this sentiment in 2007 (p. 5) where it was postulated that due to the varying degrees of complexities and uncertainties causing immense chaos in society, organisations need leaders to “operate from the highest possible future, rather than being stuck in the patterns of our old experiences” to manage the chaos. However, our current leadership

behaviours depend on patterns of our past actions (Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013), which is not the best way to lead in an environment overcome with VUCA. Haedrich (2020) writes that although organisations are slowly returning to some kind of new normality, greater demands are being placed on the leaders' role post the Covid-19 crisis. The crisis has revealed much gapping weakness in leadership competencies. Competencies that were once successful before the crisis had proven ineffective in managing and leading through the crisis writes Haedrich (2020). Traditional leadership theories and leadership styles were found to be outdated to navigate through and post the Covid-19 pandemic, with Dileep (2020) postulating that Covid-19 has allowed leaders to rethink their existing business, operational and leadership models.

Eskom Integrated Report, 2020 (p. 45) indicates that the “Covid-19 pandemic is considered the most dominant factor affecting the global and local economy, as well as our business, now and into the foreseeable future.”

“The impact of Covid-19 is expected to further threaten future sales volumes and the cost of production, the ability of customers to pay, as well as Government’s capacity to appropriate the remaining financial support for 2021 and beyond”, cites Eskom’s Integrated Report 2020 (p. 67).

Business models have changed; how we do business and engage has changed; socialising and customer needs have changed; in essence, the world we once knew does not really exist anymore. LeMaster (2017) postulates that for leaders and organisations to succeed in the knowledge era characterised by VUCA, they need to be adaptive, innovative, change their mental models, be agents of change and embrace diversity. They also need to “embrace opposition and criticism with truly open minds, listen closely to our perceived adversaries, put self-interest aside, and work together to achieve “the greater good” for our organisations, our people, and our social systems” (Le Laster, 2017, p. 1). A sense of collective accountability, responsibility, and leadership for the greater good seems to permeate post the crisis.

To date, there has been no empirical research into leadership at SoEs in South Africa, let alone a leadership framework relevant to the current economic climate and for leading a complex entity like Eskom in such VUCA operating conditions. The Covid-19 pandemic crisis has given Eskom leaders an ideal opportunity to reassess their leadership qualities and traits for the ‘new world’ that the virus has created. Leadership in crises, especially during a black swan event like the Covid-19 pandemic, is under-researched.

It is against the backdrop of this research gap that this study developed a leadership framework that supports the sustainability of Eskom in the volatile environment using the SCAILES framework for a VUCA environment as the foundation of this research study.

## 1.4 Statement of the Problem

Before 2007, Eskom was classed as one of the leading producers of electricity worldwide. It was so effective and efficient that by the end of 1990, it had supplied more than half of Africa's electricity. Due to its efficient processes and systems, it is cited in the 1994 annual report as promoting the entity as the lowest-cost electricity producer in the world (Eskom Annual Report, 1994). Looking at the present day, 2020, this once highly efficient, profitable, well managed, stable producer of electricity now fails to produce enough electricity to keep the country's lights on, is always reliant on government bailouts and cannot produce electricity at a low cost for the people of South Africa. This is costing the economy billions of Rands financially and crippling economic growth, investor confidence, compromising on service delivery and are playing a pivotal role in contributing to the downgrade ratings of the economy by the likes of S and P Global Ratings, Moody's and Fitch (Laing, 2017; Cronje, 2020). Goldman Sachs declared that in 2017, Eskom was the "biggest risk to South Africa's economy" (Bonorchis and Burkhardt, 2017). Eskom, with a net loss of R20.7 bn and R450bn debt (Eskom Integrated Report 2019) and another bailout of R59 billion on the government's cards, Moody's Rating Agency downgraded South Africa to junk status in 2020. With the Covid-19 virus pandemic bringing the global economy to almost a standstill and stock markets crashing, one has to ask are the key drivers of this complex ship are of the right fit and skill to take the utility forward in a market; that is so volatile, unpredictable and uncertain? With the South African economy under such immense strain, the government cannot afford further bailouts to the utility in the future. Business, as usual, can never be the same in South Africa post the Covid-19 virus pandemic. The Minister of Public Enterprises, Pravin Gordhan, indicated the utility's dire state and that the crisis is due to years of mismanagement and corruption (du Toit, 2019).

From 1985 to 2007, 22 years, Eskom was led by only three CEOs: namely: Ian McRae, from 1985–1994, Allen Morgan, from 1994 to 2000, and Thulani Gcabashe from 2000 to 2007, see Figure 1.2 below. However, things changed rapidly after Thulani Gcabashe left office, with Eskom having over a 13-year period, a total of 13 CEOs, interim CEOs and acting CEOs causing much unpredictability, volatility and uncertainty in the leadership and the running of Eskom, where scheduled load-shedding, growing fraud levels and escalating debt characterised Eskom from 2008 to 2020 (Staff Writer, 2020).

Thirteen CEOs in such a short space of time; what did they achieve? What were their failures? Table 1.1 below documents some of the failures and successes of these leaders. From 2008 to 2020, Eskom has been plagued with numerous challenges resulting in insurmountable losses.

The instability in CEOs' posts has not been the only senior position at Eskom with a high churn rate. There have been six chairmen in the last ten years compared to three over 20 years when Eskom was known to be a profitable energy producer (Staff Writer, 2020).



With the surmounting challenges (financial, operational and governance) plaguing Eskom and with the previous CEOs tenure (mainly from 2013-2018) being tarnished with lack of compliance of governance policies and regulations, contravention of fiduciary duties, corruption and fraud and lack of accountability and transparency (see Table 1.1, below), a new Board of Directors were appointed in 2018 to address the dire financial status, diminishing revenue and governance problems. The Board were unaware of the underlying contributing factors to these ills, Phakamani Hadebe had cited. (Omarjee, 2019a)

The government and the new Board of Directors of Eskom have realised the dire state of the challenges plaguing Eskom, the resulting impact on the economy and were thus determined to rectify it as per the 2018 Eskom Integrated Report and media reports (SA News, 2019). However, Transform RSA President Adil Nchabeleng indicates that the new Board appointed in 2018 does not have the necessary skills and knowledge of the electricity and engineering industry to effectively make the required changes. He goes on to say that Eskom's Board is "chaired by a person who knows nothing about energy, who has admitted that he is not an energy expert. He said that an experienced CEO with a strong engineering background and understanding of the energy sector should have been appointed." (Staff Writer, 2019)

So, is the current Board of Directors of the right fit, one needs to ask? Do the Board of Directors and senior management possess the required skills to succeed in a VUCA environment?

With Eskom supplying 95% of the nation's electricity, bankruptcy is not an option as the entire economy will fall. President Ramaphosa assured the nation in his State of the Nation address, 2019, that the SoE is "too big and important to fail and he won't allow that to happen" (Cohen, Vecchiatto and Goko, 2019; SONA, 2019)

Years of leadership's failure in dealing effectively with political interference, mismanagement, inept leadership, corruption, inadequate and uninformed decision making have led to the destruction of this once profit-making entity that contributed to the South African economic growth, driving it to the brink of almost a total shutdown. The rapidly changing business landscape has added to this conundrum, where previous leadership models and styles have become archaic. A new type of leadership is required as the traditional leadership methods will not suffice.

Taking the challenges plaguing Eskom into context with globalisation, unpredictable economic trends and customer needs that are continually changing, there is growing evidence to indicate that organisations, government and SoEs like Eskom are now acknowledging the importance of leadership and the impact leadership styles and qualities have on service delivery, employee health and

organisational goals (Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber, 2009; McCarthy, Almeida and Ahrens, 2011; Muchiri, 2011; Muchiri, Cooksey, Di Milia and Walumbwa, 2011; Velu et al., 2017).

Worldwide, the current approach to addressing problems are reductionistic in nature; that is, simplifying complex issues and coming up with a policy/framework that has already been superseded by new events and situations, for example, the Covid-19 virus pandemic and the current global economic crisis of 2020. A new way of thinking and leadership behaviour is required to navigate the new unknown reality post the Covid-19 pandemic.

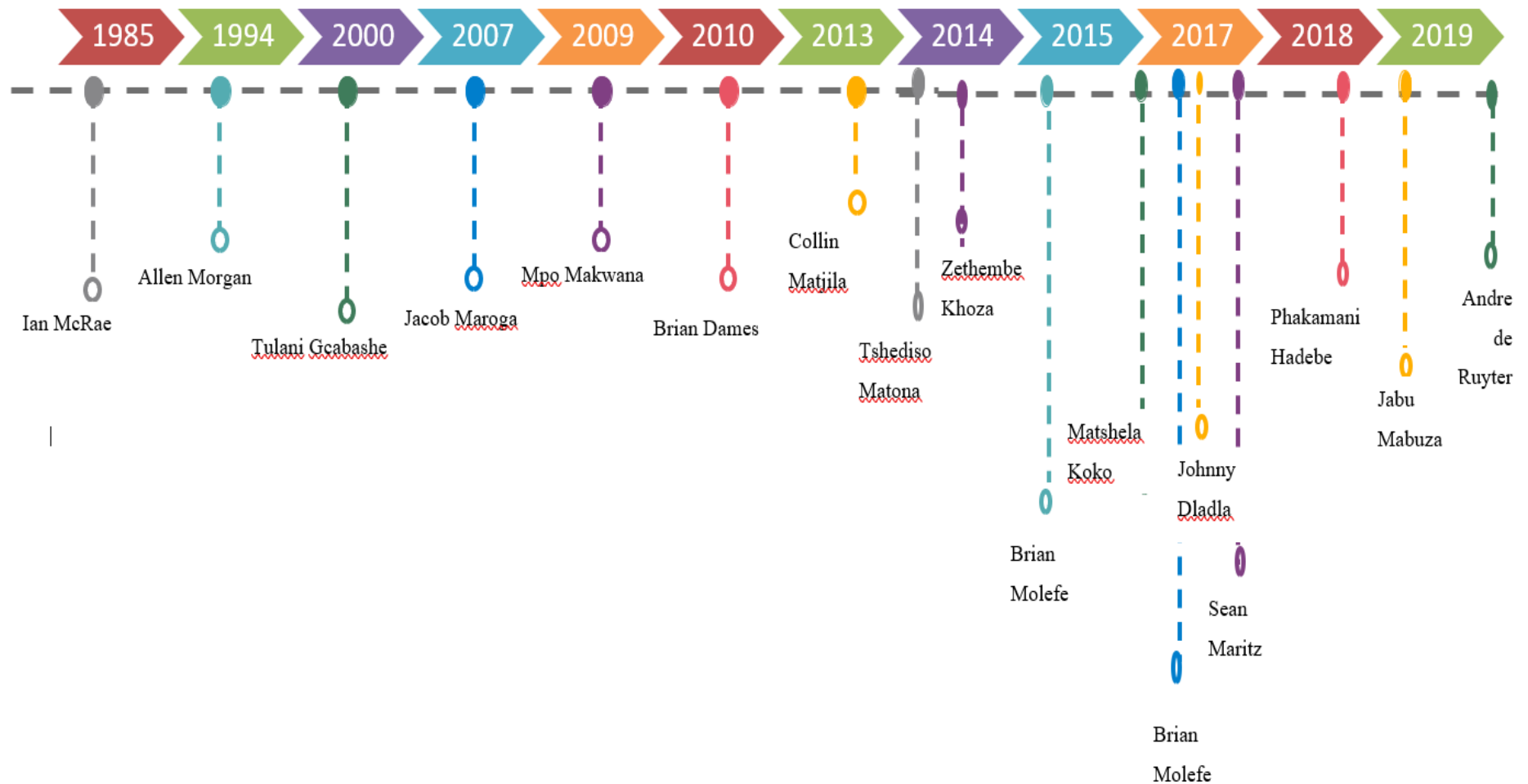
Thus, decisive action is required to address the ills within the leadership at Eskom and ensure the leadership that is instated have the necessary skills, qualities and competencies needed to survive and succeed in a VUCA environment.

Jason Geerts (2020, p. 1), in his article “Leadership lessons and hope for a post-crisis world”, says very eloquently, “there is perhaps no greater need for, or measure of, leadership than during a crisis.” This study examined the leadership approach Eskom managers and executives adopted during a volatile environment and crisis, like the Covid-19 pandemic. How did these leaders and managers cope during the crisis? Do they have the required qualities and traits to successfully lead in a volatile environment?

**Table 1.1: Success and Failures of Leaders at Eskom: 2009-2019**

Leader	Education	Associated Leadership Success/Failure(s)
<b>Mpo Makwana</b>	Honours Degree	He ensured that load shedding did not occur during the 2010 FIFA World Cup. He <b>kept the lights on</b> .
<b>Brian Dames</b>	Diploma, Honours, MBA	<b>He stabilised Eskom after the first round of load shedding in 2007 and spearheading the implementation of a maintenance programme.</b>
<b>Collin Matjila</b>	LLB	Disregarded <b>legal advice and broken procurement rules</b> at Eskom to favour deals with Gupta-linked businesses.
<b>Tshediso Matona</b>	Honours, Masters	He and Eskom management allegedly <b>provided unreliable and inconsistent information</b> to a war room that was mandated to deal with the power crisis.
<b>Zethembe Khoza</b>	National Diploma	<b>Contravention of fiduciary duties and failure to comply with governance protocols</b> and discredited the integrity of the G9 report. <b>Placed pressure on Sean Maritz to sign off on the loan agreement. Removed Johnny Dladla for co-operating with investigators looking into a deal between Eskom and Gupta-linked Trillian.</b>
<b>Brian Molefe</b>	MBL	He was implicated in several testimonies before the <b>State Capture</b> Commission, related to wrongdoing at state entities Transnet and Eskom.
<b>Matshela Koko</b>	Bachelors Degree	<b>Gross negligence and corruption and the unlawful awarding of procurement contracts</b>
<b>Johnny Dladla</b>	Honours	<b>Suspended the contract between Eskom and McKinsey, involving Trillian and commissioned a probe into officials implicated in it.</b>
<b>Sean Maritz</b>	Bachelors Degree	<b>Hired a friend and fellow church member</b> at a salary of about R100 000 a month <b>without declaring the friendship to Eskom</b> . Two Eskom executives had also accused Maritz of allegedly <b>deleting evidence implicating Gupta companies</b> in controversial deals with Eskom and Maritz <b>signed off on an R400m payment</b> from Eskom to a Hong Kong bank account, <b>against all legal advice</b>
<b>Phakamani Hadebe</b>	2x Masters Degree	<b>Lead a turnaround strategy</b> at Eskom and mapping a way forward for the entity. <b>Recovered R1.3bn irregularly paid to McKinsey</b>
<b>Jabu Mabuz</b>	No formal degree. Honorary Doctorate	Mabuza's dual role goes against sound governance principles. He held office until new CEO Andre de Ruyter was appointed.
<b>Andre de Ruyter</b>	2x Masters Degree	Tasked with restructuring and turnaround of Eskom. Accused of <b>racism</b> at Eskom in 2020.

Source: Adapted from Omarjee (2019b); Phakathi (2021)



**Figure 1.2: Eskom's Leadership Timeline**  
Source: Adpated from Staff Writer (2020)

## **1.5 Aim of the Study**

With Eskom having service and economic delivery mandates to achieve, whilst attempting to do it most efficiently and effectively to remain competitive, the study aims to explore the leadership of State-Owned Enterprises in a volatile environment with a focus on Eskom by eliciting feedback from senior managers and executive members as well as gathering data from managers, executive members and employees in order to recommend an effective leadership framework that promotes the effective generation of electricity and the sustainability of Eskom post the Covid-19 crisis.

## **1.6 Objectives of the Study**

1. To assess the perceived impact of leaderships behaviour in achieving Eskom's goals.
2. To determine if the leadership qualities perceived to be important by the leaders at Eskom align with the leadership qualities required for a VUCA environment.
3. To determine if the leaders at Eskom possess the required leadership traits to succeed in a VUCA environment.
4. To ascertain to what extent had the leaders at Eskom changed their leadership approach during the Covid-19 pandemic.
5. To develop a feasible leadership framework that supports the sustainability of Eskom in a volatile environment.

To help gain more in-depth insight into the key research objectives, the following secondary objectives of the study were created:

- a) To establish if there is a relationship between demographic data and leadership qualities in the senior managers.
- b) To establish if there is a relationship between demographic data and leadership traits in the senior managers.
- c) To establish if there are similar perceptions of what senior managers perceive as important leadership qualities and what their employees perceive they possess.
- d) To determine if an alignment exists between how leaders perceive how well they can perform their tasks are aligned with the employees' perception of their ability to do the task.

## **1.7 Research Questions**

This research study intends to answer the following questions:

1. What is the perceived impact of leadership behaviour on achieving Eskom's goals?

2. Do the leadership qualities perceived to be important by the leaders at Eskom align with the leadership qualities required for a VUCA environment?
3. Are the leaders at Eskom equipped with the required skills and qualities to succeed in a VUCA environment?
4. How did the Covid-19 pandemic shape leadership behaviour at Eskom?
5. What do leaders at Eskom believe are the critical take-aways for them from the Covid-19 pandemic?
6. Is there an alignment between how leaders perceive how well they can perform their tasks is in alignment with the employees' perception of their ability to do the task?
7. Does a relationship exist between demographic data and leadership qualities in the senior managers?
8. Does a relationship exist between demographic data and leadership traits in the senior managers?

## 1.8 Research Methodology

The study adopted both the post-positivist and interpretivist paradigms, thereby guiding the adoption of the mixed-method research approach. A single case study approach was adopted. For the post-positivism paradigm, quantitative research was employed with survey research informing the questionnaire design that was used to collect quantitative data. The interpretivist paradigm guided the qualitative research element of the mixed-method research and informed the creation of the open-ended questionnaire used to collect the qualitative data.

To ascertain if the research measuring instruments contained any flaws, a pilot study among two senior managers at a state-owned enterprise, an Academic Leader and two Professors at a local university and two Academics in the field of Management at a private higher education institute was conducted. The feedback provided was used to improve the structure, layout and phrasing of the questionnaire. The data analyst employed to analyse the data was a statistician certified in Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), and Nvivo Pro further refined the questionnaire.

The research population of 7526 included senior-level managers and executive members at Eskom and employees reporting to the senior managers. The study targeted a sample size of 366 for the quantitative study. The sample size was determined using the computation postulated by Cochran (1977). The quantitative data collection used a margin error of 5% and a 95% confidence level. A disappointing 30% response rate was attained. The data were analysed using SPSS.

A census was employed on the Executive Team members for qualitative data collection as the sample size was small, seven in total. The Executive Team was targeted based on the assumption that they are the key strategic decision-makers at the entity, setting the goals and creating the strategies to attain the stated goals and ensuring that Eskom's mandate is met. The responses from the open-ended survey were coded, transcribed and then analysed using Nvivo 12 Pro. Of the seven Executive Members, only three members had completed the questionnaire despite reminder requests being sent out.

The data from the quantitative and qualitative data were collected using Microsoft Forms, an online survey tool. The data was analysed and merged into findings discussed in chapters 6, 7, and 8. The research methodology and design adopted for this study is detailed in chapter 5.

## **1.8 Significance of the Study**

### Practice:

This study's findings provide insight into the various leadership behaviour traits adopted by leaders at Eskom and whether it aligns with the traits required to succeed in the VUCA environment. Further, the study provides key insights to policymakers, ministers, and the Board of directors by proposing a new leadership approach to address the current gaps and a leadership framework for Eskom and other SoEs that supports organisational efficiency, effectiveness and governance in a volatile environment. These study findings can inform development training programmes for leaders and help introduce leadership behaviour changes in Eskom and other SoEs.

### Theory:

By fulfilling the aims that were stated in the objectives section, the extension and development of the theory in certain areas are attainable. The study findings can provide insight for researchers studying the area of effective leadership in a VUCA environment in SoEs, making a more significant impact on society and contributing to the body of knowledge.

The study findings contribute to the body of knowledge since leadership in SoEs is highly under-researched in South Africa and developing countries. No study has been found to investigate leadership in complex entities like SoEs in South Africa.

## **1.9 Delimitation of the Study**

The study focused on one large SoE, Eskom.

### **1.9.1 Assumptions**

The following assumptions are made in pursuit of this study:

- a) Respondents to the survey research provided objective and accurate information that will enable conclusions to be reached, according to this study.
- b) Various stakeholder's imperative to the research would co-operate with the researcher, thereby providing the support and required information that is sought.
- c) Data collection and interpretation of the study will be prudent and objective.
- d) The study would form the basis of developing a leadership framework that would support the sustainability of Eskom in a volatile environment.

### **1.9.2 Limitations**

The study has the following limitations:

- a. Its focus on a single country limited the study, and single SoE thus may result in less significant findings in other countries and other SoEs. However, due to the in-depth description and detailing of the research methodology process and design, researchers can use the study findings as a building platform for future studies extending to other SoEs.
- b. Time and access to the executive team and senior members at Eskom were also major constraints. Due to the policy and regulations governing external research conducted at Eskom, interviewing the participants were impossible. An online survey was advised by the Human Resources Department of Eskom. Thus, an online survey was administered to all participants.
- c. Data collection took place during the Covid-19 virus pandemic outbreak, where various lockdown restrictions were in place. Thus, the response to the surveys could have been hampered. To help increase the questionnaires' response rate, reminders were sent to the participants, and the survey was open for two months as opposed to 1 month.

### **1.10 Ethical Considerations**

The research undertaking in this study ensured that the necessary and applicable measures were taken to ensure the human rights of individuals participating in the study were not violated by adhering to the ethical principles and procedures governing research involving humans, namely: confidentiality, safety, ownership of information and respect of respondents' right to autonomy and consent to participating in the study willingly. This study followed the University of



KwaZulu- Natal Research policy, whereby ethical clearance from the University had been sought as well as the ethical clearance confirmation from Eskom. Participants had to sign a consent to participate in the study, which also indicated the study was anonymous. They had the right to end the survey at any time they wished to, should they not want to participate further. Also, all the respondents' information was treated as confidential and would be used solely for the purpose of the research study. Refer to Appendices 5 and 6 for the Informed Consent Form and the Introductory Letter to the Participant.

## **1.11 Structure of the Thesis**

The rest of the thesis structure is explained hereunder.

### **1.11.1 Chapter 1 - Introduction and Overview of the Study**

Chapter 1 introduces the reader to the topic under study by providing a background into the research problem at hand and a rationale for conducting the study. An overview of leadership in a volatile environment is provided. The chapter further contextualises the study with the post-positivist and interpretivist research paradigm and theoretical frameworks, namely, Theory U and VUCA. The study's objectives and aim are stated, followed by a brief overview of the research methodology employed to address the research objectives. The significance of undertaking the study is discussed as well as the delimitations and ethical considerations.

### **1.11.2 Chapter 2 – Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

The chapter unpacks the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of leadership in volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environments. A review of the literature on leadership establishes a concise theoretical underpinning for the study and highlights the importance of the research topic.

### **1.11.3 Chapter 3: Contextualising Leadership in a Volatile Environment**

In this chapter, the concept of leadership will be explored through the review of various authors work, unpacking how leadership has changed over the years and the factors that have attributed to this change and the resultant challenges it has presented to leadership. Leadership traits and qualities endorsed by various scholars and strategists for a VUCA environment will be unpacked.

### **1.11.4 Chapter 4: State-Owned Enterprises: Eskom**

This chapter draws attention to the evaluation of various literature sources on SoEs and how an SOE is defined in South Africa. An exploration of Eskom as an SoE, the mission and vision guiding the entity will be undertaken, and the challenges impacting Eskom and preventing it from meeting its stated mandate will be assessed.

### **1.11.5 Chapter 5: Research Methodology and Research Design**

This chapter presents the research methodology applied during the study informed by a post-positivist and interpretivism paradigm. The procedure for collecting, analysing and interpreting the data for a mixed methodology research approach is described.

### **1.11.6 Chapter 6: Quantitative Data Presentation, Analysis and Discuss**

In this chapter, the data is analysed, interpreted and discussed by applying quantitative analysis techniques.

### **1.11.7 Chapter 7: Qualitative Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion**

In this chapter, the data is analysed, interpreted and discussed by applying the qualitative filters.

### **1.11.8 Chapter 8: Summary of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

This chapter discusses the results, investigation, and elucidation of the quantitative and qualitative information in detail and presents the proposed leadership framework, leadership process and implementation plan.

## **1.12 Summary of Chapter**

This chapter discussed the introduction and background to the study, which is leadership in a volatile environment, and thereafter provided a brief snippet into the leadership at Eskom. Further to this, the chapter outlined the rationale of the study and the problem statement, stated the aims of the study as well as the objectives of the study, significance of the study, scope and delimitations of the study, the ethical considerations, as well as the structure of the thesis, and concluded by providing an outline of the structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework discusses the various leadership theories and will outlay the theoretical framework underpinning this study, as well as present the conceptual framework that will guide the study in fulfilling the stated research objectives.

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## **CHAPTER 2:**

# **THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS IN LEADERSHIP**

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*“We can’t solve problems using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.”*

( Albert Einstein, n.d.)

## 2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided an overview of the study. The theoretical and conceptual frameworks for leadership in a complex environment will be discussed in this chapter. The leadership theories and the conceptual frameworks that guided research on leadership over the years have been progressively developed to take into account the evolving business landscape. McCleskey (2014) asserts that “there are over two hundred opposing ideas and theories on leadership and how to define this concept”, as cited in Hunt and Fedynich (2019, p. 20).

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

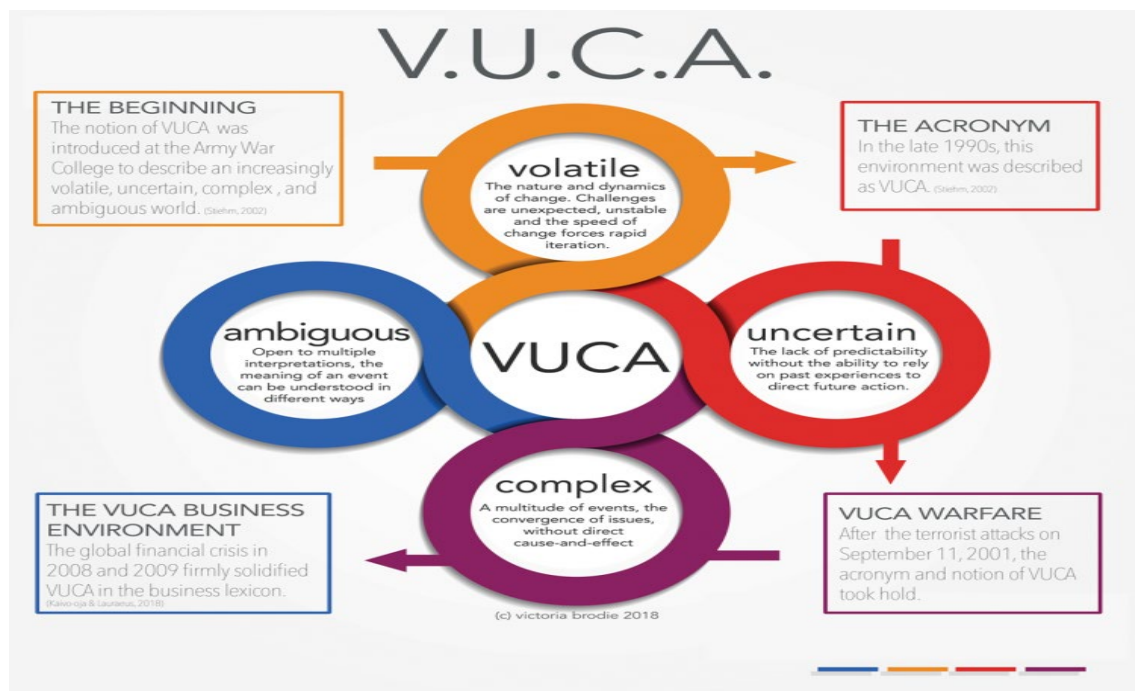
To help one understand the varying arguments postulated by research scholars and academics on leadership, one needs to unpack the different theories on leadership. The various leadership theories provide different lenses on leadership and how the various schools of thought evolved to cater to the changes occurring in the business/market environment. The debates on leadership over the years has been categorised into eight (8) dominant schools of thought; however, new leadership models have evolved, namely: systems thinking, complexity adaptive, integrative thinking, mental model, black swan model, Theory U and the SCAILES framework for leadership in VUCA markets. Studies can often be aimed at one specific theory of leadership; however, with leadership theory evolving and building on previous theories, it is important to note that the functional aspects of leadership in these theories may integrate to form a broader framework that is relevant to the environment that humankind operates in where the traditional vertical paradigm is switched to form a more flattened, interchangeable dynamic paradigm, where leadership changes between key actors, dependant on the task at hand.

The theoretical frameworks that underpin this study to address the research objectives were VUCA and Theory U. Using the lens of the SCAILES framework, a framework truly relevant for an environment categorised by VUCA, and the research questions were unpacked. Although VUCA is not a traditional leadership framework, it proves to be very relevant and appropriate in understanding and addressing the research problem and the turbulent environment created by Covid-19. The concept of VUCA is located in the paradigms of post-positivism and interpretivism, which will be discussed in detail after the concept of VUCA is unpacked.

The concept of VUCA gained its origins after the cold war in the classrooms of the U.S. Army War College, to describe the volatile, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity of the world we live in (Giles, 2018), the with concept becoming fully entrenched after the 2008-2009 world economic crisis, see Figure 2.1. With unpredictable external events, technology disruption, the rapid pace of change, the concept of VUCA is becoming more relevant to describe the current business

landscape and, more importantly, the type of leadership required to survive and succeed in this environment (Giles, 2018). VUCA affects business, government, institutions and society at large. VUCA presents simultaneously in individuals' and teams' high levels of instability, anxiety, fear, doubt, and divisions, often resulting in conflict. The explosion of information, often negative or incorrect, fuels anxiety and results in mental overload and breakdowns. Due to this unpredictability of events, either positive or negative present high levels of VUCA for leaders, thus making decision making and planning very difficult in this environment. To remain competitive in a VUCA world, traditional leadership models and styles will not suffice as hyper-innovation, creativity and adaptability are required (Jordaan, 2019, cited in Kok and van den Heuvel, 2019).

Figure 2.1 below provides a timeline as to when the concept of VUCA began, with Table 2.1 unpacking the definitions of VUCA and the resulting implications put forth.



**Figure 2. 1: VUCA Timeline and Description**  
Source: The VUCA Leader (2020)

**Table 2.1: VUCA Definitions and Implications**

	Description	Drivers	Effects	Implication
<b>Volatility</b>	A lot is known, but it is unknown when it will happen. Change comes quickly and in varying magnitudes.	Change	Risks, Instability, Fluidity	Take action by devoting resources to develop agility. <b>Visionary</b>
<b>Uncertainty</b>	Lack of knowledge about the issue and how one's actions will affect the response.	Unpredictability	Unsure about the direction to take due to high data volumes.	Ensure a broader <b>understanding</b> of different perspectives. Interpret and share information by establishing information networks. Boundary spanning <b>collaboration</b> .
<b>Complexity</b>	The volume of interconnectedness information is so large that it is difficult to know what one does not know.	The volume of information. Task correlation. Multi-layered effects.	One can predict the outcomes of their actions, but they cannot predict the unintended consequences. Unproductivity	Managing volume in a structured way to collect, access, act and respond. Simplify the situation by adopting a structure that would mirror the environment that it exists in. <b>Clarity</b> is golden. <b>Boundary spanning</b> collaboration, creativity and <b>flexibility</b> .
<b>Ambiguity</b>	Least is known in terms of the situation and the outcomes.	Misinterpretation ideal vs actual	Doubt, distrust, disloyalty; poor decision-making; a decrease in innovation and creativity.	Create an enabling environment that allows for experimentation to understand the situation. <b>Risk-taking</b> and <b>agility</b> . <b>Innovation and creativity</b> .

Source: Adapted from Bennett and Lemoine (2014); Kambhammettu (2014); Centre for Creative Leadership (2020); Baruch et al. (2021)

Upon analysis of the VUCA concept in Table 2.1, researchers have indicated that it is vital for leadership in a VUCA environment to possess these essential qualities: visionary, understanding, collaboration, clarity, flexibility, agility, and creativity/innovation, and they must be a risk-taker.

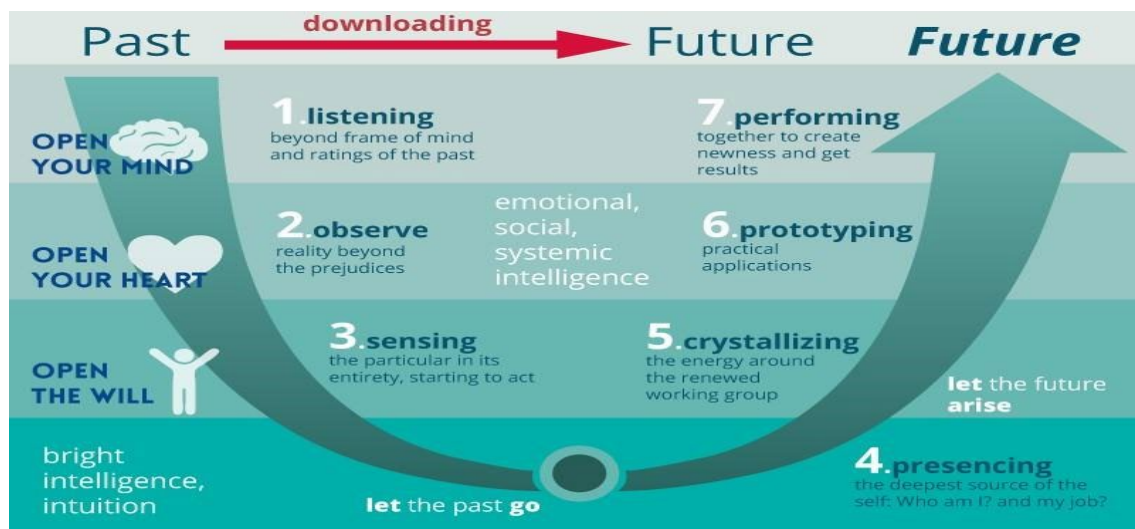
### 2.2.1 Theory U

Otto Scharmer, a Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) researcher, in 2009 developed Theory U in response to organisations inability to respond well, if not at all, to changes that were occurring around them. He found that leaders in organisations operating in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and environments branded with chaos, change, complexity, information overload, and uncertainty had still employed old tried and tested institutional thinking when finding solutions to problems. This type of thinking has resulted in massive organisational failure and the collective creation of results that has very negative consequences like violence, poverty, destruction of communities, to name a few. Theory U is about personal leadership and advocating a new or different way of thinking and looking at problems. The theory premises that the leader needs to dissociate him/herself from their usual/accustomed way of thinking, doing and solving problems. They can make unique contributions taking into account what society actually requires when providing possible solutions. The leader needs to move from a “personal, individual centred approach to a collective group centred approach” to begin creating a healthier, positive, sustainable working environment (Scharmer, 2007a; The Presencing Institute, 2020).

Theory U Framework is in the shape of a “U”, moving from left to right of the U (Figure 2.2), a sequence of stages a leader will go through to “incite a future through decisive action” (Pillay, 2014, p. 229). Theory U (downward curve on the left) asks leaders to look within themselves (beyond their personalities) with a critical lens, breaking down their existing mental models, thereafter letting go of their earlier convictions as they begin to embrace and welcome the future. At this point, the leader silences the mind and reflects. It is where the “two selves—our current self and our best future self—meet at the bottom of the U and begin to listen and resonate with each other” (The Presencing Institute, 2020). It is like when the light switch has been turned on, and we can see ever so clearly realising that things cannot remain as they were, and a new direction is required. Individuals having crossed this threshold function with an invigorated level of energy, bursting with creativity and innovation as they can easily sense the future requirements. Thereafter (the upward curve on the right), the leader embraces their perceptions and that of others around them (Scharmer, 2007a; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013). As the leader journeys through the U, they develop seven leadership capabilities, namely: listening, observation, sensing, presencing, crystallising, prototyping and performing.

The theory speaks about presencing, the ability to sense/feel the future while being present in the current situation, signifying the leader’s ability to discover and create solutions that may be evolving as the situation unfolds to address the problems. However, Theory U's limitations are its vagueness, lack of grounding in practice, and it is challenging to implement in unstructured situations. This framework will be explored in greater detail under Mental Models (section 2.5.4) later in the chapter. The VUCA world and Covid-19 have revealed the importance of leaders

being able to open their minds to new ways and discarding their old behaviours. It heightened the importance of integrative and collaborative thinking and engagement. It required leaders to be present physically, mentally, and emotionally to navigate the pandemic's turbulent months. Collaborating with people within and outside their group became vital to ensure efficiency and the creation of new solutions to this unknown problem. Silo mentality had fallen to the wayside. Being fluid and adaptable, agile, creative, understanding and collaborative were the required skills of the day. Constant self-reflection became the norm for leaders if they wished to survive the storm.



**Figure 2.2: Theory U**

Source: Barreto, Brito and Turra (2019)

## 2.2.2 Paradigms Underpinning VUCA

Reflecting on the majority of the modern leadership theories, these theories can be traced to a positivist, materialistic paradigm where science is viewed as the best approach to get to the reality/truth of understanding of the world, where the world is perceived as deterministic – cause and effect. With science, we could predict and control events and behaviours as well. According to positivism, the purpose of knowledge is to describe what we see and experience. If a phenomenon cannot be directly observed and measured, the positivist approach alludes that it is impossible to gain insights beyond that (Trochim, 2020). Trochim (2020) says that to predict an individual's behaviour, only positive and negative reinforcers of behaviour are taken into consideration. An individual's emotions, thoughts, experiences, cultural connotations and external reality that inform their thinking are not taken into account and cannot be directly nor effectively measured. The fluidity of human behaviour makes it very difficult to segment how an individual will think and act (Kivunj and Kuyini, 2017). There are no explicit predetermined factors.



This is the blind spot in many leadership theories, especially in an environment where VUCA is so rife. With complexity and uncertainty, as well as the unpredictable nature of multiple factors that influence leaders' decision making, this gap has now been challenged by the consciousness paradigm that informs Theory U (discussed in greater detail later in the chapter), interpretivism and post-positivism.

### **2.2.2.1 Post-Positivism**

Post-positivism rejects positivism's fundamental beliefs, postulating that all reality, observations, and opinions are imperfect with errors and that strategies premised on post-positivist thinking can be changed and adapted to suit the circumstances it finds itself in. Post-positivists know that getting reality correct is impossible to achieve; however, they will still persevere to achieve that goal. Harford (2011, p. 8) writes that information provided by experts "go only so far. The problem is not the experts: it is the world they inhabit...which is simply too complicated for anyone to analyse with much success."

Post-positivists believe that using a single measurement is fallible, thus postulating the use of multiple measurement points and types. Triangulation of data across the multiple measures is vital for getting a more informed understanding and perspective of the reality surrounding them. To add further, post positivists believe that people and researchers cannot be objective in their views as their social-cultural experiences and worldviews fundamentally influence them. They believe that we construct our world view based on how we perceive it, and these beliefs and observations are imperfect; hence the creation of our world view will be imperfect as well. Post-positivists accept that we all come from diverse backgrounds and experiences with inherent biases. A common base can be attained with triangulation, collaboration and critical constructive engagement across multiple imperfect perspectives/stakeholders towards a common goal and shared vision. The goal is to strive towards objectivity, knowing that reaching perfect objectivity is not possible. Knowledge is continuously evolving as the process of reflection, discussion, selection, and retention unfold. Knowledge has "adaptive value" (Trochim, 2020, p.2). This type of thinking is what is required in a VUCA environment. Leaders do not remove their bias, experiences and emotions from their decision making. We live and work in an imperfect world; thus, it is our goal as individuals to sieve through our imperfections in an attempt to find common ground that will form a base for new innovative thinking. Reflecting on one's experiences, opening up the mind and thoughts while listening to others as you begin to unlearn old ways and develop new ways of thinking, engaging and doing as a team for the situation at hand, is vital in the VUCA environment. Due to this environment's fluidity, changing, adapting and readapting thinking and strategies is the norm to survive and break through the chaos caused by VUCA.

### **2.2.2.2 Interpretivism**

The positivist paradigm is about proving or disproving theories, intending to reach objectivity. Positivists believe reality is the same for everyone and using quantitative measures; it can be proven what that reality is. Interpretivism is on the other side of the coin, valuing subjectivity and rejecting positivism. The interpretivist paradigm postulates that individuals will perceive social reality based on the cultural, moral, and ethical stances they hold, implying that one gains knowledge based on their individual experiences. Thus, the notion of truth and knowledge from an interpretivists point is subjective. One cannot remove their beliefs, values, opinions and experiences when engaging with a phenomenon; thus, it will influence how they collect, interpret and analyse information (Ryan, 2018).

Further to this, interpretivism argues that reality is not a single simple layer but one that is multi-layered filled with complexity. A single situation can be understood and interpreted in several ways based on an individual's experiences and how they perceive reality. Different people have differing views of the world and what may be real (Ryan, 2018).

Creswell and Creswell (2018), Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2011) and Thanh and Thanh (2015) argue that researchers following the interpretivism paradigm gain knowledge and understanding of reality from the people they are observing or interviewing, their personal experiences and upbringing.

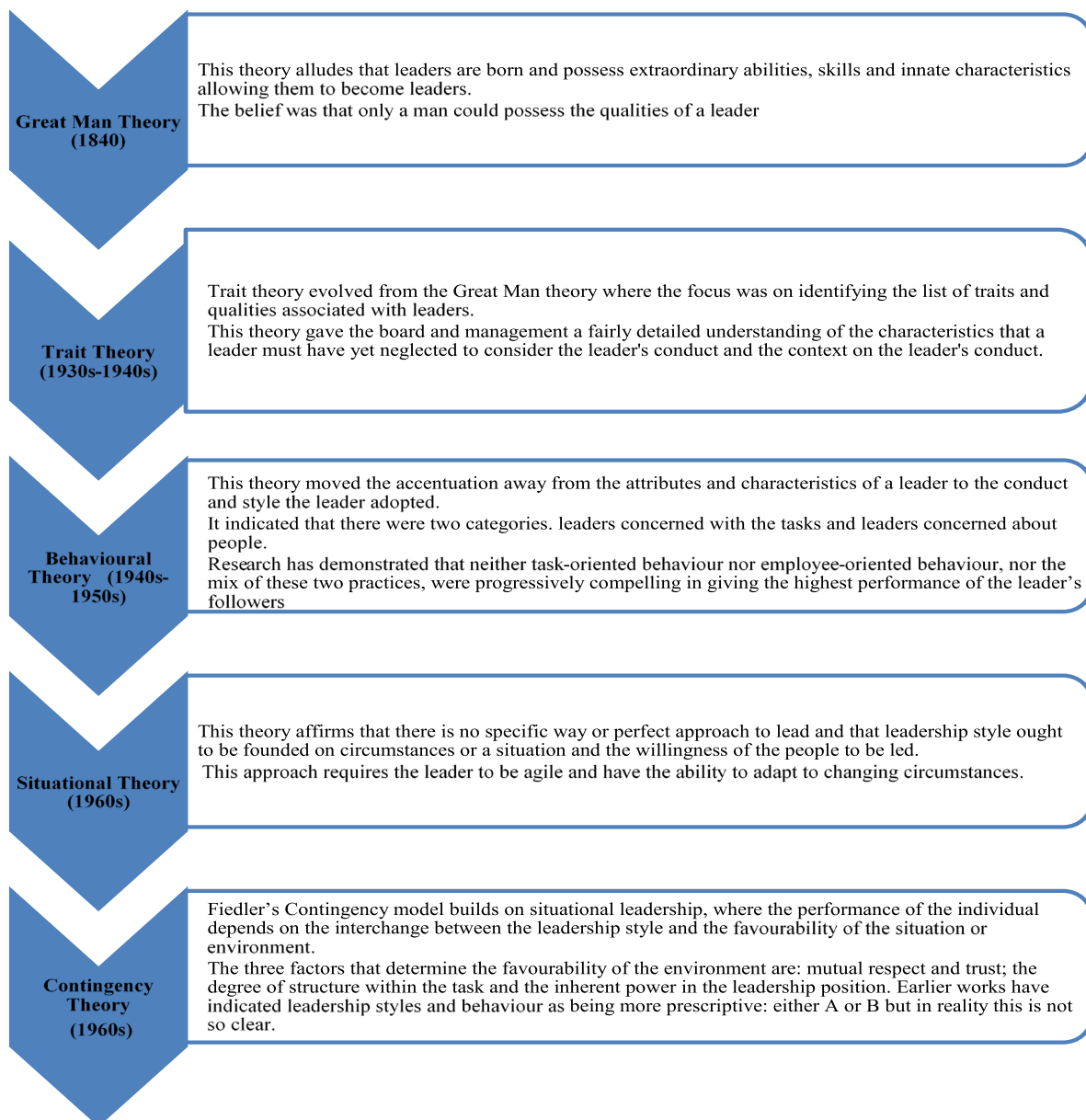
Leaders often make decisions based on their experiences and will default to old ways based on it being tried and tested and fear leaving one's comfort zone. In the VUCA environment is important for the leader to listen to the opinions of his subordinates as well as team members, and on the same breathe it is paramount for the leader to acknowledge and show understanding, compassion, empathy to what the team/subordinates are feeling, saying and doing. As a leader, you need to understand your team dynamics and how they operate. To gain a complete understanding of what is going on, the leader needs to immerse himself/herself into the team to make sense of the situation and think from the team perspectives to gain deeper insights into how the team constructs meanings and imparts it thereof (Thanh and Thanh, 2015).

A review of these theories will be done to gain a deeper understanding of the inherent gaps in the historical and present-day leadership theories and reinforce VUCA and Theory U as the chosen theoretical frameworks that governed the study.

## **2.3 Review of Historic Leadership Theories**

Numerous theoretical underpinnings have been utilised to depict leadership. Four (4) conventional classifications of leadership theories exist to be specific: trait theory, behavioural theory, situational theory and contingency, see Figure 2.3. The discussion to follow will show the

inherent flaws with these various theories and that these theories were developed to cater to a specific environment and time. These theories demonstrate the static nature of the leadership approach and the inability to allow for flexibility and accommodate the fluidity, complexity, and uncertainty required in the VUCA environment. Tourish (2020, p. 1) postulates that the conventional leadership theories have proven ineffective in an environment of “radical uncertainty”, where leaders have inadequate “information, expertise and resources to guide them. The Covid-19 pandemic can be categorised as a time of radical uncertainty, and during this period, leaders made crucial decisions with little to no information.



**Figure 2. 3: The Evolution of Leadership**

Source: Adapted from Hemphill and Coons (1957); Stodgill, 1948 cited in Iszatt-White et al. (2017); Likert (1961); Cook and Hunsaker (2001); Hersey, Blanchard and Johnson (2001); Ngambi (2011)

The above theories had inherent flaws as their focal points were specifically on the traits, behaviour and role of the leader as an individual in accomplishing the set organisational goals, not taking into account the role and effort of followers/employees as well as the importance of having a heightened positive relationship between the leader and followers in attaining the desired goals. This led to the emergence of new theories that were found to be more holistic in nature and linked to effective leadership, namely: **transactional leadership and transformational leadership**. (Dartey-Baah, 2014)

**Transactional Leadership (the 1970s)** is a mutual activity-oriented outcome-driven procedure of exchange between leaders and subordinates to influence the subordinates to meet their specified obligations for an agreed-upon remuneration. It centres around efficient management and less on building relationships and inspiring others. On the other hand, Warrilow (2012), as cited in Dartey-Baah (2014), described **Transformational Leadership (1978)** as leadership that “creates positive change in the followers whereby they take care of each other’s interests and act in the interests of the group as a whole”. The critical parts in this theory are change and leaders' responsibility in changing subordinates and followers in the company to go past their personal circumstances for the company's benefit. They are stimulants to mutual stimulation and elevation of morality and motivation among their team in creating, achieving and building commitment towards the strategic vision (Ngambi, 2011).

Based on the key attributes of transactional and transformational leadership, it is evident that these theories are on the opposite sides of a coin, with transactional leadership being best at getting the job done, as opposed to transformational leadership is about the organisation and its parts as a whole and transforming the individual’s morality, motivation to achieve a common goal (Afsar, Badir, Saeed, and Hafeez, 2017).

The above theories, which are Western-based, are helpful in understanding leadership; however, they do not fully take into account leadership from an African context perspective which is centred on “culturally embedded values of communalism, togetherness, relationalism, consensus, and unity, which are encapsulated in the ethos of Ubuntu” (Iszatt-White et al., 2017, p. 23). Further to this, it lacks a key aspect, that is, looking at leadership in “totality” according to Ngambi, “a consolidated RARE principle-based value system linked to a total leadership approach with the head, heart and hands” (2011, p. 12), which Theory U advocates.

Iszatt-White et al. (2017) go on further to elucidate that African leaders and followers have strong family bonds of interconnectedness, solidarity, tolerance, forgiveness while their Western counterparts display traits of survival of the fittest, eradication of non-performers with very low tolerance and acceptance of human weaknesses and errors. Common in South Africa rural areas

is **Community Leadership**. Through principles of a shared vision and common values, the Chief of that village listens and engages in dialogue with the community to reach a decision based on consensus. It is a “we” approach as opposed to an “I” approach that is used to mobilise the community where human resources are used optimally for the greater good of all. The leader displays confidence, trust, reliability, integrity, empathy, authority, empowerment, creativity in adversity and is predictable in his/her behaviour. (Ngambi, 2011)

Ngambi (2011) postulates that despite Africa being wealthy in natural and human resources, its poor development and growth can be attributed to the inherent leadership challenges that need to be looked into, deliberated and addressed. She proposes that to confront the development challenges of countries in Africa, a Principled and Value-based leadership model: **Responsible, Accountable, Relevant and Ethical (RARE)**, being the most effective leadership approach in solving Africa’s problem.

## **2.4 Principle Valued Based Leadership**

### **2.4.1 RARE Leadership**

This model alludes to there being a synergistic evolving relationship between the leadership’s attributes and competencies, the role and relationship with the individuals and the values required to address the environment. This leadership approach has five key dimensions: vision, change, connectivity, engagement and integrity. These five areas are also evident in transformational leadership. Although the model was first designed for businesses, it is adaptable to the political arena (Ngambi, 2011).

On a similar note, Servant Leadership, Authentic Leadership and Ethical Leadership embody similar principles like RARE being termed principled value-based leadership.

### **2.4.2 Servant Leadership**

Leaders show commitment to the greater good of others than for themselves and genuine caring for others. This type of leader is motivated by an innate desire to make a desire to serve first and leads with no ambitions of showing his power where the individual sincerely believes he/she is no better than the people they are leading. The organisation’s goals are more important than the leader’s personal goals. Innate characteristics of such a leader are vision, empowerment, trust, honesty, integrity, service, caring, building relationships, appreciation and encouragement of others and vision. This type of leadership is like community leadership. (Ngambi, 2011; Hendrikz and Engelbrecht, 2019) Government departments and SoEs often follow a servant leadership culture, where the needs of and service to the people of the country should come first.

### 2.4.3 Authentic Leadership

Leaders show self-control and are guided by internal morals and values rather than the influence of others. Principles such as respect, forgiveness, responsibility, empowerment, fairness, trustworthiness, citizenship, emotional healing and voluntary subordination are embedded in servant leadership. In contrast, trustworthiness, genuineness, values-driven, humility, optimism and commitment builders, self-restraint, integrity and tolerance embed authentic leadership. (Hendrikz and Engelbrecht, 2019; Keselman and Saxe-Braithwaite (2020)

### 2.4.4 Ethical Leadership

Brown, Treviño and Harrison (2005), cited in Wijsekera, Lalitha Fernando (2018, p. 120), describes ethical leadership as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement and decision making”. An ethical leader is a role model of appropriate behaviour and uses rewards to stimulate ethical behaviour.

Eisenbeiss (2012), Yukl, Mahsud, Hassan, and Prussia (2013), Engelbrecht, Heine and Mahembe (2017) and Keselman and Saxe-Braithwaite (2020) postulate that the behaviours found to be unique and important to Ethical Leadership are: authenticity, trustworthiness, honesty, integrity, fairness, kindness, compassion and concern for others, responsibility and sustainability, justice, empowering, mentoring, moderation orientations and behaviour that purposefully communicates ethical standards to followers.

### 2.4.5 Entrepreneurial and Network Governance Leadership

Van Wart (2012), Piening (2013), Teece (2016) and Ricard, Klijn, Lewis and Ysa (2017) highlight that **Entrepreneurial Leadership** could be seen as a perspective in transforming public organisations with its strong presence in dynamic capability and strategic styles of leadership, but points to the “path of dependency or organisations that can find themselves caught up in their past routines and organisational behaviour.” The key traits in this leadership perspective are the leader’s ability through key strategic actions to initiate change, restructure organisational practises and remobilise resources. Hence, the key factor is the leader’s ability to adapt to a changing environment and circumstances, thereby creating or re-strategising the organisation’s strategies and conditions, so it is beneficial to the change. These key traits are similar to that of transformational leadership, where the leader strategically adapts to the change by re-evaluating the intended strategic plans and mobilising the team to the new direction to achieve the shared vision and goal.

Building on Entrepreneurial leadership, **Network Governance Leadership** is based on pulling together actors/stakeholders to a joint solution, facilitating and in a collaborative leadership style. The leadership style is one of examining, facilitating, engaging, activating/connecting actors/stakeholders and necessary resources and enhancing collaboration to facilitating the finding of solutions to problems. The key principles underpinning this leadership style's success are building trust and cooperation among the actors/stakeholders. (Ricard et al., 2017) These traits are also evident in a transformational leader.

The above mainstream leadership theories place a great deal of responsibility and power on the leader; thus, placing undue and, at times, unrealistic expectations on their ability to solve highly complex wicked problems of which they have little knowledge off. Added pressure is placed on the leader as their subordinates expect them to have all the answers and the way forward.

In his internal memo to Eskom employees, the previous CEO of Eskom, Phakamani Hadebe, displays traits of a transformational leader: charisma, motivation, team orientation, and commitment to the strategic goal and shared vision. Mr Hadebe writes, “South Africa needs a viable and sustainable Eskom, and you can help us achieve this. You are the engine room of this great institution, and you can turn our situation around,” he said. “We need you, and we rely on you...and South Africa relies on all of us pulling together as a team! I believe in you and know we are going to get this right!” (Omarjee, 2019a, p. 1). Similar transformational leadership traits are evident in the new CEO, Andre de Ruyter, as Wasserman (2019, p. 1) cites in her article, “André is a very good people person, and he understands that you win on the ground,” his colleague says. “He will be looking to the factory floor to rebuild trust and confidence.”

However, suppose the current CEO, Andre de Ruyter, follows a transformational leadership style, with responsible and ethical leadership being part of Eskom’s corporate governance framework; in that case, one needs to question if this leadership style is appropriate for Eskom in the current environment? Will it be enough to address the vast surmounting of challenges at Eskom and the Covid-19 pandemic, or should a new leadership framework be created that will be relevant for the current context, ‘new world post-covid-19’ that will explore ways and means on guiding leaders how to handle and deal with total deep-seated uncertainty and ambiguity, knowing that margin of error on decisions made are extremely high while knowing if the plan fails, the consequences can be catastrophic.

## **2.5 Newer Leadership Models**

Research has shown there is an association between the way leaders think and act and organisational performance; also, a link in the way leaders lead, manage and motivate their

employees/team and the performance of the individual/team, employee retention and the performance of the organisation as a whole (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007; Iqbal et al., 2015; Verba, 2015; Trivisonno and Barling, 2016; Armstrong, 2017; Edge Learning Media, 2020). Peter Senge, founder of the Society for Organisational Learning at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Sloan, says that organisations must constantly evolve and adapt to change. For this to occur effectively and efficiently, both organisations and leaders must learn, unlearn, and relearn, allowing growth to occur (MIT, n.d). Some of the newer models of leadership and thinking are namely: complexity leadership, integrative thinking, mental models, black swans, Theory U and Moore's SCAILES Framework, which provide insight into why successful organisations survive very unstable, chaotic times. In addition, it also provides a solution to the traditional leadership theories that are very rigid, linear and developed during very different times, addressing a particular need or requirement (Towler, 2019).

Authors Scharmer and Kaufer (2013) highlight the profound disconnection that exists in the systems that govern the planet resulting in unethical practices and behaviours, exploitation of mother nature and her resources and people, income inequality as well flawed policies (monetary, fiscal and regulatory). This is often the result of greed and the desire to satisfy one's self (ego-systems) as opposed to caring and working towards the greater good of others (eco-systems) (Pillay, 2014). A focus on the whole and the well-being of others has implications for the future of the world.

Reflecting on Eskom, the greed, ego and self-enrichment of the CEOs and leadership from 2010 onwards had placed the once-profitable SoE on a downward trajectory of increased debt, misappropriation of funds, poor plant and equipment maintenance, low coal reserve stocks and poor storage, resulting ultimately in load-shedding to the entire country costing the economy direly as businesses lost billions in their inability to operate. Consumers were left with poor service delivery, rolling blacks outs, appliances being destroyed to power surges and increased energy tariffs to the already financially strained consumers. The irony, consumers have to pay exorbitant energy bills for no electricity and poor service delivery.

### **2.5.1 Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT)**

Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT) emphasizes the entire organisation as opposed to parts of it and the growing processes and systems within and 'rejects linear causality' indicating that leaders need to function interactively across all levels in the company or system (Uhl-Bien, Marion and McKelvey, 2007; Davis and Sumara, 2014; Towler, 2019). The framework has three components, namely: adaptive, administrative and enabling.



Towler (2019, citing Uhl-Bien and Marion, 2009) highlights that CLT takes cognisance of the interactions within the organisation (the processes, the systems, the people) that are dynamic in nature, as they transform, employ innovation, novel ideas and progress with an emphasis being on the complexity within the relationships and effective collaboration and engagement with the stakeholders involved. The move away from a top-down autocratic, controlling and one-size-fits-all approach. Leaders in these environments must be adaptable to ensure interdependency as they connect with the team address the arising issues/conflicts: what are the leading causes of the problem? What are the key strengths? what are the key weaknesses? How can we integrate these facets to produce an effective plan? (Lichtenstein and Plowman, 2009; LDC, 2016; Towler, 2019)

The key characteristics of CLT (Towler, 2019):

1. Social interactions within a team or network at multi-levels in the organisation
2. Collective action/plan
3. Any individual within the organisation can be a leader based on their social knowledge, connections and value.
4. Any person (agent) involved in the stated collective action/plan can create, enable and encourage innovation within the team, strengthening it into something extraordinary.
5. To ensure effective organisational change and growth, the leader is a facilitator/enabler of creating and developing processes and systems.
6. Takes into account the contextual pressures (external and internal) influencing individuals.

In terms of evidence for where CLT has been successful in organisations managing change under challenging environments, are in areas of adaptability, interconnections and communication, innovation, promotion of quality outcomes/goals, change and team performance (Losada 1999; Lichtenstein et al., 2006; Uhl-Bien and Marion, 2009; Shipton, Armstrong, West, and Dawson, 2008; Arena and Uhl-Bien, 2016; Towler, 2019). Towler (2019), however, cites that one of the significant weaknesses of CLT is that the theory has to be corroborated using examples and data modelling software, with Daigle and Matthews (2017) adding that the variables of CLT are not defined clearly. Neither are they measured without difficulty hence leaving the understanding of the findings up to the reader.

## **2.5.2 Integrative Thinking (IT)**

Integrative Thinking is about looking into the darkness and chaos for the one flicker of light that may exist. Even when there is no light, the leader creates a light to brighten the pathway and

dissipate the existing inherent chaos. According to Martin (2009), cited in Edge Learning (2020), integrating think is premised on:

1. Solutions can be generated by assessing conflicting ideas and opposing strategies/frameworks/models.
2. Leaders can extract critical elements from the opposing strategies/frameworks/models to create a stronger and more viable solution. They combine weak ideas to make one strong idea.
3. Leaders employing IT can give meaning to the inherent chaos.

The critical elements of IT are:

1. **Salience:** The leader identifies the problem and asks key pertinent questions: what is causing the problem (the separate factual evidence from misleading or ambiguous information), why is it occurring, what is the impact, what are the possible solutions and what impact the decision or action will have?
2. **Causality:** Cause and effect pendulum. Leaders must understand the impact of A on B, C and D and how they are interlinked but, more importantly, for them to look beyond what might seem as apparent.
3. **Architecture:** A leader must think holistically and form a model or “big-picture” of the problem and its sub-components and linkages. The leader must be able to zoom in and out of the problem areas while still maintaining the focus on the entire situation and adapt and change ones thinking and strategies as the one unpacks the subproblem areas and solutions.
4. **Resolution:** In this final step, the leader reviews steps 1-3 and assesses the solid and weak points and the tensions within each subproblem and their resultant impact on the “big picture” and seeks ways to transform the tensions, weak and stable points into workable solutions for the entire system. (De Wit and Meyer, 2010; Garbee and Danna, 2019; Edge Learning Media: Leadership, 2020).

According to Martin (2009) cited in Edge Learning Media: Leadership (2020), integrative thinking shares similar principles to that of systems thinking, where leaders must work in environments that are often open systems and these systems are never static and often in conflict however each system is dependent on the other to ensure the success of the organisation as a whole. No system works in isolation.

### 2.5.3 Black Swans Model

According to Taleb (2007), the black swan events (BSE) (either environmental, political, economic, technological or societal in nature) are infrequent, unpredictable events that occur

unexpectedly with dire consequences. BSEs are only recognised after it has taken place. Actions to address the black swan events are often very reactive and can have dire consequences for the business if not managed effectively and correctly. Organisations traditional plans to manage a crisis will not suffice to manage these black swan events.

The Covid-19 pandemic that occurred in 2020 is such an event that brought economies to almost a standstill where only essential and emergency workers and industries were allowed to operate, stock markets across the globe crashed and governments in numerous countries implementing partial or complete lockdown. Every industry was affected, where overnight, change, agility, adaptability, fluidity, creativity was the new normal and life we knew before 1 March 2020 in South Africa was a distant memory. No one could have predicted this pandemic, the severity of it and the impact it would have on the local as well as the global economies and business models. Literally, the world was held captive by this virus, with government and business leaders taking drastic action in the way they thought and acted. The way of doing business was not as usual as a new way of doing, thinking, and acting having evolved that employed the collaboration and engagement of various minds across various industries, government, religious and non-profit sectors to come together as one to fight this pandemic and save the people as well as businesses of South Africa. Business models and strategies became redundant overnight. The situation was so fluid that decisions and strategies continuously changed as it was being implemented.

Thus, this model advises leaders to be alert to unplanned or unexpected events and to be agile, swift, decisive, and adaptive in their thinking when it does occur. They need to avoid complacency in their thinking and not overreact at the likelihood of a crisis happening, resulting in carelessness in their actions. The composure and calmness of the leader and his team are paramount. Innovative, creative, and novel ways to address the event require various stakeholders' collective collaboration and engagement across and outside the business network. The leader needs to be able to identify the individual pieces of the crisis and see how it fits into the complete picture/problem and the resulting impact thereof.

The black swan model has similar features to mental models (Taleb, 2007), in terms of:

Platonicity – people have their own image of reality, which is often perceived as being perfect but, in fact, is actually chaotic. They cannot see the wrongs, gaps or inherent challenges that may exist.

- Platonic folds – is the gap between reality and a person's idea or their reality. It is within this gap that the unexpected black swan events occur.
- The 'triplet of opacity' – tomorrow is a mystery. Ginter, Duncan and Swayne (2018), the triplet of opacity is about the attitudes of leaders that give rise to a black swan: namely:

1. Leaders often do not understand the situation or problem but assume that they do.
2. When leaders reflect on the problem, they perceive the problem to be less chaotic and complex when in reality, it is the opposite; and
3. Leaders will often give precedence to data and factual evidence than to their intuition and experience.

### **2.5.4 Mental Model**

The concept of Mental Models, first described by psychologist Kenneth Craik in 1943, postulates that human beings have in their minds a preconceived image of what reality is and often will attempt to match their image of reality to what they experience in the world (Landriscina, 2013). Senge (1990:8), cited in Edge Learning Media: Leadership (2020), further states that the mental models are “deeply ingrained assumptions, generalisations, or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world, and how we take action”. Our unique view of the world forms our assumptions that drive our behaviour, fortifies the consequence of an action, and influences our learnings. This could be either negatively or positively. Thus, leaders who understand how mental models influence thinking, action, and behaviour need to develop the dexterity to work with the various mental models in their team toward the organisation's desired goals and vision. However, unpacking and understanding the various mental models, especially deeply ingrained established mental models, can be challenging and often require a high degree of maturity (Pillay, 2014).

Senge (1990) points out that leaders need to be cognisant of the effects that mental models create, namely:

1. Humans will learn and adopt new theories; however, they abandon them and default to their original mental models when it comes to applying them in their decision-making.
2. People assume the previous findings can be used to anticipate future results; however, they fail to consider the underlying variables that may have influenced the outcome at that time. Situations change.
3. Mental models cannot be easily changed, as they are one's beliefs.
4. People choose what they want to see, hear and believe. What one may believe is the truth may not necessarily be because of one's selective perception of reality. Finer details are often missed, thus skewing the complete picture.
5. Mental models often shape the identity, culture and behaviour of the organisation and its people.
6. Mental models shape our reasoning and our resultant behaviour and decision-making process.

7. People will disregard information that disrupts or is against their current thinking and will automatically fill in information based on what they believe to be correct. This results in ill-informed decision making and outcomes.

To help change one's mental model, which is extremely difficult and a long journey, the consciousness model like Theory U becoming very relevant. Techniques such as self-reflection and a work culture that encourages and embraces the generation of new and opposing thoughts and ideas will assist in changing people's mental models. An individual must continuously self-reflect and go within his mental models and abandon thinking and ways that are not conducive to the present. Critical conversations within the self are required. Life-long learning, continuous introspection, experiences, the attainment and acceptance of collective knowledge will help change old mental models and increase the adoption of newer mental models. Humans tend to acquire new knowledge yet, and they tend to abandon that knowledge once they return to their daily tasks or when confronted with a decision. The need for one to abandon their mental model and accept the new information must be powerful and motivating enough for the individual, or else they will not abandon their existing mental models. These strong, established mental models, often resulting in impaired judgment, will not allow for new innovative and creative ways of thinking and doing in organisations like Eskom, hence not permitting the full adoption of the SCAILEs Framework and Theory U constructs for a VUCA environment. Their innate bias held in their mind prevents them from being fully open to change (Senge, 2006a).

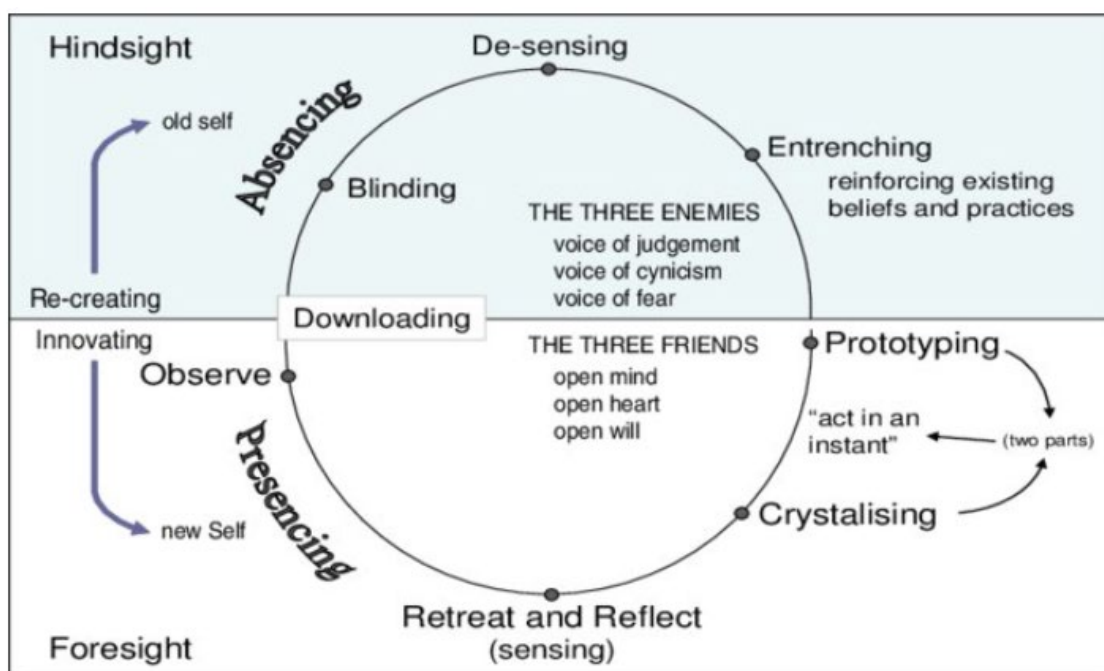
#### **2.5.4.1 Theory U**

Theory U advocates that the leader must first open their mind, heart, and will by listening beyond their thought frames and past, to objectively observe reality, free from bias and prejudice to sensing, by looking at the situation in its entirety. The leader must self-reflect and let go of the past, so the focus on the future can take precedence. As the future begins to take priority, the leader must crystallise and catalyse the energy in the group by creating an enabling working environment that fosters constructive discussions, idea generation, creativity and collaboration. Once this synergy is in place and ideas and solutions are brought to the table, applications of these strategies take place (prototyping), resulting in a team working as one to create new ideas and solutions that are practical, relevant and applicable to the problem at hand as depicted in the lower half of Figure 2.4, below. (Scharmer, 2007a; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013)

The Presencing Institute (n.d) refers to Theory U as "Leading From the Future As It Emerges - the process shows how individuals, teams, organisations and large systems can build the essential leadership capacities needed to address the root causes of today's social, environmental, and spiritual challenges... how to update the operating code in our societal systems through a shift in

consciousness from ego-system to eco-system awareness”. Leaders and society are constantly caught and stuck in this cycle of challenges, destruction, pain and failure. Leaders and society cannot seem to entangle themselves and move away because “we are blind to the deeper dimension of leadership and transformational change” (The Presencing Institute, n.d). Little is known about the inner depths of the mind from where a person functions informing their actions and decisions. Theory U attempts to explore this place.

RARE principled based leadership also asks leaders to reflect and use their head, heart and hands when leading a team and making decisions (Ngambi, 2011). Leading in a VUCA environment, it is important for leaders to self-reflect, break down existing mental models and immerse themselves in their teams to understand their thinking. This creates a hive for constructive discussions resulting in creative thinking and innovative strategies. Leaders must have a sense of presencing and co-presencing (collective presencing in the team), authenticity and eradicate the absencing qualities that create a toxic environment and dysfunctional leadership. If leaders fail to adopt presencing, they become caught in a rut where they are blinded by their previous actions and the negative impacts they had and will continue to repeat those behaviours and beliefs as depicted in the upper half of Figure 2.4. No new learning, growth or change can take place; hence no improvement within the individual or in the organisation. Covid-19 has “opened cracks in our mental models and existing systems” (Geerlof, 2020, p. 4) and has taught society the importance of discarding old ways/habits, leadership approaches, thinking and broadening their perspectives.



**Figure 2. 4: Theory U: absencing and presencing loops and the domains of hindsight and foresight**  
Source: Hays (2016)

Abscencing not only takes the form of not being present at work, but it also speaks about not being mentally and emotionally present while at work. It also refers to the inability to think conceptually, strategically and critically. The inability to see the big picture as well as the whole picture and the sums that make up all the parts and how they interlink and contribute to the whole. It is the inability of being able to look at the past, the present and the future as a single continuum to inform decision making. It is the inability to look within oneself and reflect and understand who you are and asking do I add to the greater whole? What are my weaknesses and my strengths?

For learning and transformation to occur, it cannot be based on the past using outdated theories and models but on the “emerging future” (Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013, p. 19) like lessons learned during Covid-19, which is a typical VUCA event. This notion is premised on the concept of presencing, where a person can sense the environment and make predictions about the future whilst being fully aware of the current situation he/she is working and living in (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski and Flowers, 2004). With a continuous desire for transformational learning, awareness of oneself and its organisation relative to its environment occurs unceasingly. The leader now has an “open heart, open mind, open will”, as depicted in Figure 2.4 above (Hayes, 2016), and Ngambi’s RARE leadership model advocates this principle. This is a recipe for lasting success, postulates (Lloyd and Maguire 2002 cited in Pillay, 2014).

### **Benefits organisations can attain from adopting Theory U:**

- Leaders and employees can focus on the problems with a clear mind, objectively, and self-reflect and celebrate their successes individually and collectively.
- Innovation and creativity become a standard norm and forms part of the organisational policy.
- All team members' contributions are recognised as valuable, thus creating a comrade among the team and towards the organisation and its goals and a sense of appreciation.
- Technologies and mechanisms that are used to enable and engage the interactions within the social networks play an important role in resolving conflict amicably and creating respect among team members.
- Leaders and employees work towards a common shared goal. (Scharmer, 2007a; Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013)

## **2.6 Conceptual Framework: SCAILES Framework**

The leaders of today are working in environments that are overwhelmed with VUCA due to technological innovations, digitisation, globalisation, environmental crisis, demographic and cultural challenges, increasing rapid developments and urbanisation, leadership feminism, the

constant need for new and skilled talent, individualism and value pluralism, and the accelerating need for change and transformation. Such factors greatly affect every organisation's ability to stay relevant, profitable, as well as competitive. Organisations like Eskom are in a time when they need to rethink their current leadership structures to accommodate these changes and ensure dominance, sustainability and competitive advantage. (Vielmetter and Sell, 2014; Moore, 2015)

Leadership in the VUCA environment has to continuously view the world in novel ways and from different angles and lenses, thereby changing their thinking models. This will allow them to adapt and respond faster with informed, collaborative, decisive decision-making and the ability to anticipate a future that is so uncertain and accelerating at an astronomical rate, one by its very nature approaching chaos. (Moore, 2015)

It is critical for a leader in the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution (IR) to possess traits of agility, adaptability, decisiveness, responsibility, accountability, ethics, visionary, proactive, innovation, strategic, awareness, anticipatory, life-long learning and have the ability to connect, engage and collaborate with their team/employees whilst also displaying integrity, empathy and humility with the ability to motivate teams to a shared vision. Leaders of such qualities will ensure competitive advantage, sustainability and performance of the organisation.

Moore's SCAILES framework leverages, extends and broadens on concepts grounded in Complexity Leadership Theory, Complex Adaptive Systems Theory, Systems Thinking, Integrative Thinking, Theory U, Transformational Leadership, Network-Governance and Mental Model. SCAILES takes these various theories and thinkings to a higher and improved level, making them more accessible and relevant by adequately considering the required strategic, pre-emptive and innovative capabilities focused on learning and transformational skills as the prerequisite for future success (Moore, 2015). The VUCA environment is characterised by constant change, complexity, chaos, disruptions, unexpected unknowns, technological advancement, demographical changes, and rapid innovation in thinking, processes, systems and products. Thus traditional leadership models will not be relevant in this environment as they are static and were not developed, taking into account the VUCA environment.

The seven (7) key concepts in this framework (Figure 2.5) form a system of thought, highlighted as being: Strategic, Complex, Adaptive, Innovative, Learning, and Emergent System (SCAILES). The variables within each of the seven (7) concepts are vital qualities a good leader should possess, as discussed in chapter 3. These variables are also key attributes in entrepreneurial leadership, network governance leadership, servant leadership, transformational leadership, complexity leadership and the newer thinking leadership models discussed earlier.



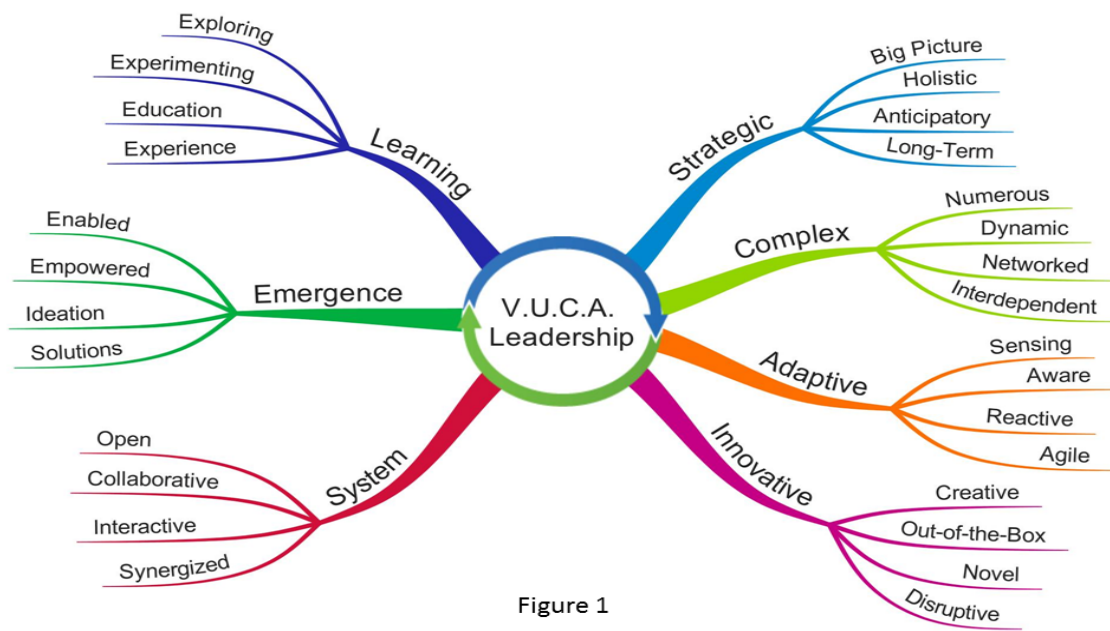


Figure 1

**Figure 2.5: The SCAILES Framework**  
Source: Adapted from Moore (2015)

Table 2.2 below expands on each concept's definition and the critical skills a leader requires to meet that concept.

**Table 2.2: The SCAILES Concepts**

CONCEPT	DEFINITION
<b>STRATEGIC</b>	Strategic thinking enables a leader to see the big picture while thinking holistically about the impact each input and stakeholder has on each other. Strategic thinking enables the leader to predict the future whilst simultaneously evaluating the past and present outcomes to create a credible road map to realise the desired goal.
<b>COMPLEX</b>	Complexity is about the number of factors one considers helping create well-informed approaches, plans and decisions while working about challenges, concerns or circumstances. Organisations, as a whole, with the advancement in technology, are growing more complex, and their fluid, chaotic nature poses tremendous challenges to leadership. Leaders constantly have to work through what they know while considering what might be unknown and the inherent interconnectedness and interdependence. Discernment, wisdom and an acute sense of judgement are required of leaders in the VUCA environment.
<b>ADAPTIVE</b>	Adaptability is about a leader's ability to sense their surroundings and people whilst being fully aware of changes that will affect their goals, strategies, actions and behaviours. The leader needs to be adaptable and agile in their thinking, to react quickly and resourcefully to the changing environment.
<b>INNOVATIVE</b>	Innovative is the ability to think creatively to create new thought processes resulting in fresh ideas and designs. To keep up with the competition or be head of it in the VUCA environment, leaders need to foster an environment where creativity can occur individually or in a collective nature that is grounded in knowledge with social networks that are built on trust, a common goal as well as respect and acknowledgement.
<b>LEARNING</b>	Learning is acquiring new knowledge and skills to add to a person's existing knowledge to improve their ability to perform their required task and think and contribute more meaningfully to discussions. Learning in a VUCA environment is vital. It will help leaders become more effective in thinking analytically, strategically, critically, and creatively about how networks and systems operate within diverse organisations.
<b>EMERGENCE</b>	Emergence is about creating an environment that allows for the sharing of opinions and ideas in a space where the employees feel safe to voice their thoughts and enable the creation of novel ideas and solutions. Further to this, the leaders need to show valid interest in what is being shared and give appreciation to the individual for their contribution based on the ideas and or solutions that were shared. Leaders need to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. set the scene</li> <li>2. create a conducive atmosphere for innovative thinking and constructive discussions</li> <li>3. ask the appropriate questions, and thereafter,</li> <li>4. set the team free to activate successful and substantive communication to achieve great results.</li> </ol>
<b>SYSTEM</b>	The system concept is about leaders functioning in a system that is open, non-linear, interdependent, as well as interconnected and collaborative in nature. The environment must allow for synergies to occur where an environment for critical thinking, analysis, learning and innovation is created and encouraged.

Source: Adapted from Moore (2015)

Moore (2015) postulates that amidst the uncertainties, the macro and micro environmental disruptions and challenges and the nonlinearities of systems, processes and decision making of

the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the SCAILES framework is a novel way to view leadership in a VUCA environment. Having a leadership model that is very prescriptive with little room for flexibility to lead in a VUCA environment may prove to be a significant limitation.

In a complex environment like Eskom, a slight change in policy or decision-making can significantly affect the outcome. LDC (2016, p. 7) indicates that “if policies are based on a linear, mechanistic approach rather than a negotiated and consultative approach, they can have unexpected and unwanted outcomes in such an environment”. Thus, SCAILES Framework is a composite of key leadership theories and thinking relevant for the 21<sup>st</sup>-century leader and an organisation as dynamic and complex as Eskom.

However, individuals have a base thinking/mental model where they see the world in one particular view while having other mental models that perceive the world differently. This contradictory pull often results in dysfunction in leadership because the lack of self-awareness often overrides our theoretical learnings. As an analogy, one may talk of connection but actually may feel deeply separate. This results in particular forms of leadership dysfunction. As the various newer leadership thinking models discussed above indicate, abandoning and or changing one’s thinking model is by far no easy task. It requires a great deal of motivation or, if one may say, reason or scare for someone to change their mental model. Thus, can one really change their mental model completely? Did leaders do this during the Covid-19 pandemic, and if so, to what extent? Will these new thinking be their new mental models going forward? The Covid-19 pandemic provides us with an opportunity to conduct research on how leadership theory can better influence practice in achieving the stated outcomes and contribute towards creating leadership theoretical frameworks that are relevant and suitable for the current environment by taking into account diverse views, multisectoral thinking approach, conducting root-cause analysis, and providing co-created solutions that span across departments and stakeholders which is evidence-based.

## **2.7 Summary of Chapter**

In conclusion, for organisations and SoEs like Eskom to function at optimum and remain competitive, it requires a leadership framework that will consider the dynamics of the VUCA environment and the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution. Leaders of yesteryear will not suffice in these environments. The following, Chapter 3: Contextualising Leadership in a Volatile Environment, provides a discussion around the definition of leadership, the derailment of leadership and leadership in a VUCA environment and crisis.

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## **CHAPTER 3:**

### **CONTEXTUALISING LEADERSHIP IN A VOLATILE ENVIRONMENT**

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*“All that was normal has now evaporated; we have entered postnormal times, the in-between period where old orthodoxies are dying, new ones have not yet emerged, and nothing really makes sense. To have any notion of a viable future, we must grasp the significance of this period of transition, which is characterised by three C’s: complexity, chaos and contradictions.”*

(Ziauddin Sardars, 2010)

### 3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the theoretical and conceptual framework that governs the study. The chapter to follow will discuss the various definitions of leadership, leadership effectiveness, challenges and factors influencing leadership behaviour, the inherent qualities and behaviour traits of good leaders, leadership in complex environments and crises and the derailment of leadership will be unpacked.

### 3.2 Leadership Defined

There are numerous definitions and connotations of what leadership is, with no one explicit definition being the correct one. Soobben (2019) asserts that leadership is about motivating a collective of people in the organisation to act in a certain manner to achieve a common and shared goal. Iszatt-White, Saunders, Botha, Ladzani, Rudansky-Kloppers, and Strydom (2017, citing Northouse, 2010) share similar sentiments, defining leadership as a process by which an individual exerts influence over other people while inspiring, motivating and directing their activities to attain a shared vision and a common end goal. LDC (2016, p. 1) corroborate Iszatt-White et al. (2017) by stating that “leadership in complex environments is a **process**—not an intervention. It is an ongoing process.” This notion of leadership as a continual process or a set of associations is also corroborated by Edge Learning Media (2020), Gandolfi and Stone (2016) and Mutch (2020). In the VUCA environment, it is paramount for leaders to unlearn old ways and learn new ways of doing things. Continuous upskilling to address and accommodate the changing dynamics of the work and external environment is vital. Complacency will be the death of the leader and the organisation.

Researchers (Senge, 1990 cited in Koech and Namusonge, 2012; Ojokuku et al., 2012; Chemers, 2014; Amanchukwu, Stanley and Olulube, 2015; Baillie, 2017; Edge Learning Media, 2020) have highlighted that leaders play a distinct role in influencing, directing, motivating, and incentivising employees to perform specific tasks, whilst also inspiring team members to achieve organisation’s objectives through efficient performance. They indicate further that leaders adopt specific leadership styles when providing direction to the team, which affects the entire organisation and its performance. Chemers (2014) alludes to leadership being an interpersonal process, where the individual influences others willingly and full of enthusiasm to achieve stated objectives. Surbhi (2015) states that a leader is someone a group of people see as a source of inspiration and follows his/her direction and guidance to achieve set goals. This person requires foresight and the ability to think and act across various levels and go within themselves to understand the situation, how their social reality influences, and the ability to let go of the past and embrace the new. Listening

to the team, accepting their views, and finding common ground to achieve the goal are the key drivers of success in the VUCA environment.

Mullins (2013) recommends that successful authority is a dual process between leader-follower, where leaders inspire subordinates by creating a vision that employees can align with. Leadership includes the conduct and characteristics exemplified by the leader and how these influence their subordinates' practices and activities. Ngambi (2011) defines leadership as “the process of influencing others’ commitment towards realising their full potential in achieving value, adding a shared vision to passion and integrity.”

LDC ( 2016, citing Pink, 2005) indicates that in the twenty-first century, the conceptual age – the age of creators and empathisers, companies are moving vigorously from conditions concentrated on completing things through micro-management of staff toward environments where participation, collaboration, engagement, coaching and empowerment are emphasized and encouraged (LDC, 2016; Towler, 2019). To solve problems in complex environments, skills such as probing, sensing, assessing, responding and re-strategising are needed, thus requiring leaders as opposed to managers and or specialists (LDC, 2016). The fluidity in a VUCA environment calls for adaptability, agility, resilience and the ability to change and make sudden changes quickly while rallying the team to a shared vision/goal.

Joseph Jaworski (2011, p. 3), in his book “Synchronicity: The Inner Path of Leadership”, beautifully encapsulate what leadership is: “*Leadership is about creating a domain in which human beings continually deepen their understanding of reality and become more capable of participating in the unfolding of the world. Ultimately, leadership is about creating new realities*”. To do this, the leader needs to let go of their old realities by reflecting, sensing, presencing and catalysing new thoughts and ways of doing things. They need to learn, unlearn and relearn. The tenets of Theory U and enlightened/awakened leadership are very evident.

Thus, leadership will be visible not only in their actions but also in their behavioural traits/qualities and attitudes. The key ingredients in the above definitions of leadership are: process, directing, guiding, inspiring, enabling, empowering, collaborating and influence. However, one must ask what kind of influence is important and how effective is one in “influencing” others to realise and build on their potential as individuals in a VUCA environment? Toxic, autocratic, dictatorial types of influence in a VUCA environment will add to the organisation's detriment in navigating and succeeding in this chaotic landscape. The relevance and importance of post-positivist theories like Theory U in the VUCA environment are taking precedence.

### 3.2.1 Leadership versus Management

Many people use the terms leadership and management interchangeably. The underlying principles and concepts of management and leadership often overlap; however, there are inherent differences (Algahtani, 2014; Edge Learning Media, 2020), as depicted in Table 3.1 below. It is important to understand the differences as well as interlinks of the roles when leading in the VUCA environment. Often, a leader may have to play the role of a manager and a leader.

**Table 3.1: Differences Between Leadership and Management**

Leadership	Management
Leadership is about direction – multidirectional influence	Management unidirectional influence. It is about speed and capability – i.e. ensuring that a goal is achieved as quickly as possible (using the right people).
Leadership is about decisiveness, adaptation and change- probe, sense and respond to achieve the goal.	Management is about speed, consistency and capability – i.e. ensuring that a goal is achieved as quickly as possible (using the right people).
Leadership deals with vision – creating strategies to turn the vision into action.	Management deals with structures and systems to complete the tasks to achieve the goals in the shortest possible time.
Leadership has a behavioural focus – i.e. helping to shape the behaviour of people so that goals can be achieved.	Management has a non-behavioural focus because it takes into account the selection of actions, structures and controls necessary to meet goals.
Leadership visualises the future (a changed and better one) and creates change by inspiring and enabling others to embrace the same vision.	Management is about the actions involved in moving toward the future. It is also about sustained efforts to maintain changes and the forward direction of the company.
Leadership is about big-picture, holistic, long-term thinking.	Management is about the detailed steps, processes and procedures required to meet goals and ensure the organisation's success.

Source: Bărgău (2015); Aalateeg (2017); Wajdi (2017); Edge Learning Media (2020, adapted from Covey, 1992, pp. 246–247)

Based on the table above, it is evident that leadership and management are very closely related and rely on each other to achieve organisational goals.

Over the last two decades, the South African business and governmental landscape have been impacted by significant changes from the local and global landscape, namely: a new democratic government system, affirmative action in employment practices, rolling energy blackouts, rising taxes and costs, state capture, political infarctions, globalisation, recession, diseases (SARS, HIV/AIDS, Covid-19, Ebola, to name a few), market fragmentation, demographic changes and credit crises. To address these changes and remain competitive and efficient, leaders are forced to relook at their leadership thinking and practices. These emergent leaders possess very different values and qualities and the manner they exercise their duties, compared to the older generation of leaders. Leaders failing to adapt to the changing landscape have resulted in leadership

derailment. Organisations need to align their upskilling per market trends and based on the individual's own performance development needs. A general blanket development approach using outdated training methods, resources and tools are ineffective and adds financial costs to the organisation down the line.

In the VUCA environment, an interlinked and robust relationship with unremitting dialogue between the leaders and the managers of an organisation is critical. Managers need to implement the plans created by leaders, and continuous feedback sessions are required to gauge if the strategies require to be changed or revised based on the changing market and internal organisation conditions. Both leadership and management have evolved over the years, with the “old paradigm of extreme bureaucracy, hierarchy and top-down command and control alone will not cut it today's complex world” (Proches, 2020, p. 1). Forster, Patlas and Lexa (2020, p. 1) share similar sentiments to Proches advocating for creating a “network of teams, empowerment of others and promote open discussions”.

The world of today, especially post the Covid-19 pandemic, is full of ambiguity and disorder. Society has become accustomed to forming their routines and mental organisations that inadvertently drove order into the disorder. However, with the complexity, severity, fluidity and ambiguity the Covid-19 pandemic presented, many leaders, managers and society at large found it very difficult to navigate the situation and create some kind of order. This resulted in much fear, anxiety and the roles of the leader and manager becoming interchangeable. Leaders and managers found themselves taking on a more caring role while driving the business forward. Leadership has evolved from the leader being the nuclei with one-way communication and directive to all team members being influencers and leaders.

### **3.3 Derailment of Leadership**

Leadership or managerial derailment, or leadership or managerial failure, refers to leaders and managers being unable to fulfil their organisational goals; the resultant effect of poor/bad leadership in a company; the appointment of individuals in leadership roles which had a negative impact/effect in the organisation in terms of organisational performance. Managerial derailment also refers to the reasons why people in senior positions have challenges in building teams and mobilising the team to achieve the targeted results. (Edge Learning Media, 2020; Inyang, 2013)

Chitkara (2019) asserts that leadership derailment tends to occur when leaders:

- Are unable to build or develop a strong and successful team.
- Fail to address and handle their performance issues.
- Personal desire for success leads to greed, unethical practices and negative attitudes.



- Adopt an autocratic style of management that is rigid, uncompromising, punitive, with an egotistical attitude.
- Micromanage and fail to delegate duties effectively.
- Rely excessively on others in the team (their advisors and superiors) to fulfil their responsibilities.
- Lack of trustworthiness, accountability and cannot meet required deadlines and promises.
- Are thrust into managerial positions without the relevant knowledge, skills and experience.
- Are unable to change and adapt to the changing business and environmental conditions.

Van Velsor et al. (2016, p. 7) establish in their research of 16,752 government leaders across the USA that the factors most likely to derail leadership in the government sector were in ranking order:

1. “Too narrow functional orientation
2. Difficulty changing or adapting
3. Failure to meet business objectives
4. Difficulty building a leading a team
5. Problems with interpersonal relationships.”

The effects of leadership derailment on the organisation and the teams could result in decreased competitive advantage in the market; a decline in market (customers, suppliers, investor, government, financial institution, to name a few) confidence resulting in loss of investment, sales and profitability; a decline in employee morale and trust resulting in a decline in employee cooperation, efficiency and productivity, an increase in absenteeism, conflict among team members, apathy, lack of compliance and subsequently an increase in staff turnover; a negative toxic working environment that breeds unethical behaviour and practices, nepotism and risk aversion among employees; a decline in employee work-life balance resulting in illnesses, depression, sleeplessness, nightmares, fatigue, weakening in concentration as well as an unhealthy relationship with their family; the attraction and recruitment of highly sought-after people can be compromised and may affect recruits’ development and training and them releasing their potential; and a decline in shared common goals to achieve the vision of the organisation but an increase in personal self-serving goals (Erickson, Shaw, Murray and Branch 2015; Snyder, 2015, Chitkara, 2019; Edge Learning Media, 2020).

Leadership derailment in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is very challenging and worrying for public and private organisations that operate in an environment enveloped with complexity and uncertainty, where team collegiality, creativity and innovation in products, services and processes are essential ingredients to long-term success and sustainability. Leadership often uses Dr Bruce Tuckman’s

sequential 4 stage process when forming their teams, namely: forming, storming, norming and performing though, the concept of teams and the types of problems have evolved drastically over the years where the above concepts of forming a team still stand, but they occur simultaneously now (Sandahl, 2019). However, the mindset of leaders and team members have changed, argues Sandahl (2019). Sandahl (2019) says that leaders and team members are only coming to terms now as to what, rather somewhat, it actually means to work in a world where stability, predictability, clarity and simplicity do not exist.

The Covid-19 pandemic has clearly shown organisations and leaders that stability, predictability, clarity and simplicity in how they knew things to be is of the past. Teams had to work in the dark with no certainty about what will work, and often plans had changed in a split-second, leaving teams feeling overwhelmed, anxious, and uncertain about how to move ahead. Thinking out of the box was archaic; leaders had to think without a box, not knowing what the influencing variables may be. The influencers of yesterday became irrelevant today. That is how unpredictable and uncertain the environment became. Leaders who did not have the skills required for a VUCA environment found it very difficult to cope and adjust to the new environment, thus leading the organisation to an untimely demise or adjusting to new ways of doing business very late. Speed to the market is essential to stay afloat and stay ahead of competitors.

Creating an enabling environment that allows adaptability, sudden changes, where mistakes can be made, where learning can occur by creating a platform for constructive debates and collaboration is vital for creativity to occur. A destructive toxic leader can be a detriment to this creative process and problem-solving arena that is vital in complex working environments such as SoEs.

Complex environments need leaders that will encourage team collegiality, enable a positive working environment that allows for innovation, creativity and everyone's voice and opinion is heard while motivating and inspiring all towards a common shared goal. Underpinning these are trust, empathy, compassion, accountability, flexibility, adaptability, and agility.

### **3.4 Qualities of a Good Leader**

In a fluctuating business landscape, there are numerous ways to lead organisations. For a leader to excel, they must be able to change at a personal level and be able to identify the differing contexts and environments they are engaging in, adjust their behaviour and actions to align to the context they are in as well, as be able to prepare their employees to understand these diverse situations and how to respond to it as well as move between it (Snowden and Boone, 2007; Moore,

2015; LDC, 2016; Towler, 2019). For purposes of this study, qualities are referred to as the key or distinct characteristics/attributes that an individual has.

LDC (2016), citing Snowden and Boone (2007), cross tabulates the different environments and the various roles of leaders in those environments as well as their responses to danger signals (Table 3.2, below).

Successful leaders often use unique, varying or a combination of leadership styles in different situations for different purposes and outcomes. The common styles used are laissez-faire, autocratic, democratic, participative and transformational, and principle value-based, as shown in Figure 3.1. However, the unspoken worldview is that leaders are autonomous free agents; this is itself informed by a prior ontological assumption that pervades much of leadership theory. There is a counter perspective, informed by systems thinking and the worldview of non-separation, and that is, you cannot find a free agent that is separate from the environment as informed by the interpretivist paradigm. This is also supported by findings of the neurosciences and informs the field of neuro-leadership. This has immense implications for understanding VUCA leadership and leading in a VUCA environment. What type of leadership style is appropriate in a VUCA environment? Is there an acclaimed research style for leading in a VUCA environment? Is the VUCA environment so fluid that agility and adaptability grounded in collaboration are the guiding principles and skills?



**Figure 3. 1: Common Leadership Styles**  
Source: Author (2019)

**Table 3.2: Environments versus Leader's Role**

Environment	The context's characteristics	The leader's job	Danger signals	Response to danger signals
<b>Simple</b>	Repeating patterns and consistent events  Clear cause and effect relationships evident to everyone; right answer exists  Known knowns Fact-based management	<b>Sense, categorise, respond</b>  Ensure that proper processes are in place Delegate Use best practices Communicate in clear, direct ways Understand that extensive interactive communication may not be necessary	Complacency and comfort  Desire to make complex problems simple Entrenched thinking  No challenge of received wisdom Overreliance on best practice if context shifts	Create communication channels to challenge orthodoxy  Stay connected without micromanaging Don't assume things are simple  Recognise both the value and the limitations of best practice
<b>Complicated</b>	Expert diagnosis required  Cause and effect discoverable but not immediately apparent to everyone; more than one right answer possible  Known unknowns Fact-based management	<b>Sense, analyse, respond</b>  Create panels of experts  Listen to conflicting advice	Experts over-confident in their own solutions or in the efficacy of past solutions  Analysis paralysis Expert panels Viewpoints of non-experts excluded	Encourage external and internal stakeholders to challenge expert opinions to combat entrenched thinking  Use experiments and games to force people to think outside the familiar
<b>Complex</b>	Flux and unpredictability  No right answers; emergent instructive patterns  Unknown unknowns  Many competing ideas  A need for creative and innovative approaches  Pattern-based leadership	<b>Probe, sense, respond</b>  Create environments and experiments that allow patterns to emerge  Increase levels of interaction and communication  Use methods that can help generate ideas: open up discussion (through large-group methods); set barriers; stimulate attractors; encourage dissent and diversity; and manage starting conditions and monitor for emergence	Temptation to fall back into habitual, command-and-control mode  Temptation to look for facts rather than allowing patterns to emerge  Desire for accelerated resolution of problems or exploitation of opportunities	Be patient and allow time for reflection  Use approaches that encourage interaction so patterns can emerge
<b>Chaotic</b>	High turbulence  No clear cause-and-effect relationships, so no point in looking for right answers Unknowables Many decisions to make and no time to think High tension Pattern-based leadership	<b>Act, sense, respond</b>  Look for what works instead of right answers Take immediate action to re-establish order (command and control) Provide clear, direct communication	Applying a command-and-control approach longer than needed  'Cult of the Leader'  Missed opportunity for innovation Chaos unabated	Set up mechanisms (such as parallel teams) to take advantage of opportunities afforded by a chaotic environment  Encourage advisers to challenge your point of view once the crisis has abated Work to shift the context from chaotic to complex

Source: Snowden and Boone (2007 cited in LDC, 2016)

Leaders continuously empower themselves with new knowledge, skills and new and improved means to manage their organisations. However, an organisation can only be successful if it has leaders that are accountable, ethical, have the foresight and a shared vision, is innovative and can motivate directors, managers and lower-level employees with a common purpose of delivering on the organisational goals. A motivated workforce is key a factor that could impede or enhance the commitment, determination, interest and passion of the employees in the organisation (Veliu et al., 2017). However, employees respond differently to the diverse leadership styles; thus, it is paramount for leaders to identify their leadership style and understand its impact on employees and the organisation.

Veliu et al. (2017) sights that successful leaders communicate openly with their teams, inspiring them to share a common vision for the organisation. The authors' displaying similar sentiments to that of other researchers (Bass and Bass, 2008, O'Reilly, Caldwell, Chatman, Lapiz and Self, 2010; Ngambi, 2011; Ojokuku et al., 2012; Baillie, 2016; Van Velsor et al., 2016; Hendrikz and Engelbrecht, 2019; Sandahl, 2019) further postulate that successful leaders display integrity, ethics, reliability, responsibility, fairness, caring, trustworthiness, citizenship, accountability, set clear specific goals, and motivate employees towards them. However, Veliu et al. (2017) denote that leadership must not be construed as a "one size fits all" notion, and that successful leaders display varying leadership styles among them.

Proches and Green (2016) assert that the public sector, as well as SoE leadership, are often held accountable by members of the community, with Herbst and Conradie (2011) advocating that the underpinning component of "constructive social transformation in any public sector", is leadership. Van Velsor et al., (2016) say that the key priority areas government leaders require development in is in their ability to lead their team, change management, and participative management. Their research further established that the most important leadership skills a government leader should possess are:

- "The ability to lead;
- Resourcefulness;
- Straightforwardness and Composure;
- Building and Mending Relationships; and
- Participative Management" (Van Velsor et al., 2016, p. 8).

However, considering the state of our SoEs and government departments in SA, with the economy thrown in chaos and uncertainty due to the downgrading by rating agencies, declining GDP, corruption and fraud and the Covid-19 pandemic will such servant leadership skills be useful in turning SoEs like Eskom around and weathering the storm of the Covid-19 pandemic? Applying

the principles of managing Eskom like a corporate organisation taking into account the SCAILES framework and lessons learned by leaders during the Covid-19 pandemic, seems more beneficial and realistic than the old ways of running Eskom did work. Using the post-positivist and interpretivist paradigms, a deeper understanding of the dynamics driving the organisation and its people are required.

Reviewing the literature, researchers have found over the years the following key qualities a leader should possess to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as depicted in Table 3.3. Leaders who possess these qualities have displayed success as leaders in mobilising the team to achieve the stated objectives and goals, improving employee morale and efficiency, and ensuring sustained profitability and competitive advantage of the organisation in the market. The majority of the qualities were found in people who displayed either or a combination of transformational, participative and principle value-based leadership styles.

**Table 3.3: Good Qualities a Leader in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Should Possess**

Leadership Qualities	
1	Leading and Inspiring
2	Conceptual and Resourcefulness
3	Straightforwardness and Composure
4	Building and Mending Relationships
5	Adaptability, Flexibility and Versatility
6	Learning and Experimenting
7	Self-Awareness and Reflection
8	Compassion and Sensitivity
9	Accepting That Differences Matter
10	Delegation and Empowerment
11	Innovation, Risk Taking and Novel Ides
12	Respectfulness and Trustworthiness
13	Honesty and Integrity, Responsibility and Accountability
14	Goal and Performance Oriented
15	Strategic Thinking, Visionary and Holistic Thinking
16	Decisiveness, Agility, Responsiveness and Being Proactive
17	Embracing Diversity and Change
18	Thinking clearly under pressure and communicate effectively
19	Interactive Value-Creating and Collaboration
20	Set a Clear Vision and Direction

Source: Adapted from Lekganyane and Oosthuizen (2006); Bass and Bass (2008), O'Reilly, Caldwell, Chatman, Lapiz and Self (2010); Yukl (2010); Ngambi (2011); Ojokuku et al. (2012); Moore (2015), Verba (2015); Andreani and Petrik (2016); Baillie (2016); Trivisonno and Barling (2016); Van Velsor et al. ( 2016); Donkor and Zhou (2019); Edge Learning Media (2019); Hendrikz and Engelbrecht (2019); Sandahl (2019); Centre for Creative Leadership (2020)

Which of these qualities will be the best fit for a VUCA environment, especially for an SoE like Eskom? Or will the qualities be interchangeable based on the situation at hand? Or do we need to go back to the drawing board as Covid-19 has proven that all theories and knowledge that we thought were the 'north star' in leadership are false?

### 3.5 Leadership in Complex Volatile Environments

A small variation in decision-making, policy, processes, and systems can greatly impact the outcome in a complex environment like Eskom. Skills and techniques such as probing, sensing, and network collaboration allow for sensitivity to be employed when investigating viable solutions to the problem rather than using an existing solution that may not adequately address the problem. Thus, creating an enabling environment or workplace for innovation, creativity, productivity and efficiency to flourish is paramount than improving performance when leading in complex environments. (Moore, 2015; LDC, 2016; Towler, 2019) Further, Chorn (2013) asserts that leaders in complex environments cannot really control the various facets at play in a complex organisation; instead, they are facilitators and hosts who create an enabling environment where learning and adaptation can occur. In his book *Leaders Make the Future: Ten New Leadership Skills for an Uncertain World*, Bob Johansen asserts that in the VUCA environment, leaders will be continuously faced with challenges where no solution exists. He says leaders “must be positive change agents amid chaos, creating the future” (Centre for Creative Leadership, 2020). In terms of a post-positivist paradigm model like Theory U, there is a need to go beyond such aspirational declarations into probing the deep learning that makes such an aspiration a reality. The Covid-19-19 pandemic calls for this self-reflection, probing, sensing, listening and presencing to all for the co-creation of creative innovation strategies.

According to Chorn (2013 cited in LDC, 2016), Moore (2015) and the Centre for Creative Leadership, 2020, the host leader:

- Is aware that neither he/she nor anyone can completely control the environment and its influences on an individual’s social reality.
- Brings together people from diverse cultures and encourages them to share their thoughts and ideas towards a constructive engagement and solution-finding process.
- Acknowledges that he/she may not know all the answers.
- Respects, trusts, and acknowledges other’s creativity and novel ideas.
- Remains part of the group and is actively involved in constructive collaboration and networking to find a solution or path, rather than leaving it up to fate and the team that all will work out.
- Is able to see through the chaos to a future that is not obvious to others by immersing himself in the unfamiliar environment to learn from it.

Chorn (2013) suggests the following factors need to be put in place that would provide clear, consistent direction to the team; thus, allowing leaders to be successful in complex environments. The project's actual destination is unknown; however, these key factors and the project parameters

will serve as a guiding map for the project. Further to this, the departmental silo mentality will need to be broken down as interdepartmental communication and information sharing is paramount. Chorn (2103) provides four factors for successful leadership in complex environments, as depicted in Figure 3.2, while Sarkar (2016) recommends eight factors. There are common overlaps between the factors proposed by these two researchers. These recommendations may be beneficial but, one will only know if these proposed factors are relevant for a VUCA world if leaders during the COVID-19 pandemic actually found these factors aiding them to navigate through the turbulent uncharted waters of the pandemic

1. An identified purpose for the organisation	Define the broad outcomes to be achieved (usually not financial) and define the purpose of the organisation.
2. Explicit organisational guiding principles	Communicate the 'rules and boundaries' for the organisation.
3. Established performance feedback processes	Determine how the organisation is making progress towards achieving the purpose (beyond simple lag indicators, such as profit).
4. Accepted methods of responding to feedback	Agree on the ways that leaders will respond to possible 'drift' away from the purpose and/or guiding principles.

**Figure 3. 2: Four Factors for Successful Leadership in Complex Environments**

Source: Chorn (2013 cited in LDC, 2016, p. 13)

While Sarkar (2016), cited in Kok and van den Huevel (2019, p. 33), postulates the following factors as being critical to succeed in a VUCA environment are “Sound business fundamentals; Innovation; Fast-paced response; Flexibility; Change management; Managing diversity at a local and global level; Market intelligence and Strong collaboration with all relevant stakeholders.”

Moore (2015) shares similar sentiments to that of Pflaeging, Vollmer, Hermann and Carvalho (2012) cited in LDC (2016, pp. 16-17), suggesting that the following six principles need to be followed in complex environments:

- *“The promotion of a results-oriented culture - celebrate the ‘teams’ performance and encourage the team to have fun while they achieve to succeed/win.*
- *The promotion of self-development and mastery – do not force individuals into courses of self-development; instead, make learning and development opportunities and resources available when he/she may require them.*



- *Create and set clear principles* – ensure the principles governing the working environment are clear and straightforward, and the teams agree on it.
- *Focus leadership on the system, not on people* – focus improvement on the systems instead of the individuals in the team. Lead from the centre and not the top.
- *Provide accurate information* – ensure information is in real-time as much as possible, up-to-date, accurate, easily accessible and presented in a manner that everyone can understand, as change occurs very quick in complex environments.
- *Make targets, measures, and compensation ‘relative’* – proactive planning is difficult in complex environments; thus performance measurement is often done by comparing past performance relative to the current market situation and contributing factors.”

During the Covid-19 pandemic, creating and setting clear principles and strategies, providing accurate, up-to-date information in easy to understand digestible pieces, flexibility, speed, and leadership focusing on improving the system and processes to attain the revised targets took precedence. Constantly going back to the drawing board and collaborating with the team members became the norm of the day. The strategy and the plan were often only relevant on a particular day and time. Innovation and creativity in strategies and decision making were pivotal. Heightened discernment in decision making due to collective thinking, communication free of bias and collaboration was often employed. Discernment for all employees in the organisation became the new way of life.

Also, Sandahl (2019) provides five key qualities and strategies that leaders could employ to navigate the VUCA world.

- 1 *Goals and Strategies* – in addition to the goals being specific, measurable, results-oriented and time-bound, it is important to allow for adaptability (readjustment of the plan may be required), informing the team where goals are interconnected and most importantly, ensuring the goals are meaningful and motivating to the team. If the goal has changed, it is important for that change and the reasons for the change to be communicated to the team.
- 2 *Accountability* – providing clear, direct roles and responsibilities are essential yet, empowerment of the team and support is equally important. The team members' commitment will help ensure each team member is accountable for their actions and the team's performance. Mistakes happen, things often go wrong in a VUCA environment, but the key is understanding why it went wrong, how can we fix it and what is needed to ensure its success.

- 3     *Trust* – is the glue or piece of the building block that holds the team together. The leader must ensure that trust prevails in the team by creating situations where members can build deeper interpersonal relations. Transparency in decision making is paramount.
- 4     *Constructive Interaction* – conflict in the VUCA world is rife. It is important how quickly and effectively the team can agree or see the opportunity/solution path the disagreement is shedding light on. Transparency, compassion, willingness, forgiveness, empathy, and courage are important skills required. The leaders and the team must connect with their inner self, “I am”, and how their beliefs impact the team and the situation from achieving the shared goal.
- 5     *Team Leadership* – it is not the leader's sole responsibility to lead, but it is the team's collective responsibility to lead. Leadership in the VUCA world rests on everyone's shoulders.

Volini et al. (2019) add that it is vital for the organisation to inculcate a culture of transparency and collaboration while putting in place different performance measures for leaders. This will aid in creating a culture that supports skills to manage and lead in the VUCA environment resulting in leaders pursuing excellence, embracing change and innovating.

Researchers (Moore, 2015; LDC 2016; Van Velsor et al., 2016; Daigle and Matthews, 2017; Donkor and Zhou, 2019; Towler, 2019; Centre for Creative Leadership, 2020) allude that leaders in a complex, chaotic environment, like that in which Eskom operates, should possess the following skills to succeed in the current business landscape of uncertainty, while under the watchful eye of the government, the investors and the public at large:

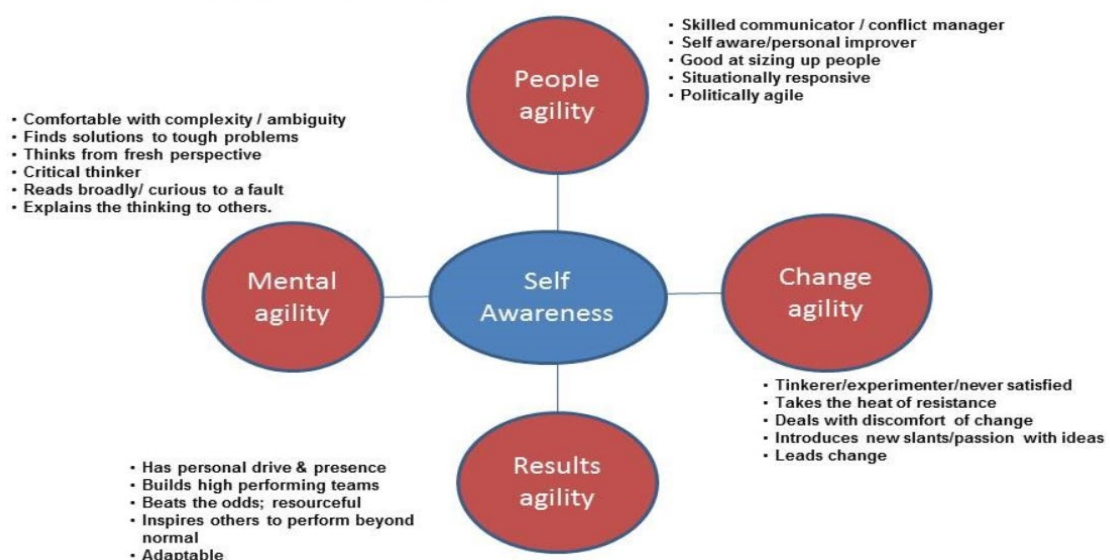
**Table 3.4: Leadership Qualities for Leaders in Complex Environments**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Probing, sensing, listening, responding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Interactive value-creating communication and collaboration</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Adaptable, decisive, and proactive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Stimulator, creator, innovator, resourcefulness</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Inspirer, negotiator and solution seeker</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Clear, direct, respectful communication</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Accountability, command, control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Facilitate and enable a learning, open, experimenting, adaptable environment</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Self-awareness and reflection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Boundary spanning, networking</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Accept change as the new norm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Speed, flexibility and agility</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Trust, empathy, compassion, humility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Empowerment, fairness</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Teamwork, harmony, commitment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Calmness, composure, confidence</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Strategic, critical, holistic, and long-term thinking, visionary, mission-focused</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Listen, accessible, available</li> </ul>

Source: Moore (2015); LDC (2016); Van Velsor et al. (2016); Daigle and Matthews (2017); Donkor and Zhou (2019); Towler (2019); Beilstein et al. (2020); Centre for Creative Leadership (2020); D'Auria and De Smet (2020); Dileep (2020); Geerts (2020); Haedrich (2020); Mutch (2020); Proches (2020); Robinson (2020); Sukhera, Richardson, Maniate and Chan (2020)

Botelho, Powell, Kinacid and Wang (2017) allude that leaders who possess such qualities as indicated in the table above are driven to succeed owing to self-effacement, self-confidence, assertiveness and not ego or control. They understand that there are gaps in their knowledge and understanding; thus, they continuously seek to empower their decision making by seeking out people with relevant skills and knowledge to fill those gaps. The thoughts and recommendations of others within the team and across teams are frequently taken into consideration. Companies of today aspire to have inclusive, trustworthy leadership that works towards the greater good of the organisation and a shared goal yet, they are still profit-driven and continue to employ leaders that are more operationally focussed with the mindset of top-down decision making and complete control over critical resources and employees (Botelho et al., 2017). This is all they know and what they have been taught and exposed to. To leaders, it is the right and only way. It is ingrained in their mental models. It is difficult to change thinking and behaviours when one has not been exposed to the desired way of thinking and behaving. This type of behaviour decreases agility and the ability to respond positively to VUCA.

The underlying term in the preceding discussions has been agility. Aziz corporate, an executive coaching consultancy, uses the Learning Agility Model (Figure 3.3) by Korn Ferry Lominger when coaching leaders on the VUCA environment and how to build strong teams to flourish in this environment. The model focuses on four areas of agility, namely: mental, people, change and results, with self-awareness being at the centre of this model. The key skills identified above are evident in this model below. This model highlights the importance of the post-positivist model, Theory U, the importance and ability of the leader to self-reflect and move from ‘unconscious incompetence to conscious competence’ (Kok and Jordaan, 2019, p. 4 cited in Kok and van den Heuvel, 2019). For a leader to be agile in all these areas, they must be explicitly aware of the information, people, their emotions and the situation at hand. To do this, they need to deconstruct their thinking to become cognisant of their personal gaps and limitations. They need to expose themselves to more in-depth information and knowledge. They continuously immerse themselves in a cycle of ongoing learning and exposure and inter and cross-departmental collaboration among various stakeholders. Creating an environment that enables collaboration based on trust and openness where the goal is to work together than against each other (Jordaan, 2019 cited in Kok and van den Heuvel, 2019) will help instil agility in the team. Human nature is to be competitive and survive, especially when faced with adversity and threat. Achieving collaboration in a VUCA environment is very difficult. It is not about developing and acquiring a new skill set but predominately about changing mindsets and people’s ingrained mental models. Adopting models like Theory U and the learning Agility Model become very relevant in this VUCA environment.



**Figure 3. 3: Learning Agility Model**  
Source: Aziz Corporate (2018 )

Agility is not only about adaptability and the speed in gathering information and making decisions but the ability to collaborate effectively to make quality informed decisions. A leader may possess all the above skills and qualities and have a dynamic team; however, inherent challenges present in the internal and external work environment may negatively impact their behaviour and performance. How they respond to these challenges is important; thus, having agile and self-aware leadership, as indicated by the Agility Learning Model, adaptive, knowledgeable and skilled, and being accountable and transparent, will prove beneficial.

In addition, if leaders imbue the principles of Theory U and the consciousness paradigm, as opposed to the materialistic paradigm, are more likely to have the skills required to survive in a VUCA world. “Role modelling, fostering understanding and conviction, reinforcing changes through formal mechanisms, developing talent and skill and the manner processes are formed” have been found to be effective in changing mindsets, according to a study conducted by McKinsey & Company in 2015. It is equally crucial for the organisation’s mental model, namely the culture and organisational behaviour, to change as well if we wish to see a change in mindsets occurring. A culture of trust, collaboration, transparency, creativity and innovation must be adopted. The silos are among people; teams and departments need to be broken down to allow for openness and inclusivity.

However, the assumption is that people are autonomous with free will and agency. You can take everything from them, accept their choice: how to feel, think and act. Could this debatable assumption of the key leadership skills a leader must have, be the cause of much leadership failure? Within every human being, there exists volatility: the constant mental wars, the disappointments, the anger, the frustration and the unhappiness with their families, work, colleagues, society and themselves. These negative emotions create much turmoil and anxiety in a person, resulting in a lack of clarity in their thoughts and actions. Covid-19 gives us observable empirical evidence of how outdated our assumptions and theories are, where theory does not align with practice. What has the Covid-19 pandemic revealed as the key leadership skills required to survive a VUCA environment? How do you measure a leader’s effectiveness in a VUCA environment? Is it their ability to navigate through the chaos with minimal damage or change to the organisational goals? Is it their ability to ensure the sustainability of the organisation and its people? Is it their ability to rally the team together to find new pathways and tactical strategies?

Volini et al. (2019) state that a leader’s ability to operate fluidly with all faith and commitment in an environment categorised by chaos, complexity, uncertainty, ambiguity, rapid change, new technologies and business processes and systems, as well as changing demographic profile of employees and customer expectations, will determine his/her effectiveness as a leader.

Quinn (2004 cited in Kok and van de Heuvel, 2019, p. 72) puts it very eloquently as to how to lead in a world characterised by VUCA: *“When we commit to a vision to do something that has never been done before, there is no way to know how to get there. We simply have to build the bridge as we walk on it.”* To do this, we need to break down our existing mental models and embrace the five stages of Theory U.

### **3.6 Leadership in a Crisis like Covid 19**

In today’s climate, a crisis is inevitable. It is unknown when it will happen and how it will happen; it is threatening and requires high priority focus, limited response time and is enveloped with uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (Mutch, 2020, citing Hannah et al., 2009).

Managing and leading through a crisis requires a different set of skills as opposed to normal day to day leadership practices (Mutch, 2020). A crisis requires immediate action to a very complex, ambiguous event that is extremely fluid as the situation and variables at play constantly change.

What is important is the organisation and its leaders are prepared to handle a crisis and have the skills and knowledge to navigate the team through it to survive and, more importantly, recover from it and thrive in the future? It requires heightened decisive strategic direction to lead the team from the unknown to the known. Is the leadership at Eskom equipped to turn adversity like Covid-19 into an advantage where Eskom begins to thrive? Ineffective response to a crisis like Covid-19 can cost organisations and the SOE direly in financial terms, loss of customers, market value, service delivery, brand equity, competitive advantage, employees, and the loss of lives the business in totality.

When managing and leading in a crisis, it becomes very difficult to quantify responses or actions that were taken at that time, as the leader often will lead based on instinct, experience, information and situations presented at that particular time, as well as insight from the team (Weinhold and Cowherd, 2016). These decisions are taken very quickly and put into action at a swift pace. Similar to soldiers fighting in a war. Situations change in a split second, and they have to use their gut feeling and experience to guide their next move. Decisions are made on the spot, and it is the best one and only one at that particular time.

Thus, crisis leadership can be defined as the manner in which strategies used by the organisation to deal with an event that places undue threat on the organisation’s financials, stakeholders and the ability to serve its customers. It also relates to the ability of the leaders and employees to deal with the crisis event effectively. (Klann, 2003). Mutch (2020, p. 4) asserts that crisis management

deals more with the operational aspects, while crisis leadership involves oversight of the operational aspects and providing direction; however, greater focus is on providing “vision, direction and the big-picture thinking.” Thus, it is important to know what is happening on the ground level, but focus needs to be placed on planning ahead and providing strategies to take the organisation through the challenge towards recovery and post-recovery.

According to the Centre for Creative Leadership webinar (23 July 2020) on “Government Leadership After Crisis: Reframe Your Mindset and Expand Your Tool Set”, the presenters illustrated the differences between leading and managing a crisis as depicted in Figure 3.4 below.



**Figure 3. 4: Crisis Leadership and Crisis Management**

Source: Adams and Becket (2020, p. 3)

In a crisis, a leader’s real strengths are tested, and their fundamental weaknesses are revealed. During this time, we can determine if the leader will embrace the challenges and take the required action to address them while mobilising the team. Will he be in the forefront or hide in the back? Will he take responsibility and find out what went wrong and work towards fixing it, or would he play the blame again and evade responsibility? (Klann, 2003)

Mutch (2020, p. 5) researched key traits and behaviours leadership should possess for managing a crisis and posits the following traits:

Traits or characteristics	Behaviours or processes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adaptable</li> <li>• Empathetic</li> <li>• Prepared</li> <li>• Resilient</li> <li>• Transparent</li> <li>• Trustworthy</li> </ul> <p>Gigliotti (2017)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognising a crisis is coming</li> <li>• Mount a response</li> <li>• Develop a network of teams</li> <li>• Elevate leaders</li> <li>• Demonstrate empathy</li> <li>• Communicate effectively</li> </ul> <p>D'Auria and De Smet (2020)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationship-oriented</li> <li>• Participative</li> <li>• Innovative</li> <li>• Problem-solver</li> </ul> <p>Alkharabsheh et al. (2013)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide stability, reassurance, confidence and a sense of control</li> </ul> <p>Alkharabsheh et al. (2013)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trusted</li> <li>• Respected</li> <li>• Decisive</li> <li>• Calm</li> <li>• Visible</li> <li>• Accessible</li> <li>• Mission-focused</li> <li>• Visionary</li> <li>• Autonomous</li> <li>• Selfless</li> <li>• Committed</li> <li>• Confident</li> <li>• Positive</li> <li>• Strong</li> <li>• Knowledgeable</li> <li>• Experienced Porche (2009)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integration of prior knowledge, leadership acumen, and practical experience</li> <li>• Manage complex tasks simultaneously</li> </ul> <p>Porche (2009)</p>
<p>Formal leaders have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• decision-making skills</li> <li>• ability to remain calm</li> <li>• effective communication</li> </ul> <p>Informal leaders have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• motivation to lead</li> <li>• autonomy</li> <li>• emotional leadership</li> <li>• and see crisis as opportunity</li> </ul> <p>Zhuravsky (2013)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage their emotions</li> <li>• Make connections to shared values</li> <li>• Be proactive</li> <li>• Act positively, sincerely, and respectfully</li> </ul> <p>Rego and Garau (2007)</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the unpredictable nature of crises</li> <li>• Being able to lead a decision-making process</li> <li>• Communicating effectively</li> <li>• Taking the big picture into account</li> <li>• Looking for creative solutions</li> <li>• Being flexible</li> <li>• Having realistic expectations</li> </ul> <p>Kielkowski (2013)</p>

**Figure 3. 5: Crisis Leadership Traits and Behaviours**

Source: Mutch (2020, p. 5)

The crisis leadership traits and behaviours depicted in Figure 3.5 have certain traits similar to servant leadership. A participatory approach and the service to others are evident (Gandolfi and Stone, 2016). Crisis leadership is about how human behavioural responses are handled by leaders, while crisis management deals with the operational issues about addressing the situation. With a crisis like Covid-19, which has been increasing in severity, spread and over a prolonged period of almost fifteen months (at the time of writing this thesis) and still going strong with countries experiencing a second-wave requires resilient, effective leadership to help organisations weather the storm. The situation demands leaders to be strong mentally, physically and emotionally.

VanSlyke and Simons (2020) state that for leaders to be effective during Covid-19, they need to first, prioritise their mental health together with that of their team members and subordinates. They can only lead if they are in the correct frame of mind. During Covid-19, things changed every day, at times, every hour (VanSlyke and Simons, 2020). D'Auria and De Smet (2020) acknowledge that at times on the spot/immediate action is required; however, they do advise



managers during a crisis to be in a cycle where they constantly “pause-assess-anticipate-act”. The common thread running across various literature sources (Joy (2021); BDO (2020); Deloitte (2020); Palmer (2020); The Center for Creative Leadership (2020a); The Rebuilders (2020); USB-ED (2020)) on the key qualities and traits leaders need for a VUCA environment like the Covid-19 pandemic were:

- Empathy, compassion, composure & support
- Self-reflection & mindful work
- Communication, collaboration, open to new ideas & learning
- Health & positivity
- Flexibility, adaptability, agility & decisiveness
- Transparency, authenticity, trustworthiness & accountability
- Strategic, visionary & anticipatory
- Being mentally, emotionally and physically present
- Re-prioritising of targets/projects & setting achievable goals

Adams and Bekert (2020) go on further to postulate a model to guide leaders through a crisis as depicted in Figure 3.6.



**Figure 3. 6: Leading Through a Crisis: A CCL Model to Guide Leaders**  
Source: Adams and Becket (2020, p. 3)

The model has seven steps. The first two steps (orient and sense-making) is where the leader must make assess the situation, thereafter in steps 3 – 5 (triage, strategise and execute) the leader must act, and the final two steps (recalibrate and pivot) the leader evaluates their actions and strategies are taken and plan for the future. To achieve the desired goal, it is paramount that

there is direction, commitment and alignment in the group (Adams and Becket, 2020).

McNulty and Marcus (2020), however, argue that organisations often fail during a crisis as most often the situation is over-managed and lacks leadership. The reasons why are three-fold:

- Leaders tend to take a narrow view of the situation. When faced with a threat, the brain automatically takes a narrow focus and not a broad, holistic view. To break out of this narrow focus, leaders are required to step back and go within their mental framework.
- Managing becomes more appealing and takes precedence over leading. Leaders get caught up with day-to-day management instead of planning for the weeks and months ahead. They are reluctant to delegate and release control during this period and feel they have to do it all, micromanage or take control by creating additional layers of protocols and approval processes that delay response times instead of having faith and trust in the current system, processes and team. This actually disrupts the crisis management and recovery processes in place. They need to create clear guidelines and principles and then “let go” of the responsibility to others.
- Due to the chaos a crisis creates, leaders are focused on the organisation's business side and forget about the human element – the people. People make the organisation and help realise their goals and objectives. Not everyone copes well during a crisis, and leaders need to show empathy, humility, understanding and support. They need to unite the team towards a shared vision and response. Be transparent, specific and clear to the team about what is happening and the plans in place. Assure them that all will be well. Be the glue that holds the team together.

### **Leading Post a Crisis**

Adams and Becket (2020) recommend that leaders use the “ROPES: A Post-Crisis Planning Framework”:

- **“Reassess:** Leveraging the value of growth mindset, leaders define a period of reflection and reassessment;
- **Organize:** Organise the right experts from inside and outside the organisation for planning;
- **Plan:** Develop a business plan with measurable actions with times and goals and assign it to key stakeholders;
- **Execute:** Quickly act—early and confident execution on time allows adjustments downstream and begins to realign the organisation; and
- **Support:** With feedback, cross-boundary spanning, and trust, leaders support the activities of direct reports and enable their authority to achieve goals.”

Klann (2003, pp. 59-66) assert that leaders in a post-crisis, should exhibit the following eight “R’s” behaviour traits:

- “Rebuild – Reassure
- Review – Revise
- Reflect – Renew
- Restore – Reinvigorate”

The crisis leadership attributes proposed by the various scholars above are relevant and critical for all leaders to possess, especially when operating in a VUCA environment like the present. Leaders can use these attributes to evaluate their leadership approach and relevance to the current environment with the intent to strengthen the leadership abilities to manage future crises.

### **3.7 Summary of Chapter**

In conclusion, leadership for the 21<sup>st</sup> century cannot follow the styles and techniques of leaders of yester-year. The 21<sup>st</sup>-century business landscape is filled with complexity and uncertainty and requires leaders with skills and qualities that will address the challenges present in these complex environments. The following, Chapter 4: State-Owned Enterprise: Eskom, will undertake a review of the literature on SoEs, definitions of the SoEs, Eskom’s operating environment and its inherent challenges.

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## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **STATE-OWNED ENTERPRISE: ESKOM**

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*“Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable...every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.”*

(Martin Luther King Jr)

## **4.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter discussed the literature on leadership, the qualities of a good leader and leadership in a complex, volatile environment. The chapter to follow defines state-owned enterprises and provides an overview of the state-owned enterprises in South Africa, focusing on Eskom and the challenges affecting Eskom.

## **4.2 State-Owned Enterprises (SoEs) Defined**

The Public Finance Management Act (Act of 1999) (PFMA). Section (1) of the PFMA of 1999 (updated in 2008, pp8-10) defines SoEs as “National Government Business Enterprise” to be “an entity which: (a) is a juristic person under the ownership control of the national executive (b) has been assigned financial and operational authority to carry on a business activity (c) as its principal business, provides goods and services in accordance with ordinary business principles (d) is financed fully or substantially from sources other than the National Revenue Fund or by way of a tax, levy or statutory money” (PFMA, 1999).

According to Chilenga (2016, citing Bolton, 2010), an SoE is a legal entity commissioned to conduct certain business interests and assist in the provision of certain services to the greater public on behalf of the government. National Development Plan 2030 of South Africa stipulates the critical and major role SoEs play in structural development within the economy and service delivery to the people of South Africa. SoEs have to maintain balance in terms of financial stability and public interest where their business activities must be beneficial to society while being economically viable to long term sustainability (SRI Report, 2017).

## **4.3 SoEs in South Africa**

SoEs falling under the Department of Public Enterprises (DPE) in South Africa play an important role in the South African economy in vital sectors such as transportation (air, rail, freight, and pipelines), electricity, and telecommunications. With over 700 SoEs in South Africa in which the DPE has partial or full control of, SoEs are responsible for the development of key infrastructure and manufacturing capacity for the South African economy, thereby playing a vital role in increasing and securing investment activities, advancing economic and development growth and sustainability of the economy.

The key and large SoEs fall under three sectors, namely: Energy Enterprise (Eskom), Manufacturing Enterprises (Alexkor, Denel and Safcol) and Transport Enterprises (South African Express Airways and Transnet). Chilenga (2016) writes that many large SoEs have come under

public and government inquiries, with the media publishing articles on their major shortcomings, challenges, and their inability to make a profit resulting in the government awarding financial bailouts at the expense of the taxpayers. South African Airways (SAA), Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA), and Eskom, to name a few, face the reality of becoming 'bankrupt'. Presidential State-Owned Entities Review Committee (PRC), established in 2010, has been tasked to review the role of SoEs in South Africa (Kanyane and Sausi, 2015), with one of the PRC findings being the creation of a Presidential SoE Council.

Ten years since the PRC's establishment, the financial state of SoEs has further declined to result in major financial losses to the economy and costs being passed onto the consumer. The president of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, states that losses in some SoEs like SAA were so high that the entity had to be placed under business rescue (Editor, 2020). He further states that many of the large SoEs have been plagued over the years with mismanagement, state capture and corruption. The president stated further that with the Presidential SoE Council's aid, they are committed to “moving from the stabilisation of state-owned enterprises to repurposing these strategic companies to support growth and development” (Editor, 2020). To help achieve this growth and development, leadership needs to ensure robust financial management is in place with strict adherence and compliance to governance policies and a clear understanding oversight role played by the government. Letshwiti (2020) writes that a different set of management and leadership skills are required to manage an SoE that is in distress as opposed to one that is financially sound.

In 2018, newly elected Honourable President Mr Cyril Ramaphosa said, “Many of our state-owned enterprises are experiencing severe financial, operation and governance challenges, which has impacted on the performance of the economy and placed pressure on the fiscus.” He stated, “Government will take further measures to ensure that all state-owned companies/enterprises fulfil their economic and developmental mandates” (SONA, 2018).

Similar sentiments were expressed by the then Finance Minister Malusi Gigaba's Budget speech and in 2019 by The Public Enterprises Minister Pravin Gordhan and the Finance Minister Tito Mboweni in 2019. Mutize (2017) highlights that South Africa's debt burden is more than 50% of GDP, which is far higher than other emerging market economies. Over the years, the underperformance of various SoEs has had a negative effect on public finances, economic growth, public service delivery, and the attainment of developmental opportunities due to the misdirection of resources and funds away from creating infrastructure, employment opportunities, efficient services and value for South Africans. The South African Government has identified that SoEs are facing challenges in the delivery of their mandates. The likes of South African Airways (SAA), who was granted a 4.8 billion rand bailout (Staff Writer, 2017) and the corporate governance failures at SoEs such as Eskom, South African Airways, and Transnet during the

tenure of Malusi Gibaba and Lynn Browne, resulting in state capture of the enterprises and severe financial mismanagement at the expense of social development and economic growth. The dire state of Eskom and other SoEs have been noted as being the key reasons for the rating agencies S and P Global Ratings and Fitch to awarding a series of credit downgrades upon South Africa (Laing, 2017). Qobo (2018) claims that the underperformance of SoEs has minimal to do with it being owned by the government but in how they are governed and lead. Despite the policies and efforts of the King Reports, Millennium Developmental Goals (MDG), National Development Plan (NDP) and United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), there is a continued failure of leaders to perform, which inadvertently gives rise to followers that display toxic, unethical, and dysfunctional behaviours, whom eventually become underperforming toxic leaders themselves. A never-ending cycle of underperformance, unethical and dysfunctional behaviour and moral decay exists. This has resulted in the government relooking at SoE's functions, processes, governance, viability, and leadership within these entities.

Many critics have called for the beleaguered SoEs to be privatised or semi- privatised. Mutize (2017) postulates that some level of privatisation, bearing in mind the firm financial performance of Telkom delivering a 56% higher dividend for shareholders and contributing to the financial fiscus (R1, 6 billion) when compared Eskom, SAA, PetroSA and others, should be an option to help resolve the perpetuating financial and corporate governance challenges facing SoEs in South Africa. van Niekerk (2017) reports that the Telkom results are indicative of high levels of corporate governance, a competent management team with a clear strategic vision and sound financial management practices. The Minister of Telecommunications and Postal Services, Dr Siyabonga Cwele, called on other SoEs to "learn from Telkom how it achieved this turnaround" (van Niekerk, 2017, p. 1).

The Solidarity Research Institute Report (SRI Report, 2017) alludes that if SoEs were privatised, the majority of the management would have been dismissed for failing to meet the organisational goals. The Report further indicated that due to the government offering SoEs billions in funding and guarantees, there is little to no incentive for management teams to meet the financial goals, pay off debts, employ efficient and effective business practices, and there is little to no accountability for failing to meet the stated targets. (SRI Report, 2017)

"Based on the Auditor-General findings on the department and state-owned companies for the 2017/18 year, Eskom qualified in terms of compliance to legislation in terms of:

Material Findings on Expenditure Management, Consequence Management, Revenue Management, Procurement and Contract Management, however, it had an unqualified status for Leadership, Financial and Performance Management." (DPE, 2019)

Eskom is crippling the economy of South Africa, and the government and the new Board of Directors of Eskom have realised the dire state of the challenges plaguing Eskom and the impact on the economy and are thus determined to rectify it as per the 2018 Eskom Integrated Report and media reports (SANews, 2019). With Eskom supplying 95% of the nation's electricity, bankruptcy is not an option as the entire economy will fall. President Ramaphosa assured the nation in his State of the Nation address that the SOE is "too big and important to fail and he won't allow that to happen" (Cohen, Vecchiatto and Goko, 2019; SONA, 2019).

The large SoEs play an important role in the economic growth and development of the South African economy; however, the SoEs' contribution depends on its ability to reduce financial debt, decrease costs, and improve operational efficiencies. Letshwiti (2020) echoes the sentiments of President Ramaphosa that SoEs are integral to economic growth and development, thus cannot afford to fail. For this change to occur, effective unconventional leadership is required to manage such complex entities.

This study focussed on one of the large SoEs in South Africa, namely Eskom.

### **4.3.1 Eskom**

Eskom is a state-owned company (SOC) as defined in the Companies Act, 2008, was established in 1923 as the Electricity Supply Commission to generate, transport and distribute electricity to the South African market as well into Africa. The South African Government wholly owns it through the shareholder ministry, the Department of Public Enterprises (DPE). As a public entity, Eskom is governed by the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA), 1999 and bound by the provisions of their Memorandum of Incorporation (Eskom Integrated Report, 2018). As an SoE, Eskom is obliged to comply with and implement government policy and strategy. Eskom has thus adopted the Strategic Intent Statement of Objectives of government to "ensure the security of electricity supply to the country, thereby enabling economic growth and prosperity. Eskom is also required to support socio-economic development, ensure regulatory compliance and maintaining financial and commercial viability". (Eskom Integrated Report, 2019, p. 25).

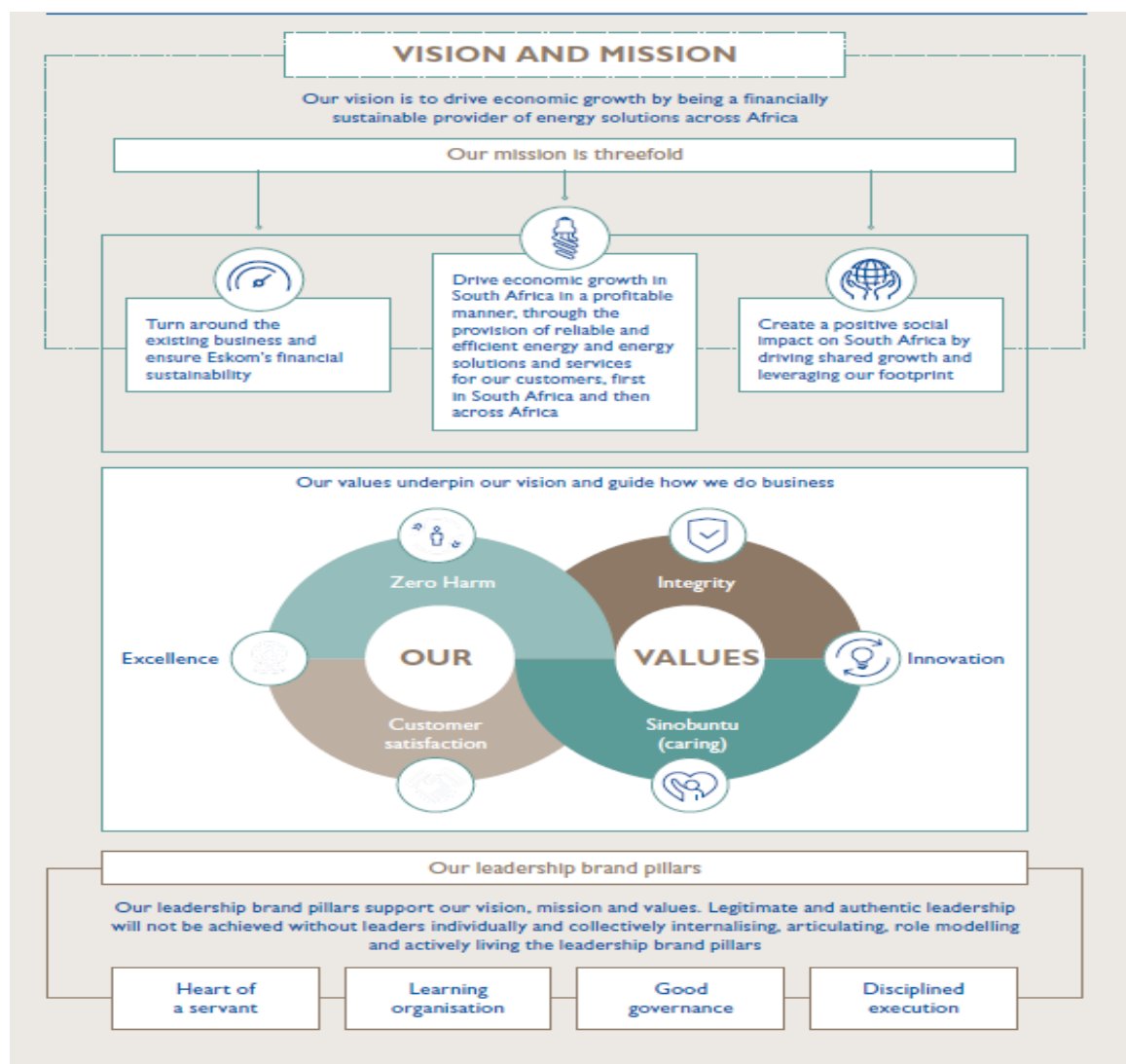
LDC (2016, p. 3) defines an organisation as a "complex system made up of multiple variables. The interdependencies of these variables mean that when a small change happens to one area of the system, it can have large effects elsewhere in the system." Based on this definition, if one looks at Eskom infrastructure, the size of the organisation, the various divisions, the various stakeholders involved in the organisation (both internal, external and governmental), Eskom can be classified as a complex entity.



Eskom's Vision, Mission, Values and leadership pillars are as shown in Figure 4.1. (Eskom Integrated Report, 2019). Eskom's mission is three-fold:

1. Business turnaround and sustainability
2. Drive economic growth by providing dependable and efficient energy as an energy solution to its customers in SA.
3. Create a positive social impact in SA

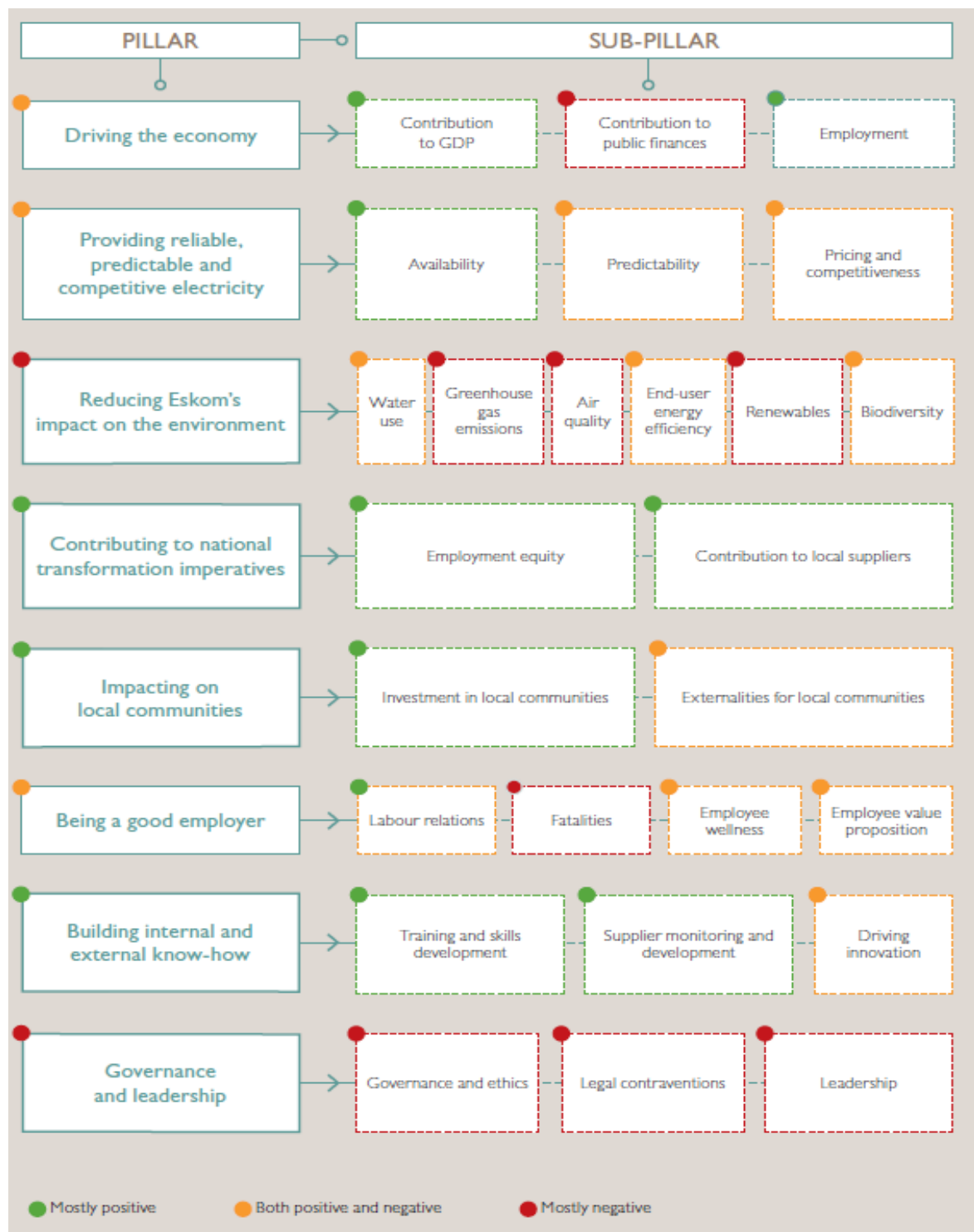
To realise this mission, their leaders need to actively live the four leadership pillars, namely having a heart of a servant, ensuring a learning organisation culture is created and maintained, employing good governance practices, and ensuring disciplined execution both individually and collectively.



**Figure 4. 1: Eskom's Mandate, Vision, Mission, Values**

Source: Eskom Integrated Report (2019, p. 2)

Based on Figure 4.1, it is evident that sustainability, economic performance and growth, safety, innovation, integrity, customer satisfaction, excellence in performance, standards, professionalism, and the improvement of South African citizens' lives should be the underpinning drivers of Eskom. However, according to the findings in a briefing by the Department of Public Enterprises, 2019 and the 2018 Eskom Integrated Report, the leadership at Eskom have not fulfilled its mandate and vision. Neither has it complied fully with the set values and that of authentic, responsible and ethical leadership as set out in the corporate governance framework of Eskom, as discussed as well in detail in chapter 1. According to The Eskom Factor 2.0 Report, which assesses Eskom's impact in eight key areas of influence, based on 244 indicators, Eskom has performed negatively in two key areas: reducing Eskom's impact on the environment and Governance and Leadership (refer to Figure 4.2 below). In the governance and leadership area, they had performed "most negatively" in all three areas: governance and ethics, legal contraventions and leadership. This is extremely concerning, especially when ethical, responsible leadership frameworks form part of Eskom's governance structures.



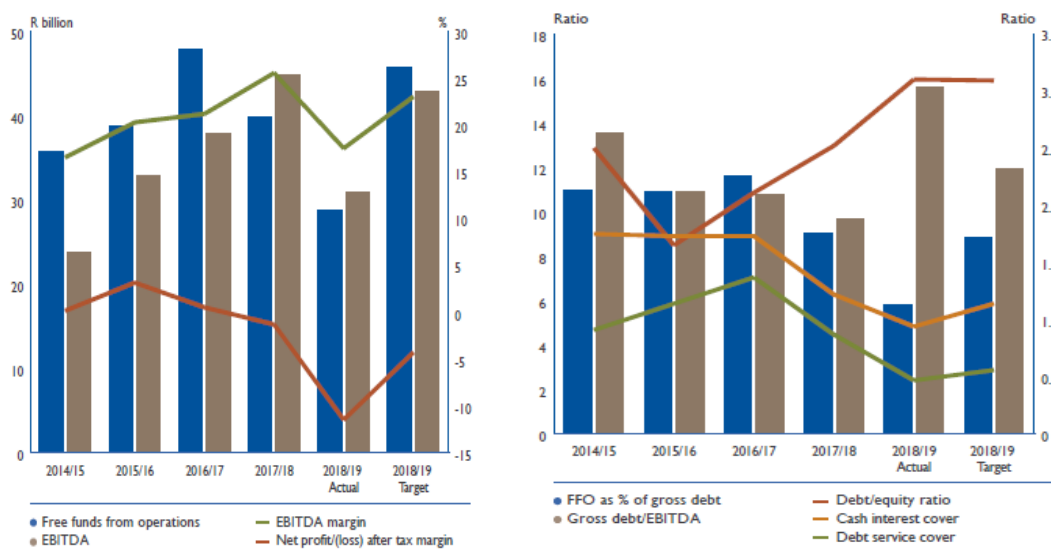
**Figure 4. 2: Eskom Factor 2.0**

Source: Eskom Integrated Report (2019, p. 31)

An analysis of Eskom's financial statements as per Figure 4.3 shows a steady decline in Eskom's profitability since 2014 despite the significant and sustained increase in revenue attributed to the NERSA approved average tariff adjustments. Eskom still has an elevated level of debt to equity ratio with little financial leeway to do so. Eskom will inevitably resort to borrowing and government bailouts to fund operating costs; however, it will be difficult to repay due to its

liquidity issues. “EBITDA for the year deteriorated to R31.5 billion (bn) (March 2018: R45.4 billion) and the EBITDA margin dropped to 17.51% (March 2018: 25.57%). We recorded a net loss before tax of R29.1 billion (March 2018: R2.6 billion)” (Eskom Integrated Report, 2019, p. 78). The liquidity of Eskom is and continues to remain a major concern to the government, Eskom’s board, rating agencies as well as investors.

As indicated earlier in chapter 1, Minister of Public Enterprises Pravin Gordhan expressed the dire state of Eskom, with mismanagement and corruption being the key factors contributing to its downfall (du Toit, 2019). If leadership at the board and senior level are toxic and corrupt, it permeates the entire organisation, which has been the case at Eskom. (Ngambi, 2011; Hendrikz and Engelbrecht, 2019)



**Figure 4. 3: Eskom Financials**

Source: Adapted from Eskom Integrated Report (2019, pp. 78-79)

MJO (2018, p. 1) writes that the “total debt for Eskom climbed by 14% to R419bn in the past six months (until the end of September 2018), with the power utility’s service-cost debt doubled to R45bn in a year. Despite only generating R26bn from operations, Eskom’s profit also dropped from R6.3bn to R671m in 2017. The power utility’s primary energy costs increased by 12% to R46bn, and employee-benefit expense grew by 12% to R16.9bn. According to its CFO, Calib Cassim, Eskom is likely to surpass the R11.2bn loss that was projected for 2018. This was all reflected in the utility’s performance results in late November 2018.”

Due to the dire state of Eskom’s financials and the immediate and extensive risk Eskom poses to the South African economy and state financial health, the 2020 Finance Minister, Mr Tito Mboweni, in his 2019 Financial Budget, allocated R69 billion to Eskom (R23 billion a year) as a support package with conditions to help bail out the power utility. One of the conditions being

the appointment of a chief reorganisation officer, who is working closely with Eskom's board and management, will ensure the recommendations put forth by the Presidential Task Team are implemented (Leuvenink, 2019; SONA 2019).

Given the governance issues of mismanagement, corruption and fraud, a new Board of Directors was appointed in January 2018, a new CEO and Restructuring Officer were appointed in 2019, to address the critical governance gaps, namely (Eskom Integrated Report, 2018 and 2019):

1. Rooting out corruption and graft, which was experienced over the years.
2. To regenerate an organisational culture of ethical behaviour and leadership.
3. Restore investor and public confidence in the SOE.
4. To improve the organisational efficiency, effectiveness, and financials of Eskom.

Reflecting on the inherent challenges plaguing Eskom that have been mainly a result of mismanagement, inept management, corruption, fraud and lack of compliance to governance policies and the volatile complex environment that Eskom operates in, one needs to ask: What leadership type is required to manage a complex entity like Eskom in a dynamic and ever-changing environment as the current leadership framework of responsible and ethical leadership is not working? The VUCA environment includes human behaviour as it is shaped by human behaviour and past events. Thus, how has the external environment and leadership contributed to a VUCA environment within Eskom?

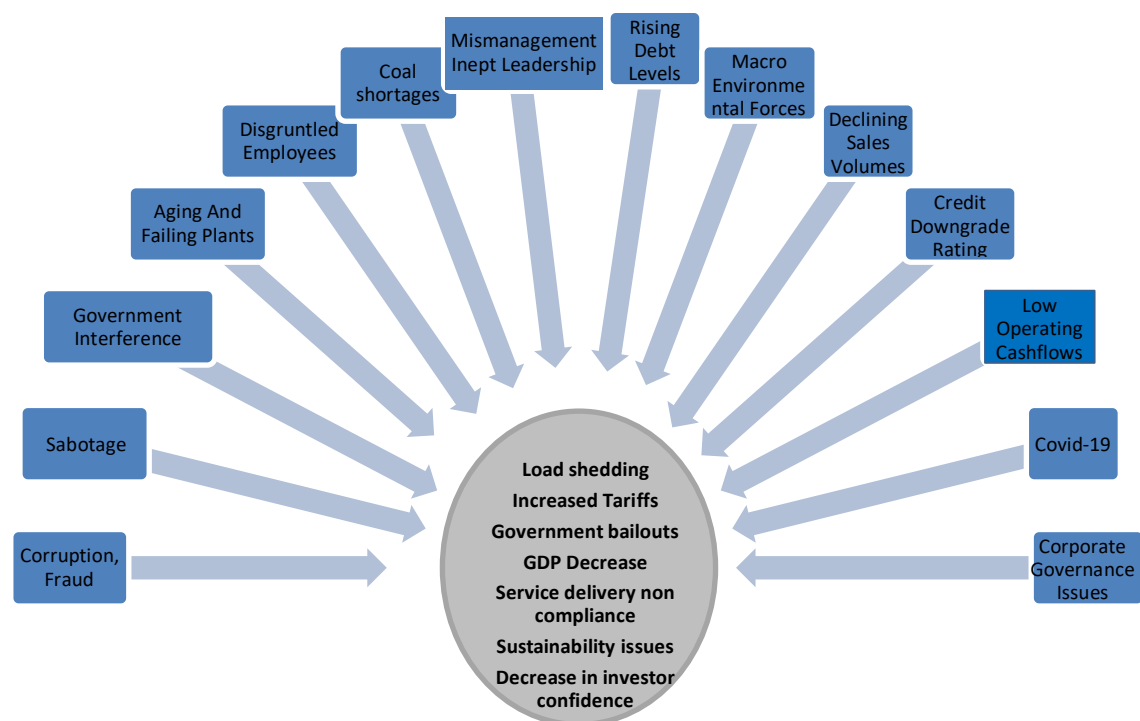
#### **4.4 Challenges Affecting Eskom**

Challenges impacting the business landscape are far and wide. As discussed in Chapter 1 and Chapter 3, the unpredictable changes in the macro-environmental forces, ever-increasing environmental crisis, changing demographics, changing family and work structures, feminisation, disruptive technological developments, digitisation, individualism vs pluralism, globalisation, pandemics (Volini et al., 2019, Edge Learning Media, 2019) are some of the challenges leaders of today have to address. Further to this, leaders are not accustomed to working and collaborating in a network of teams across functions. The leadership at Eskom is not immune to these challenges.

In addition to these challenges, the leadership at Eskom have unique challenges apart from linear policies and frameworks that guide and govern the utility. The linearity of policymaking does not consider or accommodate feedback loops, time delays, cause and effect relations that are often distant in time and space, leading to policy resistance, unintended consequences, and counter-intuitive behaviour. These blind spots and gaps do affect leadership's behaviour and actions. "Hindsight biases" hamper the "retrospective analysis of policy failures in a crisis," writes

Tourish (2020, p. 3, citing Nutt 2002). Policymakers and leaders fail to consider and factor in elements of uncertainty and contingency plans when making decisions. Post-crisis analysis reveals salient factors that were found to be the triggers in the crisis were omitted in the planning and effectiveness phase. Thus, highlighting the importance of scenario planning, contingency activities and collective thinking during strategic decision making.

Further to this, according to the briefing by the Department of Public Enterprises, 2019, Eskom has the following key challenges, depicted in Figure 4.4, that are impacting organisational performance and service delivery, with some of the key challenges being: liquidity challenges, operational sustainability, critical skills shortage, cost overruns, ageing infrastructure, low performance and governance issues.



**Figure 4.4: Eskom’s Challenges and the Resulting Effects**

Source: Adapted from MJO (2018); Omarjee (2019); du Toit (2019); No Author (2019); DPE (2019); Eskom Integrated Report (2019 and 2020); Modise (2020)

Unethical behaviour among senior managers and leaders can foster an environment of distrust, disappointment, disloyalty, lack of motivation and even unethical practices among followers hence decreasing organisational efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability (Keselman and Saxe-Braithwaite, 2020). According to the Eskom Integrated Report of 2019, Eskom has taken great strides in putting processes, systems and measures in place to address the corporate governance issues. These include that of: “cooperating with regulatory bodies and law enforcement agencies

on fraud and corruption investigations; the finalisation of open procurement disciplinary cases; lifestyle audits of senior staff; the completion of declaration of interests by the Board and Exco; a renewing of the organisational culture of honesty, transparency, good governance and ethical leadership; creation of new steps to address the governance issues the supply chain process; the removal of irregular supplier contracts and suppliers; the prosecution of employees suspected of malfeasance and corruption; and began the recover monies from suppliers whose contracts are irregular. These initiatives have increased the staff's confidence to rid the organisation of unethical people and practices as the number of whistle-blowing incidents has increased and build trust among staff, society and investors. The Board is committed to driving the implementation of King IV, together with an overall improvement in governance and ethics, to align Eskom with its stated values” sights the Chairman, J Mabuza (Eskom Integrated Report, 2019, p .4-5). Further to this, indicating Eskom’s commitment to improving performance, Eskom suspended the general managers at two power stations due to poor performance that resulted in load shedding being implemented in the country in September 2020, with the CEO citing that discipline is required at the utility (White, 2020).

The year 2020 saw further complexities and challenges being added to Eskom’s already overflowing basket of challenges. According to Eskom’s Integrated Report 2020 (p. 45 & p. 56), the following challenges added further to the worries of the Board at Eskom:

- “The impact of Covid-19 on demand for electricity.
- The potential for a global and local recession and associated impacts on-demand, cost of funding and lender sentiment.
- The impact of the reduction in the value of the Rand against foreign currencies towards the end of March 2020 and the expected impact that this will have on inflation, interest rates and other macroeconomic variables.
- The impact of the sudden and dramatic drop in the price of oil during March 2020, and the potential associated impacts on other commodities, including those produced by some of our major Eskom customers, as well as the price of internationally traded steam coal.
- IT System Failure were several critical applications were affected.”

Callib Cassim, the Chief Financial Officer at Eskom, states that Eskom expects to make a loss of “ approximately R25 billion for the 2021 financial year, with the impact of Covid-19 being a significant contributor to the unsatisfactory outlook” (Eskom Integrated Report 2020, p. 63). Relooking at Eskom’s operational, financial and supply chain efficiencies is required to help

prevent incurring such an immense loss. To achieve this, disruptive innovative thinking and new novel ways of doing business are required.

Taking the above challenges plaguing Eskom into context with Covid-19, globalisation, unpredictable economic trends and customer needs that are continually changing, there is growing evidence to indicate that organisations and SoEs like Eskom are now acknowledging the importance of leadership and the impact leadership styles and qualities have on service delivery, employee health and organisational goals (Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber, 2009; McCarthy, Almeida and Ahrens, 2011; Muchiri, 2011; Muchiri, Cooksey, Di Milia and Walumbwa, 2011; Van Velsor et al., 2016; Velu et al., 2017; Eskom Integrated Report, 2019).

Eskom Board and Exco, as well as Minister Pravin Gordhan, are committed to saving Eskom and turning it around to be the SoE that it once was, profitable and sustainable. Quoting the Chairman of Eskom, J Mabuza: *“Although we face serious financial, operational and structural challenges, we must stay focused on achieving our turnaround plan through disciplined execution and stewardship. We remain committed to contributing to the development of the South African economy, and we recognise our responsibility to society and industry to provide an enabling environment that fosters welfare, economic growth and equality.”* (Eskom Integrated Report, 2019, p. 7)

The Covid-19 virus pandemic has turned business models, including that of Eskom, upside down. An event no one ever thought about yet planned for, has made society, businesses, governments and institutions rethink how they do things, think, act and behave. For some, the virus has had devastating effects resulting in business closures and retrenchments, while others that were able to weather the storm came out more resilient, versatile and agile. This is due to the quick responses by leadership and their team to the fluid and ever-changing environment. Organisations adopted a “we can do” attitude, and where inter and cross-divisional collaboration became the norm to informed decision making. The Covid-19 environment has allowed organisations to review their business, systems, capabilities, and competencies. They had to rethink and re-engineer their operational strategies to deal with Covid-19 and its effects in the short term and consider how their business will adapt to the changing world it will find itself in when it emerges from the storm. The Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting lockdown restrictions placed by countries has caused a global recession. It will take countries and their citizens years to get back onto their feet again. Therefore, an SoE like Eskom in South Africa must re-examine the existing leadership model to deliver greater value to the customer, the people of South Africa whilst remaining cost-efficient, financially sound, and maintaining high corporate governance levels.



#### **4.4 Summary of Chapter**

In conclusion, Eskom was once a key SoE that contributed to the South African economy and beyond; however, since 2008, its profitability had become a serious concern. The high turnover of CEOs, 13, in the last 13 years has caused major instability in the leadership hierarchy. The leadership traits and skills of the leaders placed in this role during these 13 years have come under major scrutiny and have been cited as some of the key reasons for the downfall of the entity. Taking the VUCA environment into consideration and the Covid-19 black swan event and Moody's downgrading of the economy to junk status, it is important to ascertain if the current Eskom leadership possess the required qualities and traits for leading the VUCA environment and especially post the Covid-19 virus aftermath. The following, Chapter 5: Research Methodology and Research Design, outlays the research philosophy, research design, mixed-method research design process and research design implementation.

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## **CHAPTER 5:**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

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*“What we find changes who we become.”*

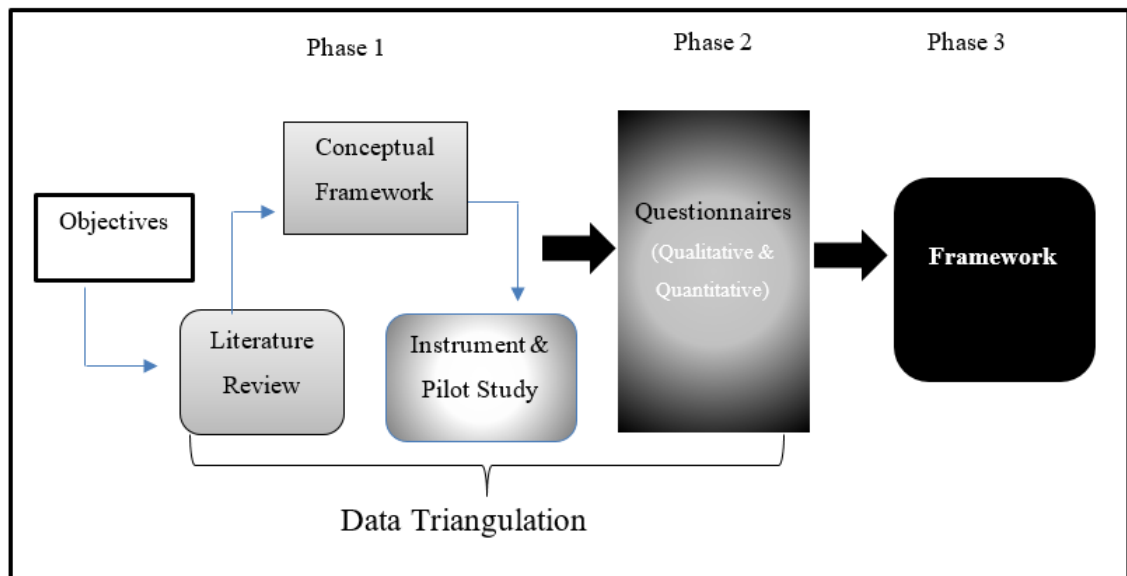
(Peter Morville, n.d.)

## **5.1 Introduction**

The earlier chapters presented the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that guide this study. These frameworks guided the knowledge and understanding of leadership in a volatile environment as a central component of this study and informed how the research was undertaken. Mackey and Gass (2016) assert that certain criteria must be taken into account when undertaking research using a specified set of procedures and tools. This entails a clear and specific statement of the research objectives, a detailed proposal that logically outlines the process of the research per the ethical requirements, an outline of the research design underpinned by the chosen research philosophy as well a detailed account of how the data was collected, analysed and presented to ensure the theories are sufficiently substantiated. This chapter presents an overview of the research proceedings for a mixed-method study which was underpinned by the worldview of post-positivism and interpretivism. The course of selecting participants, attaining, examining and interpreting information will be clarified to offer an understanding of the research procedures and tools that were administered.

## **5.2 Research Overview**

Research methodology is described as a specific set of procedures and tools used in a systematic method of acquiring, collating and analysing data to interpret the findings on a particular topic (Silva, 2017). This investigation originates from a clear and distinct purpose that guides the collection and clarifying of data for intelligible and concise deductions to evolve. Figure 5.1 provides a synopsis of the research process followed to fulfil the requirements of a rigorous examination of leadership in a volatile environment.



**Figure 5.1: Overview of the Research Approach**  
Source: Author (2020)

### 5.3 Research Philosophy

The fundamentals of any scientific research are underpinned by some philosophical assumption of the world that provides a direction in a specific manner on how information about a phenomenon should be acquired, analysed and used (Creswell and Plano-Clark, 2011; Žukauskas, Vveinhardt, and Andriukaitienė, 2018). Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, (2019, p. 130) define research philosophy as “a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge in relation to research”. The three elements within a paradigm include:

- Ontology is about the nature of reality;
- Epistemology is about understanding how to gain knowledge and the relationship; between the researcher and the perceived reality.
- Methodology relates to the techniques the researcher uses to explore reality.

Table 5.1 below shows a detailed comparison of the various paradigms.

**Table 5.1: Comparison of the Paradigms and the associated elements**

Paradigm	Ontology	Epistemology	Research methods	Data collection measures
<b>Constructivism</b>	Relativistic reality is socially or experimentally based, local, and specific in nature	The knowledge consists of mental structures that are surrounded by the relative agreements	Case studies, Interview,	Interview Observation Document study Image data analysis
<b>Interpretivism</b>	Researcher and reality are inseparable	Knowledge is based on the abstract descriptions of meanings, formed of human experiences	Case studies, interviews, phenomenology, ethnography, ethnomethodology	Interview Observation Document study Image data analysis
<b>Pragmatism</b>	The reality is ambiguous, but based on the language, history, and culture respect	Knowledge is derived from experience. The researcher restores subjectively assigned and “objective” meaning of other actions	Interview, case study, surveys	There can be used measures from positivist as well as from interpretivist paradigm, for example, interviews, observations, testing and experimentation.
<b>Positivism</b>	The reality is objective and perceived	Acquisition of knowledge is not related to values and moral content	Survey, experiment, quasi-experiment	Experiments Half experiments Tests Scales
<b>Post-positivism</b>	Reality exists however, reality and opinions are imperfect with errors, thus knowing the truth about reality with certainty is not absolute	Knowledge is hypothetical. Falsification of hypotheses using rigorous techniques to ensure that empirical data, and not the impressions of the researcher, drives the findings	Survey, experiment, quasi-experiment, interviews, observation studies mixed-method	Measurements Structured questionnaires Interviews Observation

Source: Adapted from Žukauskas et al. (2018)

### **5.3.1 Paradigm Alignment with this Research**

This study is situated in both the post-positivist and interpretivist paradigms, as postulated and justified in chapter 2.

#### **5.3.1.1 Post-positivism**

Post positivists believe in objectivity; however, they are aware that people and researchers cannot be objective in their views as their social-cultural experiences and worldviews fundamentally influence them, and these views are subject to change. “Knowledge is fluid” (Kroeze, 2012, p .2). Hence, reality and opinions are imperfect with errors; thus, knowing the truth about reality with certainty is not absolute. Thus, study results will be fallible with hypotheses being falsified instead of being proved (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

They believe that we construct our world view based on how we perceive it, and these beliefs and observations are imperfect as well as the methods we use to examine the world, hence the creation of our world view will be imperfect with only partial objectivity of the world be attained (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Post-positivists know that getting reality correct is impossible to achieve; however, they will still persevere to achieve that goal with the hope of attaining some form of objectivity. In an attempt to achieve this, multiple methodologies with a greater focus on qualitative techniques are used to cross-validate their findings. Strategies or theories that are premised on post-positivist thinking can be changed to adapt to the situation it is presented with. Nothing is cast in stone. Knowledge is constantly changing and adapting. Philosopher Karl Popper eloquently argued that researchers cannot, in reality, discover the full truth or all the knowledge of the world but will attempt to falsify what they know with their testing (McLeod, 2020). Researchers must always be open to uncertainty and new views. Positivists thinking and findings are premised on probability as opposed to certainty of reality.

Contrary to the above-mentioned research philosophy is the interpretivist paradigm.

#### **5.3.1.2 Interpretivism**

Interpretivist paradigm is premised on the interpretation of the world is done in a very subjective manner based on what the researcher perceives to be of interest to him or her. Knowledge is created based on our social interactions, and it is transient (Berger and Luckmann, 1966 cited in Dharamsi and Scott, 2009). When observing the social world, it is believed that the researcher plays a specific role in valuing subjectivity and rejecting positivism. The interpretivist paradigm postulates that individuals gain knowledge based on their individual experiences, which are influenced by their history, political stance, social, cultural and learning experiences (Dharmasi and Scott, 2009). Emmanuel Kant states, “that we not only experience the world as it presents itself to us, but we also interpret it” (Dharamsi and Scott (2009, p. 843). That interpretation is

influenced by our beliefs, values, opinions and experiences; thus, one cannot remove it when engaging with a phenomenon; ultimately, it will influence how one collects, interprets and analyses information (Ryan, 2018).

Further to this, interpretivism argues that reality is not a single simple layer but one that is multi-layered filled with complexity. A single situation can be understood and interpreted in several ways based on an individual's experiences and how they perceive reality. Different people have differing views of the world and what may be real (Ryan, 2018). Thomas Kuhn (1970), the physicist, claims that viewing science as being completely objective is misleading as the researcher's subjective beliefs play a key role in constructing their knowledge and interpreting those findings. Bias will inevitably be present.

Accepting both the stances, based on the phenomena under study, leadership in a volatile environment, undertaking both a liberal worldview and an interpretivist perspective is crucial when attempting to understand leaders behaviours in a volatile environment. Leaders in the current environment do not function in isolation, and their thinking and actions are influenced by past theories, experiences and lessons, social-cultural influences, and micro and macro environmental forces. Leaders behaviours change based on circumstances, people they are interacting with, and situations they find themselves in. It is constantly changing; thus, adopting one view may limit our understanding of leadership in a VUCA world like Covid-19. It is vital to look at leadership using different lenses to understand the different perspectives and the subjective nature of the multiple realities that leaders often construct in their minds. In the study, we need to unpack:

- How does the leader and his team in a volatile environment make sense of the world surrounding them?
- Is their upbringing and or experiences influencing how they see the world? How is it influencing their thoughts and behaviours?
- As a researcher, how might my subjective views influence how I look at leadership in a volatile environment?
- From a post-positivist perspective, we will need to explore and unpack how the research problem is defined and the assumptions that have been made?
- What are the various sources of evidence leaders use to inform their decision making and behaviours, and do they have the evidence to support their stance?
- Do all the sources of evidence lead to the same assumption? Where are the differences?
- Are there other researchers or experts in the field of study that have come to similar conclusions?
- How is complexity being addressed in the work environment? Who is driving it?
- Are solutions to complex problems welcomed or discouraged?

- Is the environment conducive for solving complex problems?
- Do solutions provided to complex problems take into account the past, present and future perspectives?
- Is there room for adapting the strategies as change occurs?

From a VUCA and Theory U perspective, the post-positivist worldview and interpretivism have parallels with the work of Jackson (2003) on creative holism, also referred to as critical systems thinking. Jackson (2003) postulates that total systems intervention warns that the problems managers face today are too complex and diverse to be handled with quick fixes and uninformed decision making. Rather a full concerted, prolonged, all-inclusive effort and strategy are required. A total systems intervention and thinking calls for managers to (Jackson, 2003, p. 324):

1. Create a supportive and enabling environment that allows creativity to be explored at its highest level when analysing the problem and seeking solutions.
2. Assist managers in helping them evaluate the usefulness of strategies in their current and different situations and solutions.
3. Reject a one size fits all situations thinking.
4. Ensure the teams have all the required resources and problem-solving strategies at their disposal as and when required.
5. Take into account various considerations, namely: “practical, technical and emancipatory”, when assessing, planning, implementing and evaluating interventions.
6. Provide the necessary resources, learning and development systems that will enable managers to do “critical self-reflection” to help improve their leadership, management and problem-solving skills.

These six key points align with the key constructs of the SCAILES framework and Theory U for leadership in a VUCA environment.

## 5.4 Research Design

A research design is an overall direction or path the study follows to address the research questions whilst ensuring the validity of the results. It stipulates the methods to be used in collecting, analysing and interpreting the data. However, the choice of the research methodology will be dependent on the research topic, aim and questions. Bearing this in mind, it is crucial to select the appropriate research method and design for the study so that the selected procedures will meet the research outcomes. Research designs may take three forms, namely: exploratory, explanatory and descriptive research. (Saunders et al., 2016)

This study employed an exploratory research design as the researcher aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the leadership of SoEs in a volatile environment. This phenomenon has not been



widely researched in South Africa. Due to the research being structured and employing a mixed-method methodology, new insight and perspectives about leadership in a volatile environment will emerge, allowing the study to build on, explain and or test the theory (Rahi, 2017). Applying the selected research techniques to the vast amount of knowledge gleaned from the literature review will be validated to attain and understand the empirical data in a manner that will authenticate and or correlate the theoretical findings.

In an attempt to approve and disprove leadership behaviour in a volatile environment like Covid-19, a cross-sectional design was used as the population at Eskom was identified and tested within a specified period (01 September to October 31<sup>st</sup> 2020). The period April 2020 to 20 September 2020 in South Africa was very challenging due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The country was placed under a state of disaster with stringent lockdown regulations on the 26<sup>th</sup> of March, with lockdown levels only easing to level 1 on the 20<sup>th</sup> of September. This impacted all sectors and employees of the economy. Access was minimal and, at times, non-existent. Due to the unforeseen challenges that Covid-19 had presented to Eskom's leadership, time became a very precious resource, and access to the sample population posed a problem. Coupled with the stringent regulations and restrictions in conducting research at Eskom, this made data collection extremely difficult. Collecting the data using this design was most preferred as this study was undertaken amidst a volatile period, thus enabling the respondents to ascertain if their current leadership behaviour was relevant for a volatile environment like the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **5.4.1 Mixed Methodology Justification**

Since this research depends on the human science of setting, viewpoints, commitment and importance, with approval through the development of the comparison of reciprocity and inconsistency, the postpositivist and interpretivist perspective is seen as a common base from which this exploration unfolds. Based on the discussion above, it is evident that both post-positivism and interpretivism have similar tenets, lending themselves to the use of multiple research techniques. This will add immense value to answer the research questions and provide a holistic view of leadership in a volatile environment. To this end, a mixed-method study using qualitative and quantitative research approaches have been adopted.

Mixed-method research model combines qualitative and quantitative research methods, thereby enriching research findings as to the strength of one method balances off the weakness of the other (Onwuegbuzie and Collins, 2007, Creswell and Plano-Clark, 2007; Williams, 2007; Creswell, 2014; Leavy, 2017; Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

This study dismisses the notion of the incompatibility thesis that that diverse information types and their strategies for investigation are not compatible with each other and hence cannot be utilised together in the same research study (Howe, 1988). Thus, in this study, the researcher believes that a careful combination of various data types and analysis tools will enable the revelation of various contrasting, complementary, and thought-provoking dimensions of leadership in a volatile environment, thereby increasing the depth of understanding and rich fullness of the findings. In a black swan event (as discussed in Chapter 2) like Covid-19 combined with the general complexity of social problems in a globalised world, solutions to these problems are increasingly becoming more multifaceted, requiring timeous actioning and creative, innovative thinking and strategies.

This research approach is most suitable for this study as it aligns with post-positivist and interpretivist thinking ideologies. These two thoughts advocate the understanding of the whole and the importance of in-depth understanding and interpretation of different realities and perspectives. As Churchman (1968, p. 3 cited in Pillay, 2014, p. 68) argues, "How can we design improvement without understanding the whole system?" Integrating qualitative and quantitative research techniques is the preferred option to better enable veracity to emerge from this study. Mixed-method research helps fill in the gaps that both qualitative and quantitative research presents. It helps paint a more holistic representation of the data by highlighting trends, commonality, in-depth information from respondents, and general deductions.

To help better understand mix-method research, a short synopsis of qualitative and quantitative research will be done.

### **5.4.2 Quantitative Research Method**

Saunders et al., (2016) and Creswell and Creswell (2018) assert that quantitative research is located within the positivist paradigm, with the data collection methods being very structured. This methodology uses numerical data that is measurable to quantify the problem and determine relationships between variables, uncover patterns and test comparisons and theories. Due to the rigid data collection methods and large sample sizes, the data is often generalisable to the larger population. The methods used to collect the data are close-ended questionnaires and experiments. These methods are structured and include surveys with closed-ended questions. (Creswell and Creswell, 2018) The major drawback of quantitative research is the inability to delve deeper into the questioning and not addressing the ‘why’ of the phenomenon under study.

### **5.4.3 Qualitative Research Method**

Addressing the shortcoming of quantitative research, qualitative research addresses the “what”, “how”, and “why” questions of the phenomenon under study. Reflection is a key component in

qualitative research. This method aims to collect in-depth, rich data where the researcher constantly dives deeper into the questions based on the respondent's responses and revisits the interpretations in an attempt to understand the meaning behind those responses. Qualitative research is located within the interpretivism paradigm, where the goal is to uncover the hidden truth and understand the different realities and perspectives. The data collection methods are interviews, focus group discussions, observations and ethnographic studies. Questions are open-ended to enable the researcher to unpack the reasons and feelings behind the provided response (Rahi, 2017; Saunders et al., 2016). It is difficult to generalise to the majority of the population as the sample size is often small (Jason and Glenwick, 2016).

#### **5.4.4 Steps in the Research Progression**

**Phase 1:** Involved identifying the research objectives and thereafter conducting a thorough review of literature, particularly in the field of leadership, leadership in a volatile environment, leadership theories and SoEs. Based on the literature review findings, a conceptual framework, namely the SCAILES Framework, was selected, which informed the design of the research instruments and questions for leadership in a volatile environment. The instruments were piloted on key academics in the field of research and employees. Responses gathered from the pilot study refined the research instrument further. These steps formed the initial steps and blocks in constructing a feasible leadership framework in a volatile environment.

**Phase 2:** Employing a convergent parallel design (refer to Figure 5.2), using a survey approach, the questionnaires (employing a mixed-method approach) was administered online by the Human Resources Department at Eskom. Data were analysed using both qualitative and quantitative techniques.

**Phase 3:** Upon interpreting the data in conjunction with the data triangulation, a feasible conceptual framework was postulated. This was underpinned by the worldview of post-positivism and interpretivism, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

The study employed a convergent parallel design. Under this design, the researcher concurrently collects quantitative and qualitative data. Each method is given equal importance while keeping the data strands independent of each other during the research process. The two strands of data are mixed during the interpretation stage. Figure 5.2 below depicts the convergent parallel design undertaken for this study. Parallel variant databases were kept for the different strands of data and the data merged once all data was collected and interpretation commenced.



### 5.5.2 Target Population for the Survey

Based on the study's aim and the research objectives, the targeted population consisted of 3 strata: senior-level managers (E Band) and executive members (F Band) at Eskom Holdings SOC Ltd and employees (MPS Band) depicted in Table 5.2. The executive members were targeted as they are the key decision-makers and the individuals who develop the organisation's strategic direction. The senior managers then take the agreed-upon strategy, for the relevant divisions, to the lower levels within the organisation to be implemented. Mid to lower-level managers were excluded from the senior manager survey. The employees were surveyed as the researcher wanted to establish if there is a correlation between what the manager believes his/her behaviour traits are compared to how the employees perceive their manager's behaviour traits. The population size figures were provided by the human resources department in March 2019, as illustrated below.

➤ Employees (MPS Band)	7193
➤ Senior Managers (E Band)	326
➤ Executive Members (F Band)	7
➤ <b>Total</b>	<b>7526</b>

### 5.5.3 Sampling Strategy

To survey the entire population group would prove time-consuming as well as costly. Thus, a portion of the population was selected to complete the survey (Rahi, 2017). Sampling assisted in systematically and scientifically identifying individuals that would represent the larger population. The key objective of sampling is to create a representation of the study phenomena, decrease inherent bias and subjectivity and enable the researcher to make inferences from the data that could be generalised to the larger population (Rahi, 2017; Saunders et al., 2016).

- **Formulae for Derivation of Sample Size**

The sample size was determined using the computation postulated by Cochran (1977), as illustrated below.

SS = Sample Size

FP = Proportion where the population is not known (Common to use 0.5)

SS Adjusted = Sample Size Adjusted

(Z-score is 1.96 for a 95% confidence level, with a desired 5% margin of error)

$$SS = (Z\text{-score})^2 * p * (1-p) / (\text{margin of error})^2$$

$$SS = (1.96)^2 * 0.5 * (1-0.5) / (0.05)^2$$

$$SS = 3.8416 * 0.25 / 0.0025$$

$$SS = 385$$

#### **This study's sample size calculation:**

$$SS \text{ Adjusted} = (SS) / 1 + [(SS - 1) / \text{population}]$$

$$SS \text{ Adjusted} = 385 / (1 + (384 / (7193 + 326)))$$

$$SS \text{ Adjusted} = 366$$

Thus, using the calculation results above, for this study, the targeted total sample size for the quantitative study is 366 with an estimated population of 7519 (MPS +E) was used, while the entire executive member population (7) was targeted due to the total population size being low. To attain the targeted sample size for the employee and senior managers, random sampling was employed. There is always the risk of survey results not being representative of the target population; thus, it is important to factor in the population size, the margin of error, confidence level and standard deviation when determining the sample size (Saunders et al., 2016; Rahi 2017; Qualtrics, 2020).

**Table 5.2: Target Population Size**

<b>Employee</b>	<b>Popula tion</b>	<b>Computed Minimum Sample required</b>	<b>No. of Questionnaires Returned as a percentage of the minimum sample required</b>
Employees (MPS)	7193	183	45/190= 25%
Senior Managers (E Band)	326	183	65/190 = 36%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7519</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>110/366 = 30%</b>

Source: Author (2020)

To attain generalisation of the study findings, a fair representation of the sample from the target population must be drawn. However, making inferences based on the findings from a cross-sectional design study beyond the study's target population must be done with caution due to the challenges associated with external validity (Bryman et al., 2017). A 60% or more response rate is often the researchers' desired goal (Mukonoweshuro, 2017).

**Table 5.3: Determining required response rates**

		Variability in population					
	Size of population	60% = a sample size of	50% = a sample size of	40% = a sample size of	30% = a sample size of	20% = a sample size of	10% = a sample size of
Employee	183	109	91	73	55	37	18
Senior Manager	183	109	91	73	55	37	18

Source: Author (2020)

For this study, it is estimated that the minimum targeted population for the senior managers (183) will have a variability ratio between 20% - 30%, while the employees (183) will have a 10%-20% variability, based on the following factors:

- Eskom's culture and organisational dynamics
- This survey does not fall part of Eskom's survey; hence employees are not obliged to participate
- Gender differences
- Age differences
- Period of employment
- The period when the survey was conducted: during Covid-19 pandemic and load-shedding

The study aimed to achieve a 50% response rate but was cognisant of the factors influencing the response rate. It was anticipated that a 20 to 30% response rate might be achieved, thus weakening generalising to the wider study population.

### **Quantitative Study – Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

Senior Manager Inclusion Criteria: Senior managers at Eskom; who have more than one subordinate reporting to them; older than 30 years; both male and females; all race groups; and who had been in the role for five years or more were targeted.

Employee Inclusion Criteria: Employed for more than a year; all genders and all race groups.

Senior Manager Exclusion Criteria: Middle to lower-level managers at Eskom; senior managers with one and nil subordinates; individuals younger than 30 years and less than five years in the role.

Employee Exclusion Criteria: Employed less than a year

For the qualitative study, there were no exclusion criteria as all executive members were targeted.

## **5.6 Data Collection**

To address the research questions, the following channels were used to source the data.

- Literature – journal articles, media reports, published research on SoEs, Eskom Integrated Reports (annual financial reports), Eskom Website.
- Survey - Questionnaires (open-ended and semi-structured questionnaires)

### **5.6.1 Research Instrument - Questionnaire**

Saunders et al. (2016) advise that when researching business and management phenomena, the most preferred choice is survey research. Survey research is deductive in nature, where the researcher aims to explain the causes of the problem under study using casual or comparative means. Survey research is often used in exploratory and descriptive research studies. A questionnaire is the data collection tool for survey research. A questionnaire is a data collection tool where a set of questions are asked in a pre-determined order, often with a pre-determined set of responses (in a quantitative study) a participant can select from (de Vaus, 2002).

In general, questionnaires are very structured in nature, using close-ended questioning where data is in numerical form. Data gleaned can be analysed using either descriptive or inferential statistics.

Questionnaires are not restricted to close-ended questions and can also be in the form of open-ended questions. When designing the instrument, it is important that the questions are clear, unambiguous, and short. In an open-ended survey, it is vital to ensure that probing questions are included so in-depth formation can be attained from the respondent. Data attained from an open-ended survey is qualitative and analysed using either thematic or content analysis.

To complement the close-ended questions in this study, open-ended questions were included in the research instrument to ascertain how the senior managers' leadership changed during the Covid-19 pandemic. It was important to capture this insight as the managers had just personally lived and worked through this pandemic, thus shedding light on key leadership traits that were predominant during a VUCA event like the pandemic and key takeaways that leaders can use to build themselves and their team to thrive in the new world that is full of volatility and uncertainty.

The chosen survey research instrument for this study was an online questionnaire. The reasons the researcher opted to use an online questionnaire for both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of this study were that:



1. The sample population under study was not easily accessible due to the nature of their roles and position in the company.
2. The policy and regulations at Eskom prohibit the disclosure of employee information and access to employees by individuals external from the organisation.
3. The study was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, where a state of disaster was declared by the government in South African, placing the country under one of the strictest lock-down regulations in the world. The movement of citizens was restricted, and business operating environments were extremely challenging, with time being a very precious resource.

### 5.6.2 Questionnaire Construction and Testing

The questionnaire for this study was constructed based on the aim and the research questions. Literature review on the preferred leadership qualities for a VUCA environment and the SCAILES Framework (Moore, 2015) informed the design of the questions. Due to Eskom's policy and regulations, the researcher could not interview the executives or email them directly. The researcher was not allowed to have any access to the staff or details of the staff of Eskom; thus, an anonymous online survey was employed.

#### Quantitative Research

The employee and senior manager questionnaires were semi-structured questionnaires (refer to Appendix 7 & Appendix 8). Sections A to C were close-ended questions, while Section D allowed the respondents to provide their viewpoints. The questionnaire comprised of the following four sections, which addressed the associated research question:

Section	Title	Research Question Number
A	Biographical	
B	Perceived key leadership qualities for leaders in a volatile environment	2
C	Leadership behaviour traits	3
D	Leadership qualities during a crisis	4 & 5

#### Qualitative Research

The executive member questionnaire (refer to Appendix 9), an open-ended questionnaire consisting of 2 sections: Section A - Biographical Information and Section B – Leadership Approach. Section B asked the executives to comment on their current leadership style, the leadership qualities they perceived as important, the key challenges impacting their leadership

role, and how the Covid-19 pandemic impacted their leadership approach. These questions addressed the following research questions:

1. What is the perceived impact of leadership behaviour on achieving Eskom's goals?
2. Do the leadership qualities perceived to be important by the leaders at Eskom align with the leadership qualities required for a VUCA environment?
3. Are the leaders at Eskom equipped with the required skills and qualities to succeed in a VUCA environment?
4. How did the Covid-19 pandemic shape leadership behaviour at Eskom?
5. What do leaders at Eskom believe are the critical take-aways for them from the Covid-19 pandemic?

The instrument's design in terms of presentation, layout, length and clarity of the questions impacts the response rate and the integrity of the data collected. Microsoft Forms was used to create the questionnaires. The instruments were pilot tested to ensure reliability as well as validity.

### **5.6.3 Data Collection and Survey Response Rate**

The study was guided by and abided by the ethical clearance letter of the University of KwaZulu-Natal as per Appendix 10.

Ethical approval to conduct the study and collect data from the employees was obtained from Eskom (refer to Appendix 11). Following the requirements of conducting research in an ethical manner, informed consent forms were prepared for employees participating in the study. The informed consent forms ensured that the participants' dignity, well-being, anonymity, and confidentiality were maintained. Informed consent formed the first part of the online questionnaire. Each participant had to consent to participate in the study, which was voluntary and were free to end the survey at any time. If they indicated yes to the informed consent, only then the formal questionnaire be activated. If a participant declined to participate, the questionnaire closed, and the participant could not proceed further.

The formal data collection period was between 01 September 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020. Using MS Forms as the survey platform, the survey links were sent to the targeted sample population by the Human Resources Department at Eskom. At the end of September, the survey response rate from all three strata was extremely low; thus, a reminder to complete the survey was sent out to the sample population on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September. Despite the reminders from the Human Resources Department as of the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020, the targeted sample size was not achieved. The response rate for all three strata was dismal. In January 2021, a further request was sent to the executive team members, with no other responses were received.

A total of three hundred and sixty-six questionnaires were administered to the various respondents, as depicted in Table 5.2, and seven open-ended questions were sent to the executive members. The total response rate was 30%, all strata inclusive and response rate per strata: Executive Members (3) 42%; Senior Managers (65) 36% and Employees (45) 25%. The response rate achieved was not alarming as it was anticipated at the onset of the study that there would be resistance in gaining access to the sample and getting the respondents to complete the questionnaire. The Covid-19 pandemic and the reoccurrence of load-shedding to the country had further exacerbated the situation, with my many managers and employees being placed under extreme pressure and challenges. Due to this not being a mandatory Eskom survey, the employees were not obliged to complete the survey, hence their reluctance.

## 5.7 Data Analysis

### 5.7.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative data gleaned from the employee and senior manager questionnaires were analysed using the statistical analysis software package Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0. The data from Microsoft Forms was exported into an excel spreadsheet and transferred to SPSS. All the quantitative data were coded with categorical numerical values for identification purposes. The data was then checked for errors that may have occurred during data capturing and coding to improve data accuracy. A copy of the raw data and the analysed data is kept safely and submitted to the University of KwaZulu Natal's Graduate School of Business.

Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) were performed on the data. To help describe the sample population, biographical information measures of central tendency, variation and descriptive statistical analysis were performed. The analysed data was presented in the form of charts and tables.

The following statistical analyses were performed on the quantitative data for both the employee and senior manager data (Rahi, 2017; Saunders et al., 2019):

- *Descriptive statistics*: Inclusion of means and standard deviations, where applicable.
- *Kruskal Wallis Test*: Non-parametric equivalent to ANOVA (analysis of variance). A test for several independent samples that compares two or more groups of cases in one variable.
- *Mann Whitney U Test*: This is a non-parametric equivalent to the independent samples t-test. The analysis was done to test if the perceptions between employees and managers differ for the questions on leadership qualities and leadership behaviour traits.

- Binomial test: Tests whether a significant proportion of respondents select one of the possible two responses. This can be extended when data with more than two response options are split into two distinct groups. This analysis was performed on the leadership behaviour traits question.
- One sample t-test: Tests whether a mean score is significantly different from a scalar value. This test was performed on the factor analysis results for leadership qualities and leadership behaviour traits.
- Independent samples t-test: A test that compares two independent groups of cases. The analysis was done to test if the perceptions between employees and managers differ for the questions on leadership qualities and leadership behaviour traits. These questions are identical. The one set reflects the employees' perceptions regarding their managers; the other set reflects the managers' perceptions regarding themselves.
- Spearman's Correlation Analysis: A non-parametric measure of ordinal data assesses the strength and direction of a relationship between two variables. This analysis was performed on the leadership qualities and leadership behaviour traits for senior managers.
- Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA): Factor analysis using Principal Axis Factoring with Promax Rotation was applied to the leadership qualities and leadership behaviour trait items to explore their structure. Single composite measures for these factors are found by calculating the average scores across the factor's items.

**Relationship testing was conducted on the quantitative data for the senior managers as follows:**

Relationship between demographic data and leadership behaviour traits factors	<p>H<sub>0</sub>: There is no association between demographic data and leadership behaviour traits factors.</p> <p>H<sub>A</sub>: There is an association between demographic data and leadership behaviour traits factors.</p>
Relationship between demographic data and leadership qualities	<p>H<sub>0</sub>: There is no association between demographic data and leadership qualities.</p> <p>H<sub>A</sub>: There is an association between demographic data and leadership qualities.</p>

The following tests were conducted:

**Leadership Qualities:** Independent samples t-test was used to test for significant differences in these measures across gender; ANOVA (or Welch if necessary) were used for age group and qualification.

**Leadership Behaviour Traits:** Mann Whitney test was used for gender; Kruskal Wallis, followed by Mann Whitney if necessary, were used for leadership behaviour traits.

### **5.7.2 Qualitative Data Analysis**

In terms of the qualitative data, the open-ended question responses were coded and analysed using a computer software package, Nvivo 12 Pro. A Framework Approach was adopted as the research objectives were stated at the beginning of the study, and the study sought to gather inductive knowledge and information from senior managers and executives on how their leadership approach had changed during Covid-19 and what were the key takeaways from this pandemic that will shape their future behaviour. Thematic content analysis and line-by-line analysis was conducted on the data to identify themes (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout, 2014). An inductive approach to the analysis was used, inductively coding themes using Nvivo 12 Pro. This analysis method helped the researcher systematically sifting through the voluminous data to identify themes on how senior managers' behaviours had changed during the pandemic and if it was reflective of what the literature review had indicated were the key behaviour traits and qualities for leading in a VUCA situation. Word clouds and Tree Tags were determined from the data and thereafter, the main and sub-themes were drawn. The data attained from key takeaways from the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as literature findings, were used to develop a feasible leadership framework that supports the sustainability of Eskom in a volatile environment.

Both the qualitative and quantitative data were triangulated with the literature findings.

## **5.8 Reliability**

### **5.8.1 Quantitative Data Reliability**

Saunders et al., (2019); Bryman et al., (2017); Leedy and Ormrod (2014), and Neuman (2011) advise on the importance of ensuring rigour and clarity of the questionnaire to ensure consistency and dependability in the results should the study be replicated by another researcher using the same design procedures while using a different sample and at a different time. The questionnaires were assessed for test-retest, internal consistency, and alternative form during the design stage to ensure reliability.

Test-Retest reliability assesses the instrument's viability producing the same results when administered to the same group of people at different times (Leedy and Ormrod, 2014). The quantitative questionnaires in the study comprised mainly multiple-choice questions on a five-point Likert scale. Due to the questions being structured, it allows for the instrument to be used

in another study to be administered to other research participants. The responses to the questions will differ; however, the analysis of the responses will inadvertently produce a similar pattern of findings if re-administered at different times.

To ensure the instrument was representative in a cultural context, meaning that the instrument attains the same results across different groups of cultures (Neuman, 2011), the instrument did not ask for the participants' race or culture and was context neutral.

Internal consistency was calculated using the Cronbach Alpha coefficients to further minimise risk on the quantitative research instrument. This measure uses a set of variables in the questionnaire to determine if the same set of respondents provides similar responses. The result of the Cronbach Alpha test scores for each factor analysis is presented in chapter 6.

A pilot study was conducted for quantitative and qualitative questionnaires to pre-test the instruments on a small sample before applying it to the main targeted sample. Conducting a pilot study was useful. It helped the researcher determine if the questions are phrased appropriately, free of ambiguity and complexity, addresses the research objectives and is user-friendly, thus reducing the risk of failure (Rahi, 2017; Saunders et al., 2019).

To test the research instrument (semi-structured and open-ended questionnaire), a pilot study was conducted from 8 June 2020 to 12 June 2020. Two senior managers at a state-owned enterprise, an Academic Leader and two Professors specialising in leadership at a local university and two academics in the field of Leadership and Management at a private higher education institute had reviewed the instruments. Further to this, in-depth discussions were held with the supervisor and the researcher on constructing the questions and the design and layout. Feedback provided was used to refine the instrument so that the questions were clearer, shorter, free of ambiguity, and the variables reflected the same construct in similar findings. A few questions were removed as it was repetitive, and the instrument was too long. The data analyst, employed to analyse the data, further refined the questionnaire to clarify the sentences and assessed if it addressed the research questions. Upon the changes being effected, the finalised instruments were not changed.

To ensure further reliability of the instruments as postulated by Leedy and Ormrod (2014), the following measures were undertaken:

1. The administration of the instrument was done in a consistent manner. All the instruments were administered using the same survey platform, MSForms, and in a similar format. The Human Resources Department at Eskom emailed the links to the sample population using a standard introductory message. Respondents were informed that the survey is voluntary, and anonymity would be maintained. This was per the Ethics Clause, and each participant had to complete the informed consent before participating in the study.

2. The questions were objective and informed by literature. All questions were free of prejudice and subjectivity, controversial or political statements. Participants were asked to select responses from pre-defined choices based on their perceptions, experience and knowledge.
3. Having adequate research skills is important when conducting research. The researcher had undergone various research training workshops held by the University of KwaZulu Natal Graduate School Business between March 2019 and October 2020.

To meet the replicability criterion, a detailed account of the research design, sampling methodology, instrument design and administration and the data coding analysis and interpretation has been explained, thus providing adequate information for other researchers to replicate the study.

### **5.8.2 Qualitative Data Reliability**

To ensure the quality of the qualitative research, the criteria of trustworthiness and authenticity were met. In terms of trustworthiness, four criteria must be met: credibility, dependability, transferability and conformability.

- Credibility (relates to internal validity) was achieved by having open-ended questions that were clear, specific and free of ambiguity. It allowed the participants to respond in their own words based on their experiences and perceptions. Participation in the study was voluntary. The participants' self-worth was not compromised at any time. (Shenton, 2004)
- Transferability (relates to external validity and generalisability) relates to how the study findings can be applied to another study or situation and generalised to the wider population (Shenton, 2004). The researcher provided detailed information on the organisation, sample population, research process, data collection methods and period, and analysis. However, it must be noted that the study was only on Eskom; thus, generalisation to other SoE's must be made with caution. The researcher wishing to use the data must assess a goodness of fit (van Vuuren, 2010) between the results and its applicability to a different context.
- Dependability (relates to reliability). In qualitative research, variation in results is a given; however, consistency can be achieved by ensuring that a detailed description of the research design and the implementation of it is provided; data collection methodology and results must be documented, and an appraisal of the project and research process effectiveness must be conducted. (Shenton, 2004) For the study, the researcher provided a detailed account of the purpose of the research (as per chapter 1), the research design, the construction and piloting of the instrument, and the sampling

methodology, data collection methods and analysis and review of the data. All the data collection methods and analyses have been stored on a DVD. Thus, this provides adequate information for the study to meet the requirements of transferability and dependability.

- Confirmability (relates to objectivity) refers to the researcher's ability to act in good faith by limiting personal opinions, values and bias. The aim is to remain as objective as possible by ensuring the findings are that of the participants' experiences and opinions and not of the researcher. To achieve conformability, the participants completed the questionnaires independently with no contact or interference from the researcher. All responses were of the experiences, perceptions, beliefs and knowledge of the participant. Responses from the online survey were not altered. It must be noted that achieving confirmability in writing up a thematic narrative is difficult to attain. The researcher strived to uphold objectivity while analysing and interpreting the findings by including as much as possible verbatim responses from the participants in the discussion of the results and triangulating the information with the quantitative results and literature findings.

## **5.9 Validity**

Validity relates to the quality and integrity of the research findings' deductions and the sums that form part of the whole thesis. To achieve quality information, the questionnaire must address the research objectives and aim of the study. It must be informed by the theoretical framework and literature underpinnings so that it measures what the research objectives and the researcher intend it to measure (Leedy and Ormrod, 2014; Bryman et al., 2016; Saunders et al., 2019). The validity of a questionnaire can be assessed using face validity, content validity, predictive validity and construct validity (Rahi, 2017):

- Face Validity refers to the extent to which, at a glance/face value, the instrument seems to be measuring a particular characteristic (Rahi, 2017; Saunders et al., 2019). This type of validity is not very a reliable indicator due to the subjective nature of each person's view. To help address this weakness, the instruments were pilot tested among seven individuals and feedback provided was used to refine the questions for clarity, and some questions were removed. The data analyst further refined the questionnaire.
- Content validity relates to the degree to which the questionnaire measures the content is intended to measure and or if the instrument's questions are of depth and breadth to ensure the constructs under investigation are sufficiently covered (Rahi, 2017; Saunders et al., 2019). To meet this criterion, a thorough review of the literature was conducted, and the researcher, with guidance from experts in the field of leadership, carefully defined the research and the questions in the instrument using the key constructs from the SCAILES



framework and leadership qualities that were predominant for leading in a VUCA environment.

- Predictive Validity refers to the ability to compare data from certain questions using correlational statistical analysis to make precise predictions of selected behaviours of the participants (Saunders et al., 2019). The study used both descriptive and inferential statistical measures to assess if there was a relationship between the demographic variables and leadership qualities and leadership behaviour traits for a VUCA environment. If a positive association existed, the predictive validity of the questionnaire could be established to some extent.
- Construct Validity is achieved by using numerous parameters to validate the research instrument by assessing how well the construct(s) converge (Neuman, 2011; Saunders et al., 2019). The study tested biographical variables against leadership qualities and leadership behaviour traits for a VUCA environment.

To further ensure the questionnaires' validity, the researcher sought guidance from her supervisor and the statistician regarding whether the research instrument's questions addressed the research objectives and the research problem and adequately represented the theoretical underpinnings.

## **5.10 Generalisability**

Generalisability refers to the ability to infer the study's findings to the wider population and from one research setting to another (Sekeran and Bougie (2013). By systematically and logically developing and following the study's sampling design and data collection methods, the study hoped to ensure the research findings' generalisability. By adhering to and the maximisation of the criteria for validity and trustworthiness infers greater credibility and defensibility of the results, alluding to generalisability (Mukonoweshuro, 2017).

Based on the study being a case study research on Eskom only, generalisability of the findings to other SoEs is not vital; however, the use of the information by other researchers and contributing to the process of natural generalisation is important (Mukonoweshuro, 2017). However, due to SoEs in SA falling under one Ministry – DPE over the period investigated, hence would bear similarities in many ways. Therefore, lessons learnt from one large SoE, like Eskom, would be relevant to other SoEs in SA.

## **5.11 Summary of Chapter**

The chapter reviewed the research paradigms underpinning the study and provided a summation of the research methodology employed in this study. A detailed account of the research design,

the sampling methodology, research instruments, the data collection techniques, and the data analysis techniques employed in the study were presented, with a justification for each chosen strategy. The following chapter will present the data, analysis and interpretation thereof.

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## **CHAPTER 6:**

# **QUANTITATIVE DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

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*“ The pessimist complains about the wind. The optimist expects change.*

*The leaders adjusts the sails.”*

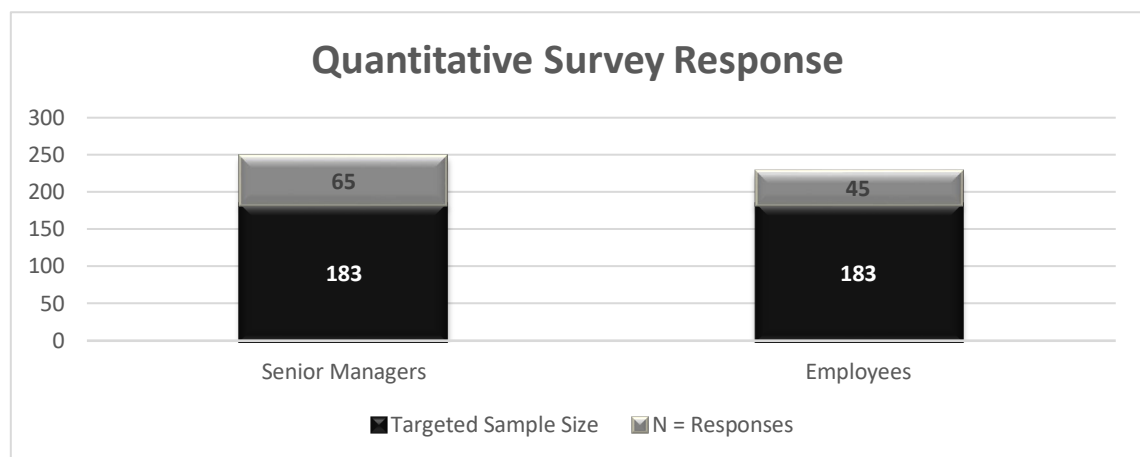
(John Maxwell, n.d.)

## 6.1 Introduction

The chapter presents the data analysis of the quantitative research for the employees and senior managers. The primary data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. A combination of statistical tests were performed on the data, namely: frequency scores, mean and standard deviation, One-sample T-test, Independent Sample T-test, Exploratory Factor Analysis, Spearman's Correlation Analysis for Variance, Kruskal Wallis Test, Mann Whitney U Test, and the Binomial Test, for easier interpretation of the data and the drawing of conclusions. The data is presented using both tables and graphs. The presentation and discussion of the results are done in accordance with the research objectives and research questions cited in Chapter 1.

### 6.1.1 Survey Response Rate

The quantitative study's targeted sample was 366 responses, with the senior managers comprising 183 and the employees being 183. A 50% response rate is considered a fair representation for analysing the data (Rubin and Babbie, 2012, p. 137). An overall 30% (110/366) response rate was achieved for the quantitative study: Senior Managers (65/183) 36% and Employees (45/183) 25%. A 20-30% response rate, as stated in Chapter 5, was anticipated based on various factors presented.



**Figure 6.1: Quantitative Response Rate**  
Source: Primary Data

## 6.2 Senior Manager Survey: Primary Data Presentation and Analysis

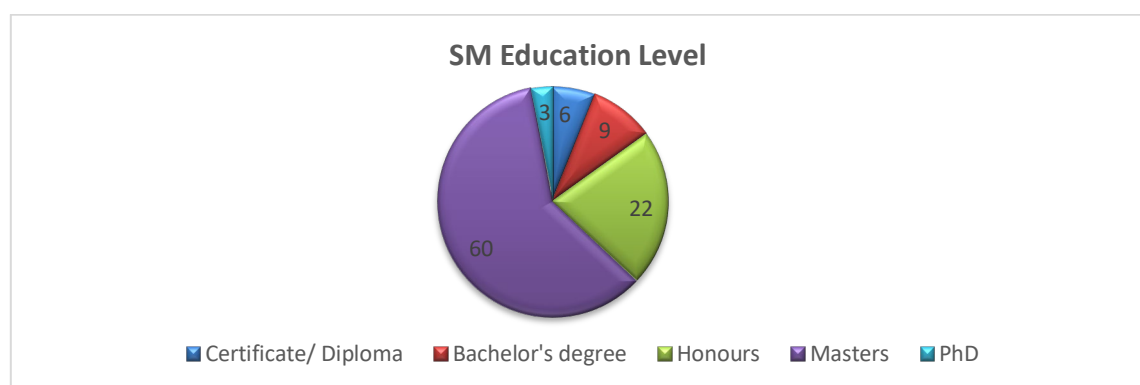
This section presents the findings of the senior manager (SM) survey. The primary data was collected using an online questionnaire. The targeted sample was selected using random sampling. It was estimated (in Chapter 5, section 5.5.3) that the targeted sample population for the senior managers will have a variability response ratio between 20% - 30% (38-57 responses). Of the 183 senior managers targeted, 65 had responded to the online questionnaire. A response rate of 36%

was achieved. Reflecting on the targeted sample and the organisation in question, it is somewhat pleasing to see a 36% response rate (which falls into the 30% - 40% range: 57-75 responses, 10% higher than anticipated), especially during the Covid-19 pandemic and amid operational challenges resulting in countrywide loading shedding at Eskom.

## 6.2.1 Senior Manager: Demographics

### 6.2.1.1 Highest Education Level

Majority of the respondents (60%) held a Master's qualification, followed by 22% holding an Honours degree, 9% had a Bachelor's degree, and only 6% had a Certificate/Diploma level qualification as per Figure 6.2. Very few senior managers had attained a PhD qualification (3%). Based on the results, majority of the senior management that responded to the survey have furthered their studies post a degree level; however, further research needs to ascertain if they do possess the appropriate qualification for their role. Based on the past CEOs' qualifications at Eskom (Table 1.1, Chapter 1), many CEOs did not have an engineering qualification or related to the energy sector (Omarjee, 2019b). Many CEOs and senior managers at Eskom undergo Executive Management Training Programmes to equip them with the relevant management skills. Thus, based on the study's findings, one can hope to infer that they have acquired the relevant knowledge, skills, conceptual and critical thinking ability required in their fields of specialisation. However, the results cannot be inferred that these individuals have the conceptual and theoretical knowledge required to address problems in a VUCA environment and a complex entity like Eskom.



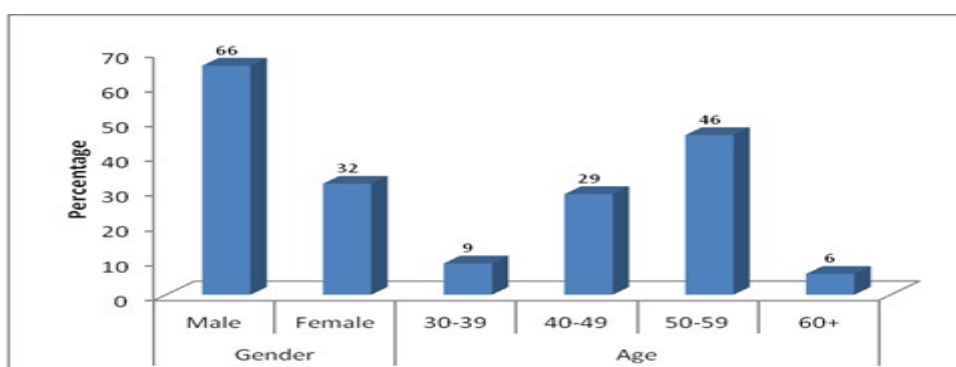
**Figure 6.2: Senior Manager Education Level**

Source: Primary Data

### 6.2.1.2 Gender and Age Range

In terms of gender equity, majority of the respondents were male (66%), and 32% were female. One respondent did not complete this question. Ninety-one percent of the respondents were older than 39 years, with 46% in the 50-59 age range and 39% within the 40-49 age range, and 6% were 60 years and older. It is evident that majority of the respondents in senior management are mature, and one can assume they would have accumulated a vast amount of knowledge and skills over the years in their career. Refer to Figure 6.3.

According to Eskom's Integrated Report of 2020 (p. 146), the gender equity percentage, the percentage of females, at senior management level is at 41, 71%. This is an almost 2% increase from 2019. This is a fair representation of a technical industry that men predominately dominated. "Eskom chairperson Dr Baldwin Ngubane stated that Eskom's rigorous transformation programme would ensure gender equality" Kazaresam (2020). The article goes on to state, "The gender equity programmes, including Eskom's Women Advancement Programme (EWAP), fit into Eskom's substantial transformation drive. Through this programme, Eskom has started to remould the women in energy and has started to eliminate the stereotypes that hamper or retard women's progress," Ngubane said at the launch of Eskom's book, Eskom's Women's Transformation Journey: A Nickel of Democracy" Kazaresam (2020).



**Figure 6.3: Senior Manager Gender and Age**

Source: Primary Data

## 6.2.2 Senior Manager Leadership Qualities

This question addresses the research objective 2:

*To determine if the leadership qualities perceived to be important by the leaders at Eskom align with the leadership qualities required for a VUCA environment.*

To address this research objective, 20 leadership qualities that were deemed prominent for a leader to have in a VUCA environment as per literature review (Moore, 2015; LDC 2016; Van Velsor

et al., 2016; Daigle and Matthews, 2017; Donkor and Zhou, 2019; Towler, 2019; Centre for Creative Leadership, 2020), were rated in terms of importance by the managers themselves. Managers had to rate how important these qualities were to them when leading in a volatile environment with, 1 being not important at all to 5 being extremely important. Mean and standard deviation testings were performed on the data. Thereafter, a One-sample T-test was applied to test for significant agreement/disagreement (results checked using the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test and no differences were found in the concluding results). When conducting the One-Sample T-test, the central rating of '3' indicates neither important nor unimportant and tests if the average importance rating is significantly different from '3'. If the result is significant and the mean rating  $>3$ , it is interpreted as 'the quality is important'; if significant and mean  $<3$  interpret as 'quality not so important'.

The results of the One-Sample T-test for the leadership qualities presented in Table 6.1 indicate that all qualities are significantly important,  $p < 0.005$  at a 95% confidence level. The mean scores for the leadership qualities are significant and  $>3$ , indicating a significant agreement to the leadership qualities statement.

Reflecting on the frequency scores in Table 6.1, the top five qualities senior managers thought were extremely important were honesty, integrity and trustworthiness (97%), followed by being able to set a clear vision and direction (94%), being able to embrace diversity and change (86%), being able to think clearly under pressure and communicate effectively (86%) and being able to think conceptually, holistically and strategically. Possessing these qualities is very important when leading in a volatile environment. Reflecting on the incidences of fraud and corruption that took place among senior government and municipal officials during the Covid-19 pandemic in SA and the devastating ripple effect it had on providing personal protective equipment, medical supplies, services and food for the most vulnerable during very trying times is both heartbreaking and disgraceful. Investor and public confidence and trust in the government declined dramatically. One expects leadership of this stature to abide by the highest code of ethical principles. Thus, the researcher concurs with the senior managers that it is vital to possess qualities of honesty, integrity and trustworthiness to ensure the teams' trust, commitment and support. Leading through the uncertainty that the Covid-19 pandemic created required leaders to think on their feet, be able to set a clear direction and vision on the way forward and communicate this new path clearly and effectively for their team. Further to this, leaders could not look at the situation or the challenge in isolation but look at how it impacts all aspects of the business, the set goals and the team. They had to quickly step back, create the big picture in their mind, and create practical and relevant strategies based on the changing circumstances.

**Table 6.1: One-Sample T-Test on Senior Management Leadership Qualities**

Item	Responses as Frequency (%)					n	Mean (SD)	t	df	p-value
	Not at all important 1	2	3	4	Extremely important 5					
1 Being able to set a clear vision and direction	-	-	-	6.2	93.8	65	4.94 (.242)	64.531	64	p<.0005
2 Being able to embrace diversity and change	-	-	-	13.8	86.2	65	4.86 (.348)	43.118	64	p<.0005
3 Being resourceful and information seeking	-	-	-	41.5	58.5	65	4.58 (.497)	25.725	64	p<.0005
4 Being direct while at the same time composed	-	3.1	4.6	26.2	66.2	65	4.55 (.730)	17.172	64	p<.0005
5 Being able to build and mend relationships	-	1.5	6.2	33.8	58.5	65	4.49 (.687)	17.501	64	p<.0005
6 Honesty, integrity and trustworthiness	-	-	-	3.1	96.9	65	4.97 (.174)	91.225	64	p<.0005
7 Being able to act in a decisive and timely manner	-	-	3.1	13.8	83.1	65	4.80 (.474)	30.594	64	p<.0005
8 Being flexible, adaptable and versatile	-	-	4.6	30.8	64.6	65	4.60 (.581)	22.204	64	p<.0005
9 Being able to communicate effectively and in transparent manner	-	1.5	-	15.4	83.1	65	4.80 (.506)	28.668	64	p<.0005
10 Reflection and Self-awareness (of personal strengths and weaknesses)	-	-	6.2	26.2	67.7	65	4.62 (.604)	21.546	64	p<.0005
11 Working collaboratively and interactively with others to solve problems and plan ahead	-	-	1.5	27.7	70.8	65	4.69 (.498)	27.420	64	p<.0005
12 Being respectful, compassionate and sensitive	-	1.5	4.6	24.6	69.2	65	4.62 (.654)	19.910	64	p<.0005
13 Being open to and accepting differing view points	-	-	3.1	26.2	70.8	65	4.68 (.533)	25.342	64	p<.0005
14 Being able to empower, equip and enable others	-	-	4.6	26.2	69.2	65	4.65 (.571)	23.246	64	p<.0005
15 Being innovative, taking risks and having novel ideas	-	-	7.7	33.8	58.5	65	4.51 (.640)	18.981	64	p<.0005
16 Being positive, upbeat, and optimistic	-	1.5	7.7	36.9	53.8	65	4.43 (.706)	16.329	64	p<.0005
17 Being responsible, accountable and goal orientated	-	-	1.5	20.0	78.5	65	4.77 (.460)	31.013	64	p<.0005
18 Being able to think clearly under pressure and communicate effectively	-	-	-	13.8	86.2	65	4.86 (.348)	43.118	64	p<.0005
19 Being able to think conceptually, holistically and strategically	-	-	-	13.8	86.2	65	4.86 (.348)	43.118	64	p<.0005
20 Being agile (responsive), alert and proactive to changes	-	-	1.5	20.0	78.5	65	4.77 (.460)	31.013	64	p<.0005

Source: Primary Data

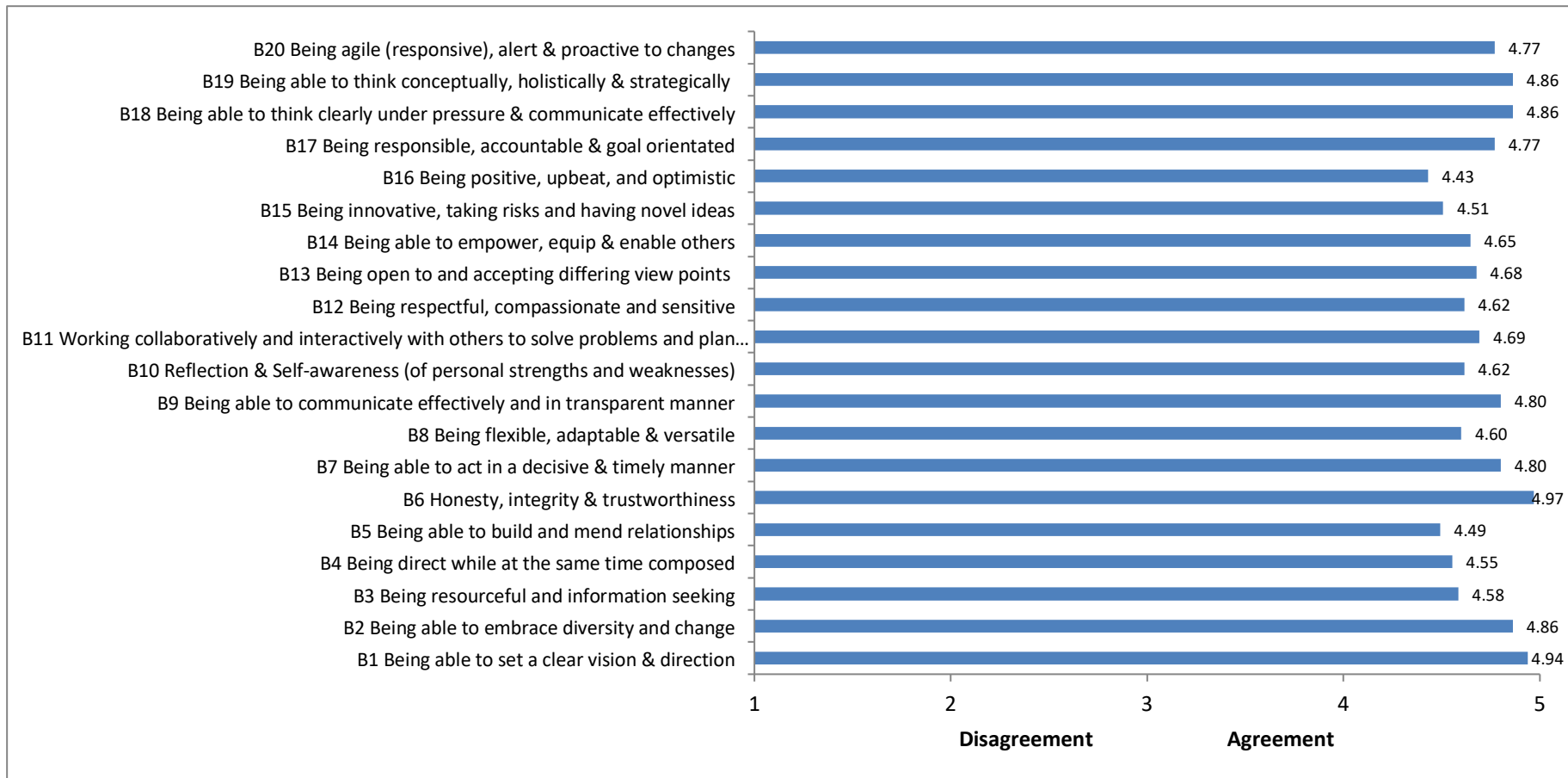


### 6.2.2.1 Significant Agreement to the Leadership Qualities

Leaders at Eskom are in agreement as per Figure 6.4 below that *honesty, integrity and trustworthiness* (M=4.97,  $p<.005$ ) and *being able to set a clear vision and direction* (M=4.94,  $p<.005$ ) are the two most important qualities a leader should have for a volatile environment, followed closely by *being able to think clearly under pressure and communicate effectively* (M=4.86,  $p<.005$ ); *being able to embrace diversity and change* (M=4.86,  $p<.005$ ); *being able to think conceptually, holistically and strategically* (M=4.86,  $p<.005$ ); *being able to act in a decisive and timely manner* (M=4.80,  $p<.005$ ); *being able to communicate effectively and in a transparent manner* (M=4.80,  $p<.005$ ); *being agile (responsive), alert and proactive to changes* (M=4.77,  $p<.005$ ) while *being responsible, accountable and goal-orientated* (M=4.77,  $p<.005$ ).

According to BDO New Zealand (BDO, 2020), in their article “Effective Leadership Qualities During Covid-19 & Beyond”, leaders who displayed qualities of decisiveness, the ability to respond quickly to the changes by re-strategising and re-prioritising goals and tasks were able to set a good foundation to weather the storm. Proactive, resourcefulness and a constant scanning of the market was the order of the day. These leaders actively sought advice from experts, consulted and collaborated with experts in the field and their team. Clear, consistent, frequent communications took place. They became very flexible in their thinking and approach and replaced “long-term plans with short-term survival strategies”. Leaders who were able to stay composed during this turbulent time and show empathy, support and united the team with their positive, upbeat-high energy, resilient outlook found it easier to implement strategies and garner support from their team. Pitstick (2020) cites “empathy, clarity, authenticity and agility” as the vital qualities leaders needed during the Covid-19 pandemic. According to *Leading in Times of Crisis — and Beyond* (Center for Creative Leadership, 2020b) highlights the importance of leaders being empathetic; having clear, frequent communications using appropriate mediums; seeking credible information; being transparent with the team on what the organisational plans are; being available, accessible and present mentally for their team and being composed, keeping their emotions in check and always reflecting on the day to see what worked, what did not and how it could have been done better and reinforce what is to be done. People were overwhelmed, and reinforcing what the plans were, had become paramount — also reflecting on their approach towards their team. They go on to say that leaders “must be positive change agents in the midst of chaos, creating the future” (Center for Creative Leadership, 2020b, 2020).

Part of Eskom’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic was for managers to monitor the health and safety of staff.



**Figure 6.4: Senior Manager Leadership Qualities – Disagreement – Agreement**  
Source: Primary Data

### 6.2.2.2 Rank Analysis - Leadership Qualities

To ascertain the qualities managers perceived as being most important, Table 6.2 ranked the leadership quality items from highest to lowest, based on the results from the One-Sample T-test, perceived to be most important to those perceived to be least important for leading in a volatile environment.

**Table 6.2: Ranking of Leadership qualities in terms of importance**

Perceived importance of leadership qualities	Mean importance
B6 Honesty, integrity and trustworthiness	4.97
B1 Being able to set a clear vision and direction	4.94
B2 Being able to embrace diversity and change	4.86
B18 Being able to think clearly under pressure and communicate effectively	4.86
B19 Being able to think conceptually, holistically and strategically	4.86
B7 Being able to act in a decisive and timely manner	4.80
B9 Being able to communicate effectively and in a transparent manner	4.80
B17 Being responsible, accountable and goal orientated	4.77
B20 Being agile (responsive), alert and proactive to changes	4.77
B11 Working collaboratively and interactively with others to solve problems and plan ahead	4.69
B13 Being open to and accepting differing viewpoints	4.68
B14 Being able to empower, equip and enable others	4.65
B10 Reflection and Self-awareness (of personal strengths and weaknesses)	4.62
B12 Being respectful, compassionate and sensitive	4.62
B8 Being flexible, adaptable and versatile	4.60
B3 Being resourceful and information seeking	4.58
B4 Being direct while at the same time composed	4.55
B15 Being innovative, taking risks and having novel ideas	4.51
B5 Being able to build and mend relationships	4.49
B16 Being positive, upbeat, and optimistic	4.43

Source Primary Data

The **top five qualities** in order of importance were:

1. Honesty, integrity and trustworthiness (M=4.97)
2. Being able to set a clear vision and direction (M=4.94)
3. Being able to embrace diversity and change (M=4.86)
4. Being able to think clearly under pressure and communicate effectively (M=4.86)
5. Being able to think conceptually, holistically and strategically (M=4.86)

However, the literature on the key skills and qualities leaders need for a VUCA environment like the Covid-19 pandemic paints a slightly different picture of what the Eskom managers believe are important for a VUCA environment. In the article “What Skills Will Leaders Need in the Future? Turn VUCA Around, leaders in the future will need to have Vision, Understanding, Clarity, and Agility.” writes The Center for Creative Leadership (2020a), citing the works of Bob Johansen. Further to this, the article states the importance of leaders doing self-reflection. The Rebuilders (2020) asserted that the essential

skill leaders would need is to take care of their own mental health and their employees' emotional health. They need to be understanding, supportive and empathetic. Flexibility, adaptability, being able to think quickly and strategically under pressure with a clear mind were qualities that literature postulates as critical to possess for surviving Covid-19. Deloitte (2020), in the report “The heart of resilient leadership: Responding to Covid-19”, states the importance of expressing empathy and support towards employees, speed in responding to changes, focussing on the goal, transparency with your team and collaboration. Underpinning these qualities are agility, flexibility and the ability to stay calm. The common thread running across various literature sources on responding during Covid-19 is empathy, agility, composure, adaptability, reflection, speed to response, strategic thinking, transparency and communication. Empathy was ranked 12<sup>th</sup> and only communication and strategic thinking falling under the five most important qualities for the managers at Eskom. Thus, do they have the required qualities for leading in a VUCA environment? To explore this further, exploratory factor analysis was performed on leadership qualities.

### 6.2.2.3 Leadership Qualities Exploratory Factor Analysis

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was performed on the 20 leadership quality items to explore its structure, as highlighted in Tables 6.3, 6.4 and 6.5. The EFA with promax rotation was applied to the 20 leadership qualities items. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) of .803 indicates that the data was reasonable for successful and reliable extraction. The significant results of Bartlett’s test ( $p < .05$ ) indicate that correlations between items are not too low for successful factor extraction.

**KMO and Bartlett's Test**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.803
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	169.815
	df	15
	Sig.	.000

Source: Primary data

Two factors were extracted, which accounted for 61.403% of the data variance. Items with factor loadings greater than 0.5 were taken into account (Cooper and Schindler, 2011, p. 547). A Cronbach’s alpha was calculated to assess the reliability of each factor. An alpha value  $> .70$  indicates reliability. Single composite measures for these factors are found by calculating the average scores across the items included in the factor. An alpha value of 0.675 was attained, thus indicating moderate reliability and internal consistency of the data.

**Table 6.3: Exploratory Factor Analysis – Senior Manager – Leadership Qualities**

Factor	Label	Items included	% variance explained	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE	MSV
<b>Strategic collaborative</b>	SCL	9, 11, 13, 14	50.432	.867	.866	.623	.444
<b>Ethical accountability</b>	ETH	6, 7	10.971	.483	.677	.518	.444

Source: Primary Data

Luong and Ha (2011, p. 35) define a factor loading as “correlations of each item with the factor it belongs to”. The results from Table 6.3 reveal a symmetry within the items in the factors. For example, **Factor 1 = Strategic Collaborative**, the items suggest that “Being able to communicate effectively and in a transparent manner; being open to and accepting differing viewpoints and working collaboratively and interactively with others to solve problems and plan ahead” relate to one another. For a leader to be able to work collaboratively and interactively with others to solve problems and plan ahead, they must be open to and accepting of differing viewpoints. Upon being able to do this only, then the leader may be perceived as communicating effectively and transparently. The leader is inclusive and committed to working collaboratively with the team to find solutions. According to the open-ended results in Chapter 7, Eskom managers did display qualities of improved teamwork, collaboration, consultation. They rallied the team towards a common shared goal and worked collaboratively on strategies to ensure the outcomes were met. They constantly communicated, providing support, direction and assistance. They were open to suggestions on new ways to achieve the outcomes, and they collaborated and engaged across centres of excellence (departments). This could be due to Eskom’s comprehensive Covid-19 response strategy. The strategy encompassed a “change management and engagement plan to ensure Eskom employees, contractors, communities, organised labour and other key stakeholders are timeously informed and engaged while building resilience and driving behaviour modification to address the Covid-19 pandemic”, Eskom Integrated Report 2020, p. 120).

VUCA environments like Covid-19 require leaders to influence and mobilise the team to a common shared goal by communicating clearly, effectively, and transparently the tactical and the future plans and the vision to the team. To achieve the vision, the leader will need to be resourceful and information seeking, be able to empower, equip and enable their team members while being flexible, adaptable, agile, proactive and versatile. Embracing diversity and change will enable collaborative engagement among the team. These are the key skills literature alludes to leaders possessing to succeed in a VUCA world.

To verify the structure of the factors, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis was performed to test if there was a good fit of the constructs, see Table 6.4 (a & b). Fit indices of ratio  $\chi^2$  /df, CFI, IFI and RMSEA all

indicate a good fit. Analysis of the reliability and validity shows that reliability and convergent and divergent validity were achieved throughout.

**Table 6.4 (a): Criteria for Reliability and Validity**

Measure	Criteria for good measure	SCL	ETH
Reliability	CR > 0.7	Yes	Yes
Convergent validity	CR > AVE	Yes	Yes
	AVE > 0.5	Yes	Yes
Divergent validity	AVE > MSV	Yes	Yes

Source: Primary Data

**Table 6.4 (b): Good Fit Test**

Fit index	Criteria for good fit	Value for this measurement model
Chi-square		8.905
p-value	>.05	.350
$\chi^2 / df$ *	<5	1.113
CFI	>.95	.994
IFI	>.9	.995
RMSEA	<.08	.042

Source: Primary Data

\* better fit index than using chi-square and p-value

The Chi-Square statistic is, in essence, a statistical significance test that is sensitive to sample size, which means that the Chi-Square statistic often rejects the model when large samples are used (Bentler and Bonnet, 1980; Jöreskog and Sörbom, 1993). On the other hand, where small samples are used, the Chi-Square statistic lacks power, and because of this, it may not discriminate between good fitting models and poor fitting models (Kenny and McCoach, 2003). Due to the restrictiveness of the Model Chi-Square, researchers have sought alternative indices to assess model fit. One example of a statistic that minimises the impact of sample size on the Model Chi-Square is Wheaton, Muthen, Alwin, and Summers (1977) relative/normed chi-square ( $\chi^2/df$ ).

Statistical testing using a **one-sample t-test was done on these factors to test for significant agreement/disagreement**. It is important to note that there is no independent variable or dependent variable as this measure is the univariate analysis of each 'quality' as a composite latent variable. This test was NOT TO TEST the composite variables found from the EFA but test for significant agreement/disagreement to the leadership qualities factor.

Significant importance (agreement to the statements) was shown for all the quality groupings where the p-value was <0.005 at a 95% confidence level as per Table 6.5. To determine if the overall measure,

for example, SC shows significant agreement/disagreement that the managers believe that quality factor is important, instead of reporting on each quality item, there are 20 items in total.

**Table 6.5: One-Sample T-test on Senior Manager Leadership Qualities Factor Analysis**

One-Sample Test							
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	n	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b>SC</b>	30.793	64	.000	1.70385	1.5933	1.8144	30.793
<b>ETH</b>	52.383	64	.000	1.88462	1.8127	1.9565	52.383

Note: at a 95% confidence level

Source: Primary Data

Although the top five qualities managers ranked as most important for a volatile environment did not align fully with the qualities Covid-19 literature had cited, the open-ended questionnaire findings (in Chapter 7) tell a different story. During Covid-19, managers found themselves having a greater disposition towards their staff in terms of *improved teamwork, collaboration and consulting*. They were more *empathetic, supportive and understanding* towards their employees. They *listened more*; there was *greater trust in the team* and *agility and adaptability*. They *rallied the team together* and looked *for new ways to ensure the outcome was achieved*. Thus, they were focused on the goal and *frequently had communication calls* to check how is everything was progressing with their work and mental well-being. Some managers found themselves *doing more reflection and deep thinking* and was better able to sense the staff's emotional well-being. Hence, we can deduce that they do possess the skills required to lead in a VUCA environment

### 6.2.3 Senior Manager Leadership Behaviour Traits

This question addresses the research objective 3:

*To determine if the leaders at Eskom possess the required leadership traits to succeed in a VUCA environment.*

To address this research objective, the SCAILES Framework constructs were tested. The question comprised 32 questions that addressed the seven key constructs in the SCAILES Framework (Strategic; Complex; Adaptive; Innovative; Learning; Emergence and Systems). Using a 5-point Likert Scale, senior managers had to indicate how well they felt they were able to do the tasks listed in their role at Eskom, with 1 being Not Well At All to 5 being Extremely Well. Sixty-five managers answered this question. A Binomial Test was performed to find the cut-off rating where a significant number rate each trait (their ability to do a task). The summary of the findings is presented in Table 6.6 below. The Binomial Test shows that items 1 and 5, where the leaders' best traits:

- 1 - the ability to see the big picture and think holistically and
- 5 - take into account a number of elements when thinking through problems to help create well-informed strategies and decisions

Item 17 - Encourage disruptive innovations that will establish completely new standards for improved efficiency and service delivery - was their worst trait.

One of the key requirements in strategic thinking and planning in a VUCA environment is the ability to see the problem as well as the solution in totality and for the leader to be able to think holistically, factoring all elements that would impact the situation and the role of all the stakeholders in the organisation. Further to this, to make informed decisions in a volatile environment, leaders need to consider the various elements when unpacking the problems and providing strategic solutions. Holistic and conceptual thinking comes into play here. Encouraging disruptive innovations and thinking is a key ingredient for survival and success in a VUCA environment. With many leaders not being able to do this really well will result in Eskom not being able to improve on their processes, systems, efficiency and service delivery. The lack of disruptive innovation, thinking, and creativity is evident at Eskom when one looks at the various operational and strategic challenges plaguing Eskom, as discussed in chapter 4.



**Table 6.6: Summary for Leadership Traits Binomial Test**

Item	%	Their ability to complete a task is rated at least...	p-value
<b>1 Ability to see the big picture and think holistically</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>Well</b>	<b>.025</b>
2 Anticipate the future based on what is known and considers the possibilities and probabilities of each long term outcome.	77	Quite well	<.0005
3 Link the past to the present, as well as to the future, as a single continuum of dynamic interactions	72	Quite well	<.0005
4 Step back and think-through plans and decisions, connecting future outcomes to today's planned actions, and develop a credible path to achieve a desired state	83	Quite well	<.0005
<b>5 Take into account a number of elements when thinking through problems, to help create well-informed strategies and decisions</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>Well</b>	<b>.046</b>
6 Navigate what is known, while accounting for what might not be known	80	Quite well	<.0005
7 Understand the networked nature of complexity in Eskom and how its various elements are interdependent	91	Quite well	<.0005
8 Adeptly sense environments and be aware of changes which may influence my actions and strategies	82	Quite well	<.0005
9 React effectively and efficiently to stay ahead of environmental changes	88	Quite well	<.0005
10 Reflect on my actions and decision and change things so that they work better	97	Quite well	<.0005
11 Consider the impact a change will have on people, processes, systems and goals and implement plans to support the change	89	Quite well	<.0005
12 Make sound decisions quickly under pressure or when facing tight deadlines	94	Quite well	<.0005
13 Easily and speedily identify and provide innovative efficient solutions to problems and inefficiencies in processes and systems	77	Quite well	<.0005
14 Think creatively and out of the box to catalyse new thoughts which result in novel ideas and concepts	71	Quite well	.001
15 Promote learning and the development of break-through ideas and concepts in my Team	91	Quite well	<.0005
16 Routinely develop unique new solutions using input from various individuals	82	Quite well	<.0005
<b>17 Encourage disruptive innovations that will establish completely new standards for improved efficiency and service delivery</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>Not really that well</b>	<b>&lt;.0005</b>
18 Encourage my team to unlearn behaviours and strategies that hinder growth and efficiency across and within our systems and networks	69	Quite well	.003
19 Encourage experiential learning, where knowledge is applied in context, i.e. hands-on	94	Quite well	<.0005
20 Encourage my team to set their own learning and development requirements	91	Quite well	<.0005
21 Encourage continuous learning through deep engagement and involvement in a collaborative setting	88	Quite well	<.0005
22 Create an environment that enables the unrestrained emergence of new ideas, concepts and perspectives.	85	Quite well	<.0005
23 Set the tone, so that individuals feel encouraged and feel a sense of openness and trust so that meaningful dialogue and exchange can take place	89	Quite well	<.0005
24 Show a genuine interest in the generation of productive ideas and solutions and acknowledge the idea regardless of their source	97	Quite well	<.0005
25 Set the stage, create the right environment, ask the right questions, and then I 'let go'	89	Quite well	<.0005
26 Enable my team to rethink about old problems and strategies in new ways	85	Quite well	<.0005
27 Apply different lenses and backgrounds to solving a problem	80	Quite well	<.0005

28 Encourage and foster internal and external interactions across networks/ departments	92	Quite well	<.0005
29 Think in terms of open and collaborative systems	92	Quite well	<.0005
30 Think and adapt in terms of interconnected and interdependent systems and departments	97	Quite well	<.0005
31 Consider a wide range of possibilities and their inherent probabilities and their potential implications	89	Quite well	<.0005
32 Allow others to brainstorm and propose solutions to problems in complex situations	92	Quite well	<.0005

Source: Primary Data

Based on the Binomial Test results indicating that managers performed 2 out of the 32 traits well for leading in a VUCA environment, EFA was performed on leadership traits to help describe the 32 trait items using fewer dimensions.

### 6.2.3.1 Leadership Traits Exploratory Factor Analysis

EFA was performed on the 32 leadership traits question based on a 5 point Likert scale to explore its structure, as highlighted in Tables 6.7. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) of .881 indicates that the data was reasonable for successful and reliable extraction. The significant results of Bartlett's test ( $p < .0005$ ) indicate that correlations between items are not too low for successful factor extraction.

**KMO and Bartlett's Test**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.881
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square
	798.137
	df
	136
	Sig.
	.000

Source: Primary Data

Four factors were extracted, which account for 69.15% of the variance in the data. Items with factor loadings greater than 0.5 were taken into account (Cooper and Schindler, 2011, p. 547). Table 6.7 provides the factor analysis results for the leadership traits for senior managers. Four factors were extracted from the 32 items.

In terms of reliability to meet internal consistency requirements, an alpha score of 0.70 is the accepted standard of measure. The Cronbach's Alpha score for the leadership trait items were 0.881 (a single composite measure for these factors were found by calculating the average of scores across the items included the factor), which exceeds the minimum requirements. Thus, we can infer that the instrument has met the requirements of reliability.

**Table 6.7: Senior Manager Leadership Behaviour Trait Factor Analysis Summary**

Factor	Label	Items included	% Variance explained	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE	MSV
Strategic	STRAT	1-7	48.749	.923	.935	.619	.706
Collaborative	COLL	15, 17, 28, 29	8.760	.849	.832	.560	.585
Problem-solving	PS	23, 24, 27, 32	6.675	.883	.882	.654	.706
Learning	LEARN	19, 20	4.695	.867	.867	.766	.295

Source: Primary Data

To verify the structure of the factors, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis was performed to test if there was a good fit of the constructs, see Table 6.8 (a & b).

**Table 6.8 (a): Criteria for Reliability and Validity**

Measure	Criteria for good measure	STRAT	COLL	PS	LEARN
Reliability	CR > 0.7	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Convergent validity	CR > AVE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	AVE > 0.5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Divergent validity	AVE > MSV	No	No	No	Yes

Source: Primary Data

**Table 6.8 (b): Good Fit Test**

Fit index	Criteria for good fit	Value for this measurement model
Chi-square		184.353
p-value	>.05	.010
$\chi^2$ / df	<5	1.298
CFI	>.95	.952
IFI	>.9	.954
RMSEA	<.08	.068

Source: Primary Data

Fit indices of ratio  $\chi^2$  /df, CFI, IFI and RMSEA all indicate a good fit. Analysis of the reliability and validity shows that reliability and convergent validity was achieved throughout; however, divergent validity was only achieved for the factor Learn.

**A one-sample Binomial Test was performed to find the cut-off rating where a significant number rate each composite trait** (their ability to do a category of tasks) was performed on the four factors. A significant proportion indicated that they could perform the 'trait' at least 'quite well' for all these composite traits. The computed p values are <0.005, indicating great significance at a 95% confidence level, as per Table 6.9. A significant 74% indicated that they could perform the key tasks under the 'Strategic' factor either well or extremely well,  $p < .0005$ . Some of these key traits with a factor loading > 0.7 are:

- Anticipate the future based on what is known, considering the possibilities and probabilities of each long-term outcome
- Link the past to the present, as well as to the future, as a single continuum of dynamic interactions
- See the big picture and think holistically about how different aspects affect one another
- Step back and think-through plans and decisions, connecting future outcomes to today's planned actions, and develop a credible path to achieve a desired state
- Adeptly sense environments and be aware of changes which may influence my actions and strategies
- Navigate what is known while accounting for what might not be known

**Table 6.9: Senior Manager Leadership Behaviour Traits Binominal Test Results**

Factor	Factor Name	Label	Binomial %	p-value
1	Strategic	SM - STRAT	74%	< .0005
2	Collaborative	SM - COLL	66%	.013
3	Problem Solving	SM - PS	69%	.003
4	Learning	SM - LEARN	65%	.025

Source: Primary Data

Moore (2015) advocates the importance of leaders being able to think strategically by planning ahead, taking into account the present situation. This is done most effectively by assessing the current environment and the situation and engaging in constant collaboration. They have to constantly plan for the day, the week and review the plans and re-strategise and re-prioritise (BDO, 2020). Managers at Eskom did do this during the Covid-19 pandemic based on the findings of the open-ended questions. They were navigating what was known and attempting to accommodate for the unknown. They assessed the market and the situation, re-strategised and re-prioritised, and worked towards the originally set outcome. They frequently engaged with the team to ascertain how they were progressing with the tasks and looked for new ways to achieve the outcomes more efficiently considering the remote working. They often reflected on their decisions and took a step back to assess the impact of the changes have on their staff and provided the necessary support and understanding.

#### **6.2.4 Relations between demographic data and leadership qualities and traits**

This section addresses the secondary objectives 1 and 2 of the study.

*To establish if there is a relationship between demographic data and leadership qualities in the senior managers.*

To establish if there is a relationship between demographic data and leadership traits in the senior managers.

#### 6.2.4.1 Relationship between demographic data and leadership qualities

To establish if a relationship exists between demographic data and leadership qualities factors as per Table 6.3, the following tests were conducted to test the hypothesis: Independent sample T-test was used to test for significant differences in these measures across gender; ANOVA (or Welch if necessary) statistical analysis was used for age group and qualification.

$H_0$ : There is no association between demographic data and leadership qualities.

$H_A$ : There is an association between demographic data and leadership qualities.

Hypothesis Test: ANOVA and Independent Sample T-Test

Significance Level: 95% ( $p=0.05$ ); 6df

Rejection Criteria: Reject  $H_0$  if  $p \leq 0.05$ ; Accept  $H_0$  if  $p > 0.05$

In terms of an association between **Age and Leadership Qualities**, ANOVA testing was conducted to establish if an association exists between age and leadership qualities of senior managers. Table 6.10 below presents the statistical findings.

**Table 6.10: ANOVA: Age and Leadership Qualities**

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>SCL</b>	Between ages	.325	3	.108	.533	.661
	Within ages	12.411	61	.203		
	Total	12.737	64			
<b>ETH</b>	Between ages	.029	3	.010	.109	.954
	Within ages	5.356	61	.088		
	Between Groups	5.385	64	.108	.533	.661

Source: Primary Data

The ANOVA testing results show no significant difference in the mean scores of the leadership quality factors (SCL and ETH) and the different age groups ( $p>0.05$ ); thus, we reject the alternative hypothesis and accept the null hypothesis that there is no association between demographic data, namely: age and leadership qualities factors: Strategic Collaborative and Ethical Accountability.

In terms of **gender and leadership qualities**, Table 6.11 provides the Independent Sample Test results.

The Independent Sample T-test results found no significant differences existed between gender and the leadership quality factor Strategic Collaborative (SCL), as the p-value is  $> 0.05$ ; thus, we reject the alternative hypothesis and accept the null hypothesis that there is no association between demographic data, namely: gender, and leadership quality Strategic Collaborative.

However, a significant difference was found between females and males for Ethical Accountability (ETH) leadership quality, with females rating Ethical Accountability higher than males. Thus, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis that there is an association between demographic data, namely: gender and leadership quality Ethical Accountability. Table 6.11 below presents the statistical findings. According to researchers Kennedy, Kray and Ku (2017), “women are more likely than men to have strongly internalised moral identities, leading to more ethical negotiation practices—but the situation can suppress women’s ethical strength”. Their study found that women are less likely to engage in unethical activities like deception than their male counterparts. Employees indicated their managers possessed qualities of honesty, trustworthiness and integrity ( $M=3.80$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and ranked it as the second most possessed quality by their managers (see Table 6.18 below).

**Table 6.11: Independent Samples Test – Gender and Leadership Qualities**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
<b>SCL</b>	Equal variances assumed	4.635	.035	-1.541	62	.128	-.18189	.11800	-.41777	.05399
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.674	49.424	<b>.100</b>	-.18189	.10864	-.40016	.03637
<b>ETH</b>	Equal variances assumed	15.433	.000	-1.820	62	.074	-.13898	.07634	-.29159	.01363
	Equal variances not assumed			<b>-2.435</b>	<b>56.311</b>	<b>.018</b>	-.13898	.05708	-.25331	-.02465

Source: Primary Data

ANOVA and Welch testing were conducted to establish if an association exists between senior managers' qualifications and leadership qualities in terms of an association between Qualification and Leadership Qualities. Table 6.12 below presents the statistical findings.

**Table 6.12: ANOVA: Qualification and Leadership Qualities**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
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<b>SCL</b>	Between Qualification	.537	4	.134	.660	.622
	Within Qualifications	12.200	60	.203		
	Total	12.737	64			
<b>ETH</b>	Between Qualification	.865	4	.216	2.872	.030
	Within Qualifications	4.519	60	.075		
	Total	5.385	64			

Source: Primary Data

The **SCL** and **EQ** variables had equal variances (homogeneity); hence ANOVA was performed. The ANOVA testing results found no significant differences between qualification and the leadership qualities factor Strategic Collaborative (SCL), as the p-value is  $> 0.05$ ; thus, we reject the alternative hypothesis and accept the null hypothesis that there is no association between demographic data, namely: qualification and leadership quality Strategic Collaborative.

However, a significant difference was found between qualification levels for Ethical Accountability (ETH) leadership quality, with managers holding an honours degree rating Ethical Accountability (ETH) higher than those with bachelor's degrees. Thus, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis that there is an association between demographic data, namely: qualification and leadership quality of Ethical Accountability. According to a paper by Lin (2015), she infers that education does play a role in ethical decision making. She goes on to state, "the more education individuals have, the better they are at making ethical decisions. However, the type of education has little effect or no effect on ethics." If morality is connected to education and if we perceive one furthering their education, we would assume that morality is increased; however, this influence is difficult to establish as many of the past CEOs at Eskom (Collin Matjila, Tshediso Matona, Zethembe Khoza, Brian Molefe, Matshela Koko and Sean Maritz) had Diplomas, Bachelors, Honours and Masters degrees (see Table 1.1, Chapter 1) amongst them, with some undergoing executive management training programmes but still were found to have committed unethical practices. While other CEOs such as Mpo Makwana, Brian Dames, Johnny Dladla, Phakamani Hadebe also held Honours and Master's degrees with Jabu Mabuz, having not completed his qualification, seem to have had a higher degree of morality and brought about positive change to Eskom. Thus, it is difficult to conclude that one's level of education will lead to ethical practices. It is always hoped that as a person gains more knowledge and education around governance and ethical business practices, they will follow them. Changing one's mental model that has been moulded by society, culture, past experiences, practises, and family is going to be difficult, and it will take a great deal of introspection and self-realisation to understand their thinking and behaviours in relation to the accepted ethical standards and practices for it to be changed. With a conscientious effort, people can unlearn old habits and ways and learn ethical, responsible ways of thinking and doing (Hartman and DesJardins, 2008).

Thus, the study concludes from the hypothesis testing that age does not influence the managers' leadership qualities at Eskom. However, females rate Ethical Accountability higher than their male counterparts and managers holding an honours degree rate Ethical Accountability higher than those holding a degree pass only.

#### 6.2.4.2 Relationship between demographic data and leadership trait factors

To establish if a relationship exists between demographic data (age, gender and qualification level) and leadership trait factors as per Table 6.8, the following tests were conducted to test the hypothesis: Independent Samples T-test was used to test for significant differences in these measures across gender; ANOVA (or Welch if necessary) statistical analysis were used for age group and qualification.

*H<sub>0</sub>: There is no association between demographic data and leadership behaviour traits factors.*

*H<sub>A</sub>: There is an association between demographic data and leadership behaviour traits factors.*

*Hypothesis Test:* Mann-Whitney U, Wilcoxon W, Kruskal Wallis Test

*Significance Level:* 95% ( $p=0.05$ ); 6df

*Rejection Criteria:* Reject  $H_0$  if  $p \leq 0.05$ ; Accept  $H_0$  if  $p > 0.05$

In terms of an **association between Gender and Leadership Trait Factors**, Mann-Whitney U and Wilcoxon W testing were conducted to establish if an association exists between gender and leadership trait factors of senior managers. Table 6.13 below presents the statistical findings.

**Table 6.13: Gender and Leadership Trait Factors Test Statistics<sup>a,b</sup>**

	STRAT	COLL	PS	LEARN
Mann-Whitney U	377.500	435.000	421.500	383.000
Wilcoxon W	608.500	1381.000	652.500	614.000
Z	-1.061	-.237	-.433	-1.002
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	<b>.289</b>	<b>.812</b>	<b>.665</b>	<b>.316</b>

a. Grouping Variable: Gender

Source: Primary Data

The Mann-Whitney U and Wilcoxon W testing results found no significant differences between gender and the leadership trait factors, as the p-value is  $> 0.05$ ; thus, we reject the alternative hypothesis and accept the null hypothesis that there is no association between demographic data, namely: gender and leadership trait factors.



A gap exists in specific studies focused on establishing the link between gender and leadership traits in SoEs and government organisations. This study's findings can be corroborated by Karunarathna (2016) in her study of government university staff. There were no significant differences between male and female workers and the ability to do their tasks. “The results showed both males and females focused on the goals and objectives and intervened when the followers are deviating from the original goals” (Karunarathna, 2016, p. 73). Similar traits were observed in the open-ended question results (in Chapter 7). Managers were focused on the goals and objectives and intervened when it was required. However, more male managers mentioned the terms “*achieve their deliverables*” and “*ensure goals were met*” than the female managers. The female managers were focused more on “*empathy and support*”.

In terms of an **association between Age and Leadership Trait Factors**, Kruskal Wallis testing was conducted to establish if an association exists between senior managers' age and leadership trait factors. Table 6.14 below presents the statistical findings.

**Table 6.14: Age and Leadership Trait Factors Test Statistics<sup>a,b</sup>**

	STRAT	COLL	PS	LEARN
Chi-Square	4.058	4.618	4.591	1.848
df	3	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	.255	.202	.204	.605

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Age

Source: Primary Data

The Kruskal Wallis Chi-square testing results found no significant differences between age and the leadership trait factors, as the p-value is  $> 0.05$ ; thus, we reject the alternative hypothesis and accept the null hypothesis that there is no association between demographic data, namely: age and leadership trait factors.

Researchers Padula et al., (2012) found in their study that there was no significant difference between age and gender and their ability to do the work among higher education workers. However, they did note that between workability in relation to gender and age, “observed an increased variability of responses for Work Ability Index (WAI) score in older workers”.

In terms of an **association between Qualification and Leadership Trait Factors**, Kruskal Wallis testing was conducted to establish if an association exists between senior managers' qualifications and leadership trait factors. Table 6.15 below presents the statistical findings.

**Table 6.15: Qualification and Leadership Trait Factors Test Statistics<sup>a,b</sup>**

	STRAT	COLL	PS	LEARN
Chi-Square	5.158	1.898	2.812	7.479
df	4	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	.271	.755	.590	.113

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Qualification

Source: Primary Data

The Kruskal Wallis Chi-square testing results found no significant differences between qualification and the leadership trait factors, as the p-value is  $> 0.05$ ; thus, we reject the alternative hypothesis and accept the null hypothesis that there is no association between demographic data, namely: qualification and leadership trait factors.

Thus, we can conclude that age, gender, and qualification demographical variables do not influence the manager's ability to perform their tasks at Eskom.

#### **6.2.4.3 Correlation Analysis on qualities senior managers rated as important and how well they perceived they could perform their tasks**

To test if there is an association between the responses for the qualities senior managers rated as important to have in a volatile environment and how well the senior managers perceived they could to the tasks, a Spearman's Correlation Analysis was performed on the factors extracted for the questions on leadership qualities and leadership traits. As shown in Table 6.16, there are significant moderate negative correlations (coefficients in red) between the Strategic Collaborate Leadership (SCL) Qualities and Strategic (STRAT), Problem-Solving (PS) and Encouraging Learning (LEARN) traits. There is also a significant moderate negative correlation between Ethical Accountability Qualities and Strategic Traits. Thus, the higher the senior managers score the importance of SCL, the worse they rate themselves at strategising, problem-solving and encouraging learning. The higher they rate the importance of ethical behaviour, the worse they rate themselves at strategising.

**Table 6.16: Spearman's Correlation Analysis: Managers Leadership Qualities and Traits**

			Leadership Trait Factors			
Leadership Qualities Factors			STRAT	COLL	PS	LEARN
Spearman's rho	SCL	Correlation Coefficient	-.359**	-.224	-.336**	-.342**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.073	.006	.005
		N	65	65	65	65
	ETH	Correlation Coefficient	-.274*	-.219	-.192	.042
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.027	.079	.125	.743
		N	65	65	65	65

Source: Primary Data

### 6.3 Employee Survey: Primary Data Presentation and Analysis

The employee questionnaire had the same variables as the senior manager questionnaire; however, the employees commented on whether their manager had possessed the leadership qualities while the senior managers commented on how important they felt those qualities are to have. In terms of the traits, the employees commented their perception of their manager's ability to do the task on a strongly disagree to a strongly agree Likert scale, while the senior managers commented on how well they felt they performed the tasks on a not well at all to an extremely well Likert scale.

#### 6.3.1 Employee Perception of Senior Manager Leadership Qualities

The following section address research objective 2:

*To determine if the leadership qualities perceived to be important by the leaders at Eskom align with the leadership qualities required for a VUCA environment.*

A One-sample T-test is applied to each item to test for significant agreement/disagreement. The average agreement score is tested against the central score of '3'. Table 6.17 provides a summary of the frequency and means (SD) scores. The results are significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), highlighted in red, and the mean scores are  $> 3$ ; thus, it is interpreted as a significant agreement to the stated leadership qualities. However, it must be noted that the mean scores are not  $\geq 4$ , but just over 3, thus leaning towards a neutral/agree response.

**Table 6.17: Employee Leadership Qualities – Frequency and Mean Scores**

Item	Responses as Frequency (%)					n	Mean (SD)	t	df	p-value
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree					
1 The ability to see a clear vision and direction	-	9 (20.0)	11 (24.4)	18 (40.0)	7 (15.6)	45	<b>3.51</b> (0.991)	3.458	44	<b>.001*</b>
2 The ability to embrace diversity and change	4 (8.9)	4 (8.9)	10 (22.2)	20 (44.4)	7 (15.6)	45	<b>3.49</b> (1.141)	2.875	44	<b>.006</b>
3 Resourcefulness and actively seeks information	-	8 (17.8)	7 (15.6)	19 (42.2)	11 (24.4)	45	<b>3.73</b> (1.031)	4.770	44	<b>.000</b>
4 Being direct while at the same time composed	1 (2.2)	5 (11.1)	16 (35.6)	14 (31.1)	9 (20.0)	45	<b>3.56</b> (1.013)	3.681	44	<b>.001</b>
5 The ability to build and mend relationships	-	7 (15.6)	14 (31.1)	17 (37.8)	7 (15.6)	45	<b>3.53</b> (.944)	3.790	44	<b>.000</b>
6 Honesty, trustworthiness and integrity	1 (2.2)	4 (8.9)	10 (22.2)	18 (40.0)	12 (26.7)	45	<b>3.80</b> (1.014)	5.295	44	<b>.000</b>
7 The ability to act in a decisive and timely manner	3 (6.7)	7 (15.6)	10 (22.2)	19 (42.2)	6 (13.3)	45	3.40 (1.116)	2.404	44	<b>.020</b>
8 The ability to be flexible, adaptable and versatile	-	7 (15)	10 (22.2)	17 (37.8)	11 (24.4)	45	<b>3.71</b> (1.014)	4.704	44	<b>.000</b>
9 Being able to communicate effectively and in a transparent manner	-	9 (20)	11 (24.4)	17 (37.8)	8 (17.8)	45	<b>3.53</b> (1.014)	3.530	44	<b>.001</b>
10 Reflection and Self-awareness (of personal strengths and weaknesses)	-	3 (6.7)	18 (40.0)	16 (35.6)	8 (17.8)	45	<b>3.64</b> (.857)	5.045	44	<b>.000</b>
11 Working collaboratively and interactively with others to solve problems and plan ahead	-	6 (13.3)	11 (24.4)	22 (48.9)	6 (13.3)	45	<b>3.62</b> (.886)	4.708	44	<b>.000</b>
12 Being respectful, compassionate and sensitive	1 (2.2)		14 (31.1)	19 (42.2)	11 (24.4)	45	<b>3.87</b> (.869)	6.693	44	<b>.000</b>
13 Being open to and accepting differing viewpoints	-	4 (8.9)	10 (22.2)	22 (48.9)	9 (20.0)	45	<b>3.80</b> (.869)	6.178	44	<b>.000</b>
14 The ability to empower, equip and enable others	-	5 (11.1)	8 (17.8)	23 (51.1)	9 (20.0)	45	<b>3.80</b> (.869)	6.000	44	<b>.000</b>
15 Being innovative, taking risks and having novel ideas	1 (2.2)	9 (20.0)	11 (24.4)	17 (37.8)	7 (15.6)	45	3.44 (1.056)	2.822	44	<b>.007</b>
16 The ability to be positive, upbeat, and optimistic	-	2 (4.4)	11 (24.4)	28 (62.2)	4 (8.9)	45	<b>3.76</b> (.679)	7.460	44	<b>.000</b>
17 Being responsible, accountable and goal orientated	-	8 (17.8)	8 (17.8)	16 (35.6)	13 (28.9)	45	<b>3.76</b> (1.069)	4.740	44	<b>.000</b>
18 The ability to think clearly under pressure and communicate effectively	4 (8.9)	3 (6.7)	11 (24.4)	18 (40.0)	9 (20.0)	45	<b>3.56</b> (1.159)	3.215	44	<b>.002</b>
19 Being able to think conceptually, holistically and strategically	-	8 (17.8)	9 (20.0)	19 (42.2)	9 (20.0)	45	<b>3.64</b> (1.004)	4.308	44	<b>.000</b>
20 Being agile (responsive), alert and proactive to changes	-	9 (20.0)	10 (22.2)	17 (37.8)	9 (20.0)	45	<b>3.58</b> (1.033)	3.751	44	<b>.001</b>

Source: Primary Data

According to Table 6.17, there is significant agreement that the managers/leaders/supervisors: are able to set a clear vision and direction ( $M=3.51$ ),  $p=.001$ ; are able to embrace diversity and change ( $M=3.49$ ),  $p=.006$ ; are resourceful and actively seek information ( $M=3.73$ ),  $p<.0005$ ; are direct while at the same

time composed (M=3.56),  $p=.001$ ; are able to build and mend relationships (M=3.53),  $p=.0005$ ; are honest, trustworthy and have integrity (M=3.80),  $p<0.005$ ; are flexible, adaptable and versatile (M=3.71),  $p<.0005$ ; are able to communicate effectively and in a transparent manner (M=3.53),  $p=0.001$ ; are able to reflect and are aware of their personal strengths and weaknesses (M=3.64),  $p<0.005$ ; are able to work collaboratively and interactively with others to solve problems and plan ahead (M=3.62) $p<0.005$ ; are respectful, compassionate and sensitive (M=3.87),  $p<0.005$ ; are open to and accept differing viewpoints (M=3.80),  $p<0.005$ ; are able to empower, equip and enable others (M=3.80),  $p<0.005$ ; are positive, upbeat, and optimistic (M=3.76),  $p<0.005$ ; are responsible, accountable and goal orientated (M=3.76),  $p<0.005$ ; are able to think conceptually, holistically and strategically (M=3.64),  $p,0.005$ ; are agile (responsive), alert and proactive to changes (M=3.58),  $p=.001$  and are able to think clearly under pressure and communicate effectively (M=3.56),  $p=.002$ .

### 6.3.1.1 Rank Analysis- Leadership Qualities

The qualities employees perceived to be most possessed to least possessed by the managers are illustrated in Table 6.18.

**Table 6.18: Employees Leadership Qualities Ranking**

Leadership Qualities	Mean agreement n=45
B12 Being respectful, compassionate and sensitive	3.87
B6 Honesty, trustworthiness and integrity	3.80
B13 Being open to and accepting differing viewpoints	3.80
B14 The ability to empower, equip and enable others	3.80
B16 The ability to be positive, upbeat, and optimistic	3.76
B17 Being responsible, accountable and goal orientated	3.76
B3 Resourcefulness and actively seeks information	3.73
B8 The ability to be flexible, adaptable and versatile	3.71
B10 Reflection and Self-awareness (of personal strengths and weaknesses)	3.64
B19 Being able to think conceptually, holistically and strategically	3.64
B11 Working collaboratively and interactively with others to solve problems and plan ahead	3.62
B20 Being agile (responsive), alert and proactive to changes	3.58
B4 Being direct while at the same time composed	3.56
B18 The ability to think clearly under pressure and communicate effectively	3.56
B5 The ability to build and mend relationships	3.53
B9 Being able to communicate effectively and in a transparent manner	3.53
B1 The ability to set a clear vision and direction	3.51
B2 The ability to embrace diversity and change	3.49
B15 Being innovative, taking risks and having novel ideas	3.44
B7 The ability to act in a decisive and timely manner	3.40

Source: Primary Data

The top five qualities most possessed by the senior managers do not align with the top five qualities the senior managers rated as most important, apart from honesty, integrity, and trustworthiness. Thus, there is a disconnect between what they believe and what they actually display/enact when performing their duties and engaging with their employees.

### **6.3.2 Employee: Perception of Senior Manager Leadership Traits**

The following section address research objective 3:

*To determine if the leaders at Eskom possess the required leadership traits to succeed in a VUCA environment.*

The One-sample T-test was applied to the data to test for significant agreement/disagreement to how employees rate their managers on the perceived ability to do each task. The results were checked using the Wilcoxon signed ranks test. No differences were found in the concluding results. The mean and standard deviation were also calculated. A total of 45 employees answered this question.

The results show significant agreement for 29 out of 32 items (p values <.005, highlighted in red) as per Table 6.19 and Figure 6.5. There was no significant agreement that the managers could do the following task well:

1. The ability to think creatively and out of the box to catalyse new thoughts which result in novel ideas and concepts (M=3.6), p=.360.
2. To routinely develop unique new solutions using input from various individuals (M=3.27), p=.083.
3. Encourage disruptive innovations that will establish completely new standards for improved efficiency and service delivery (M=3.27), p=.083.

Senior managers also rated “Encourage disruptive innovations that will establish completely new standards for improved efficiency and service delivery” as their worst trait (see Table 6.6). The traits above are key when managing and leading in a volatile environment. The black swan event, like Covid-19, required leaders to be creative in their strategic planning, develop novel ways of solving the challenges that Covid-19 had presented. Disruptive innovations that helped improve efficiencies reduced the number of tasks to be completed and catered for a fluid working situation enabled organisations not only to survive the pandemic but also to thrive post the pandemic. However, encouraging disruptive thinking is a skill that not many managers have mastered or are accustomed to. The tried and tested ways are always favoured. Current leadership models and

training does not focus on disruptive thinking and innovation, and very few organisations welcome or encourage this behaviour.

**Table 6.19: Employee Trait - One-Sample Test**

My manager....	Traits	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	n	Mean	SD
ST1_1	Is able to see the big picture and think holistically about how different aspects affect one another	3.903	44	.000	45	3.60	1.031
ST2_2	Is able to anticipate the future based on what is known and considers the possibilities and probabilities of each long-term outcome	4.069	44	.000	45	3.51	.843
ST3_3	Is able to link the past to the present, as well as to the future, as a single continuum of dynamic interactions	3.611	44	.001	45	3.53	.991
ST4_4	Is able to step back and think-through plans and decisions, connecting future outcomes to today's planned actions	4.526	44	.000	45	3.60	.889
C1_5	Takes into account a number of elements when thinking through problems, issues or situations, to help create well-informed strategies, plans and decisions	3.630	44	.001	45	3.51	.944
C2_6	Is able to navigate what is known, while accounting for what might not be known	4.118	44	.000	45	3.58	.941
C3_7	Knows the networked nature of complexity in Eskom and how its various elements are interdependent	4.409	44	.000	45	3.64	.981
A1_8	Is able to adeptly sense environments and be aware of changes which may influence his actions and strategies	4.896	44	.000	45	3.64	.883
A2_9	Is able to react effectively and efficiently to stay ahead of environmental changes	3.617	44	.001	45	3.42	.783
A3_10	Is able to reflect on his actions and decision and change things so that they work better	3.017	44	.004	45	3.40	.889
A4_11	Considers the impact a change will have on people, processes, systems and goals and implements plans to support the change	4.000	44	.000	45	3.53	.894
A5_12	Makes sound decisions quickly under pressure or when facing tight deadlines	2.847	44	.007	45	3.47	1.100
A6_13	Is able to easily and speedily identify and provide innovative efficient solutions to problems and inefficiencies in processes and systems	3.108	44	.003	45	3.40	.863

I1_14 <b>Is able to think creatively and out of the box to catalyse new thoughts which result in novel ideas and concepts</b>	.926	44	<b>.360</b>	45	3.16	1.127
I2_15 Promotes learning and the development of breakthrough ideas and concepts in the team	5.630	44	<b>.000</b>	45	3.69	.821
I3_16 <b>Routinely develops unique new solutions using input from various individuals</b>	1.773	44	<b>.083</b>	45	3.27	1.009
I4_17 <b>Encourages disruptive innovations that will establish completely new standards for improved efficiency and service delivery</b>	1.773	44	<b>.083</b>	45	3.27	1.009
L1_18 Encourages individuals to unlearn behaviours and strategies that hinder growth and efficiency across and within our systems and networks	2.406	44	<b>.020</b>	45	3.33	.929
L2_19 Encourages experiential learning, where knowledge is applied in context, i.e. hands-on	5.851	44	<b>.000</b>	45	3.71	.815
L3_20 Encourages individuals to set their own learning and development requirements	6.589	44	<b>.000</b>	45	3.69	.701
L4_21 Encourages continuous learning through deep engagement and involvement in a collaborative setting	4.392	44	<b>.000</b>	45	3.53	.815
E1_22 Creates an environment that enables the unrestrained emergence of new ideas, concepts and perspectives.	2.787	44	<b>.008</b>	45	3.40	.963
E2_23 Sets the tone, so that I feel encouraged and feel a sense of openness and trust so that meaningful dialogue and exchange can take place	2.548	44	<b>.014</b>	45	3.40	1.053
E3_24 Shows a genuine interest in the generation of productive ideas and solutions and acknowledges the idea regardless of their source	2.602	44	<b>.013</b>	45	3.40	1.031
E4_25 Sets the stage, creates the right environment, asks the right questions, and then 'lets go'	2.701	44	<b>.010</b>	45	3.36	.883
E5_26 Enables me to rethink old problems and strategies in new ways	3.317	44	<b>.002</b>	45	3.47	.944
E6_27 Apply different lenses and backgrounds to solving a problem	2.492	44	<b>.017</b>	45	3.36	.957



SY1_28 Encourages and fosters internal and external interactions across networks/ departments to create dynamic learning and innovative social environments	4.069	44	.000	45	3.51	.843
SY2_29 Thinks in terms of open and collaborative systems	3.953	44	.000	45	3.56	.943
SY3_30 Is able to think and adapt in terms of interconnected and interdependent systems and departments	3.773	44	.000	45	3.49	.869
SY4_31 Considers a wide range of possibilities and their inherent probabilities and their potential implications	3.944	44	.000	45	3.51	.869
SY5_32 Allows others to brainstorm and propose solutions to problems in complex situations	5.880	44	.000	45	3.73	.837

Source: Primary Data

### 6.3.2.1 Employee Traits – Exploratory Factor Analysis

EFA was performed on the traits data. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) of .865 indicates that the data was reasonable for successful and reliable extraction. The significant results of Bartlett's Test ( $p < 0.000$ ) indicate that correlations between items were good for successful factor extraction. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was 0.8895 (average of the alpha scores in Table 6.20), indicating reliability. Confirmatory Factor Analysis was performed on the constructs to establish a goodness of fit.

#### KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.865
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square
	939.135
	df
	153
	Sig.
	.000

Source: Primary Data

Four factors were extracted, accounting for 66.73% variance, are as follows:

1. F1 – Enabler (E)
2. F2 – Strategic Holistic Thinking (SHT)
3. F3 – Learning and Innovative Thinking (LIT)
4. F4 – Adaptable Agile (AA)

**Table 6.20 (a): Factor Analysis Summary – Employee Trait**

Factor	Label	Items included	% variance explained	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE	MSV
Enabler	E	23-25, 27, 31	64.152	.948	.884	.609	.832
Strategic, holistic thinking	SHT	6, 7, 1-4	1.137	.937	.908	.627	.947
Learning and innovative thinking	LIT	15, 17	.769	.737	.853	.743	.540
Adaptable Agile	AA	5, 9, 12, 13, 16	.670	.936	.864	.564	.947

Source: Primary Data

The EFA extraction results align with the senior managers' open-ended questionnaire results (as per Chapter 7). The managers at Eskom created a very enabling environment during Covid-19 for their teams. They relinquished control on certain aspects to their team, gave them greater freedom to be agile and brainstorm new ways of completing the tasks. They created an environment that was positive and very collaborative. Further to this, the managers found themselves doing more deep constructive thinking on solving the problems and completing tasks. They became more strategic in their thinking when approaching and solving problems and engaging with their team. Adaptability and agility were the order of the day during Covid-19, as a quick response to action was required. Managers had to be flexible in their thinking and how they approached each situation and staff. Managers who could steer their organisation successfully through Covid-19 displayed these key traits (Deloitte, 2020). Xawuka (2018, pp. 81-82) found in his study on Leadership influence on organisational performance at Eskom that employees at Eskom do “receive the necessary support, guidance and training to execute their duties and improve their performance”. Close to 70% of the respondents indicated that teamwork was encouraged, and 49.5% indicating that they felt free to raise concerns. This indicates that management provides an enabling environment for the employees' success and that of the organisation.

A Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed to confirm the factors extracted in Table 6.18 (a), as it is beneficial to confirm that these composite measures are valid and reliable and that the combination of the items into the single measures are a good fit. Fit indices of ratio  $\chi^2$ /df, CFI, IFI and RMSEA all indicate a good fit for the factor analysis as illustrated in Table 6.20(c). Analysis of the reliability and validity (Table 6.20 (b)) show that reliability and convergent validity is achieved throughout. However, divergent validity was not achieved in some cases.

**Table 6.20(b): Criteria for reliability and validity**

Measure	Criteria for good measure	E	SHT	LIT	AA
Reliability	CR > 0.7	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Convergent validity	CR > AVE	Yes	yes	Yes	Yes
	AVE > 0.5	Yes	yes	Yes	Yes
Divergent validity	AVE > MSV	no	no	yes	no

Source: Primary Data

**Table 6.20(c): Fit Index Scores**

Fit index	Criteria for good fit	Value for this measurement model
Chi-square		157.287
p-value	>.05	.031
$\chi^2 / df^*$	<5	1.248
CFI	>.95	.963
IFI	>.9	.964
RMSEA	<.08	.062

Source: Primary Data

\* better fit index than using chi-square and p-value.

A One-sample T-test was applied to test for significant agreement/disagreement to these constructs/factors. A significant agreement,  $p < 0.005$ , was established that each of these traits are present regarding the senior managers as perceived by their employees, as per Table 6.21.

**Table 6.21: One-Sample Test on Employee Trait Factors**

One-Sample Test						
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
E	3.103	44	.003	.40444	.1418	.6671
SHT	4.691	44	.000	.57778	.3296	.8260
LIT	3.916	44	.000	.47778	.2319	.7237
AA	3.283	44	.002	.41333	.1596	.6671

Source: Primary Data

### 6.3.3 Analysis comparing rankings for the two groups

#### 6.3.3.2 Analysis comparing rankings for the qualities by the two groups

This section addresses the secondary objective 3:

*To establish if there are similar perceptions of what senior managers perceive as important leadership qualities and what their employees perceive they possess.*

The question of leadership qualities was identical for the senior managers and employees. The one set reflects the employees' perceptions of their managers; the other reflects the managers' perceptions of themselves. The analysis was done to test if these perceptions differ between employees and managers. An independent sample t-test was performed on the data to test the equality of the means across the two groups. The p-value for all items are significant,  $p < 0.005$ . It is important to note that the senior managers rated on importance while the employees rated on possession. The scales were different; however, it is comparable as the scales (interval) were a Likert scale 1 to 5, with 1 being the least important/strongly disagree and 5 being the most important/strongly agree. Results of this analysis are depicted in Table 6.22 (a & b). The results of the independent t-test were cross-checked using Mann-Whitney, and the p-values did not change. The higher the mean values, the more AGREEMENT and IMPORTANCE it indicates.

Results from the Independent Sample T-test are significant ( $p < 0.005$ ) indicate that managers placed higher importance on all the qualities than what their employees had agreed as to the qualities they had perceived their managers had possessed. The mean scores for the managers for all the qualities were higher than that of the employees.

**Table 6.22 (a): Leadership Qualities Independent Sample Group Statistics**

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
B1 The ability to set a clear vision and direction	employees	45	3.51	.991	.148
	managers	65	4.94	.242	.030
B2 The ability to embrace diversity and change	employees	45	3.49	1.141	.170
	managers	65	4.86	.348	.043
B3 Resourcefulness and actively seeks information	employees	45	3.73	1.031	.154
	managers	65	4.58	.497	.062
B4 Being direct while at the same time composed	employees	45	3.56	1.013	.151
	managers	65	4.55	.730	.090
B5 The ability to build and mend relationships	employees	45	3.53	.944	.141
	managers	65	4.49	.687	.085
B6 Honesty, trustworthiness and integrity	employees	45	3.80	1.014	.151
	managers	65	4.97	.174	.022
B7 The ability to act in a decisive and timely manner	employees	45	3.40	1.116	.166
	managers	65	4.80	.474	.059
	employees	45	3.71	1.014	.151

B8 The ability to be flexible, adaptable and versatile	managers	65	4.60	.581	.072
B9 Being able to communicate effectively and in a transparent manner	employees	45	3.53	1.014	.151
	managers	65	4.80	.506	.063
B10 Reflection and Self-awareness (of personal strengths and weaknesses)	employees	45	3.64	.857	.128
	managers	65	4.62	.604	.075
B11 Working collaboratively and interactively with others to solve problems and plan ahead	employees	45	3.62	.886	.132
	managers	65	4.69	.498	.062
B12 Being respectful, compassionate and sensitive	employees	45	3.87	.869	.129
	managers	65	4.62	.654	.081
B13 Being open to and accepting differing view points	employees	45	3.80	.869	.129
	managers	65	4.68	.533	.066
B14 The ability to empower, equip and enable others	employees	45	3.80	.894	.133
	managers	65	4.65	.571	.071
B15 Being innovative, taking risks and having novel ideas	employees	45	3.44	1.056	.157
	managers	65	4.51	.640	.079
B16 The ability to be positive, upbeat, and optimistic	employees	45	3.76	.679	.101
	managers	65	4.43	.706	.088
B17 Being responsible, accountable and goal orientated	employees	45	3.76	1.069	.159
	managers	65	4.77	.460	.057
B18 The ability to think clearly under pressure and communicate effectively	employees	45	3.56	1.159	.173
	managers	65	4.86	.348	.043
B19 Being able to think conceptually, holistically and strategically	employees	45	3.64	1.004	.150
	managers	65	4.86	.348	.043
B20 Being agile (responsive), alert and proactive to changes	employees	45	3.58	1.033	.154
	managers	65	4.77	.460	.057

Source: Primary Data

**Table 6.22(b): Independent Samples Test – Comparing the ranking of qualities for the two groups**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
B1 The ability to set a clear vision and direction	Equal variances assumed	117.977	.000	-11.158	108	.000	-1.427	.128	-1.681	-1.174
	Equal variances not assumed			-9.465	47.655	.000	-1.427	.151	-1.731	-1.124
B2 The ability to embrace diversity and change	Equal variances assumed	59.144	.000	-9.124	108	.000	-1.373	.150	-1.671	-1.074
	Equal variances not assumed			-7.825	49.714	.000	-1.373	.175	-1.725	-1.020
B3 Resourcefulness and actively seeks information	Equal variances assumed	24.377	.000	-5.767	108	.000	-.851	.148	-1.144	-.559
	Equal variances not assumed			-5.140	58.229	.000	-.851	.166	-1.183	-.520
B4 Being direct while at the same time composed	Equal variances assumed	8.454	.004	-6.012	108	.000	-.998	.166	-1.327	-.669
	Equal variances not assumed			-5.673	74.677	.000	-.998	.176	-1.349	-.648
B5 The ability to build and mend relationships	Equal variances assumed	7.784	.006	-6.167	108	.000	-.959	.156	-1.267	-.651

	Equal variances not assumed			-5.829	75.272	.000	-.959	.165	-1.287	-.631
B6 Honesty, trustworthiness and integrity	Equal variances assumed	86.933	.000	-9.126	108	.000	-1.169	.128	-1.423	-.915
	Equal variances not assumed			-7.661	45.801	.000	-1.169	.153	-1.476	-.862
B7 The ability to act in decisive and timely manner	Equal variances assumed	45.455	.000	-9.019	108	.000	-1.400	.155	-1.708	-1.092
	Equal variances not assumed			-7.934	55.102	.000	-1.400	.176	-1.754	-1.046
B8 The ability to be flexible, adaptable and versatile	Equal variances assumed	18.468	.000	-5.826	108	.000	-.889	.153	-1.191	-.586
	Equal variances not assumed			-5.308	63.996	.000	-.889	.167	-1.223	-.554
B9 Being able to communicate effectively and in transparent manner	Equal variances assumed	42.057	.000	-8.649	108	.000	-1.267	.146	-1.557	-.976
	Equal variances not assumed			-7.742	59.294	.000	-1.267	.164	-1.594	-.939
B10 Reflection and Self-awareness (of personal strengths and weaknesses)	Equal variances assumed	9.558	.003	-6.972	108	.000	-.971	.139	-1.247	-.695
	Equal variances not assumed			-6.555	73.535	.000	-.971	.148	-1.266	-.676
B11 Working collaboratively and interactively with others to solve problems and plan ahead	Equal variances assumed	19.074	.000	-8.076	108	.000	-1.070	.133	-1.333	-.807
	Equal variances not assumed			-7.337	63.220	.000	-1.070	.146	-1.362	-.779

B12 Being respectful, compassionate and sensitive	Equal variances assumed	2.332	.130	-5.155	108	.000	-.749	.145	-1.037	-.461
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.900	77.154	.000	-.749	.153	-1.053	-.444
B13 Being open to and accepting differing view points	Equal variances assumed	7.915	.006	-6.554	108	.000	-.877	.134	-1.142	-.612
	Equal variances not assumed			-6.030	66.847	.000	-.877	.145	-1.167	-.587
B14 The ability to empower, equip and enable others	Equal variances assumed	5.607	.020	-6.056	108	.000	-.846	.140	-1.123	-.569
	Equal variances not assumed			-5.605	68.573	.000	-.846	.151	-1.147	-.545
B15 Being innovative, taking risks and having novel ideas	Equal variances assumed	18.109	.000	-6.564	108	.000	-1.063	.162	-1.384	-.742
	Equal variances not assumed			-6.028	66.283	.000	-1.063	.176	-1.415	-.711
B16 The ability to be positive, upbeat, and optimistic	Equal variances assumed	1.431	.234	-5.006	108	.000	-.675	.135	-.943	-.408
	Equal variances not assumed			-5.042	97.111	.000	-.675	.134	-.941	-.409
B17 Being responsible, accountable and goal orientated	Equal variances assumed	41.579	.000	-6.798	108	.000	-1.014	.149	-1.309	-.718
	Equal variances not assumed			-5.987	55.368	.000	-1.014	.169	-1.353	-.674
	Equal variances assumed	57.841	.000	-8.559	108	.000	-1.306	.153	-1.608	-1.004



B18 The ability to think clearly under pressure and communicate effectively	Equal variances not assumed			-7.333	49.533	.000	-1.306	.178	-1.664	-.948
B19 Being able to think conceptually, holistically and strategically	Equal variances assumed	63.758	.000	-9.039	108	.000	-1.217	.135	-1.484	-.950
	Equal variances not assumed			-7.817	51.389	.000	-1.217	.156	-1.530	-.905
B20 Being agile (responsive), alert and proactive to changes	Equal variances assumed	48.068	.000	-8.208	108	.000	-1.191	.145	-1.479	-.904
	Equal variances not assumed			-7.254	56.172	.000	-1.191	.164	-1.520	-.862

Source: Primary data

According to Table 6.23, the findings do indicate there are differing perceptions as to what senior managers perceive as being important to them to have and what the employees perceive they possess. Honesty, integrity and trustworthiness (B6) are ranked as most important for senior managers, while employees felt that the quality that the leaders possessed most was B12 - being respectful, compassionate and sensitive. Honesty, integrity and trustworthiness (M=3.80); being open to and accepting differing viewpoints (M=3.80) and the ability to empower, equip and enable others (M=3.80) the employees ranked it as being the second most possessed qualities. It becomes worrying as we move up the ranking, with senior managers indicating being able to set a clear vision and direction (B1), being able to embrace diversity and change (B2) and being able to think clearly under pressure and communicate effectively (B18) were the next three most important qualities for them while the employees ranked it at the opposite end of the scale at 17, 18 and 13 respectively. Employees rated managers the worst – 20<sup>th</sup> – as not being able to act in a decisive and timely manner, while managers perceived this as the 6th most important quality for them.

In a volatile environment, literature has indicated that it is very important for a leader to possess and display qualities of setting a clear vision and direction, embracing diversity and change, thinking clearly under pressure and communicating effectively and transparently. Further to this, they must be able to conceptualise the situation and what is required while taking into account all the elements and stakeholders at play when formulating the required strategies. Underpinning these qualities, the qualities of honesty, integrity and trustworthiness should permeate every decision, action and thoughts of a leader. Xawuka (2018) found in his study that 55.5% of the employees perceived their managers to display integrity, and almost 50% perceived them to have ethical values. In this study, 77% of the employees agreed (agree + strongly agree) that their managers possessed qualities of honesty, integrity, and trustworthiness, which is very pleasing to note considering the unethical practices as cited by media reports of senior managers, board members, and staff have been plaguing Eskom.

**Table 6.23: Leadership Qualities Comparison – Senior Managers and Employees**

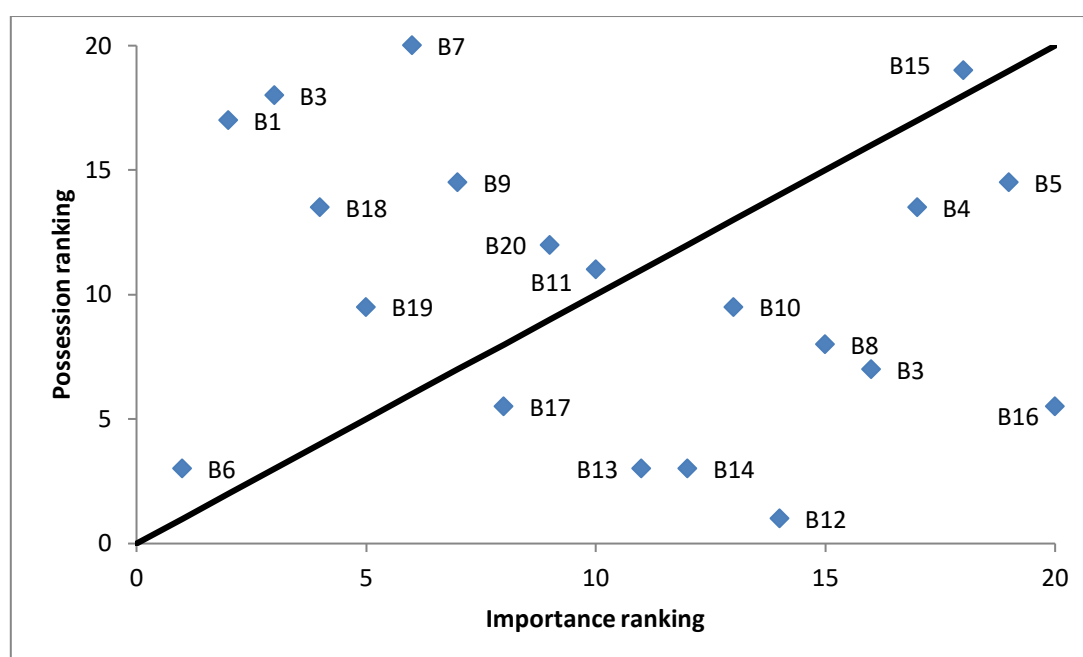
Leadership Qualities	Average importance rating of quality as perceived by SM (n=65)	Ranking (most (1) to least (20) important)	Average agreement rating of quality possession by SM as perceived by EMP (n=45)	Ranking (most(1) to least (20) possessed)	P-value
B6 Honesty, integrity and trustworthiness	4.97	1	3.8	3	p<0.005
B1 Being able to set a clear vision and direction	4.94	2	3.51	17	p<0.005
B2 Being able to embrace diversity and change	4.86	3	3.49	18	p<0.005
B18 Being able to think clearly under pressure and communicate effectively	4.86	4	3.56	13.5	p<0.005
B19 Being able to think conceptually, holistically and strategically	4.86	5	3.64	9.5	p<0.005
B7 Being able to act in a decisive and timely manner	4.8	6	3.4	20	p<0.005
B9 Being able to communicate effectively and in a transparent manner	4.8	7	3.53	14.5	p<0.005
B17 Being responsible, accountable and goal orientated	4.77	8	3.76	5.5	p<0.005
B20 Being agile (responsive), alert and proactive to changes	4.77	9	3.58	12	p<0.005
B11 Working collaboratively and interactively with others to solve problems and plan ahead	4.69	10	3.62	11	p<0.005
B13 Being open to and accepting differing viewpoints	4.68	11	3.8	3	p<0.005
B14 Being able to empower, equip and enable others	4.65	12	3.8	3	p<0.005
B10 Reflection and Self-awareness (of personal strengths and weaknesses)	4.62	13	3.64	9.5	p<0.005
B12 Being respectful, compassionate and sensitive	4.62	14	3.87	1	p<0.005
B8 Being flexible, adaptable and versatile	4.6	15	3.71	8	p<0.005
B3 Being resourceful and information seeking	4.58	16	3.73	7	p<0.005
B4 Being direct while at the same time composed	4.55	17	3.56	13.5	p<0.005
B15 Being innovative, taking risks and having novel ideas	4.51	18	3.44	19	p<0.005
B5 Being able to build and mend relationships	4.49	19	3.53	14.5	p<0.005
B16 Being positive, upbeat, and optimistic	4.43	20	3.76	5.5	p<0.005

Source: Primary Data

**Figure 6.5 illustrates the possession vs importance ranking.** The points along the 45-degree line concur closest between what the senior managers say is important and what the employees say the senior manager possesses. Points below the line show higher possession ranking than

importance. Points above the line have a higher importance ranking than possession. A ranking of 1 is most important.

Thus, B6 (Honesty, integrity and trustworthiness) is the best-ranked item by both groups. B17 (Being responsible, accountable and goal-orientated) showed greater importance to managers and B11 (Working collaboratively and interactively with others to solve problems and plan ahead) had a greater possession ranking and were fairly close in their rankings but are in the average/mid-way range. B4 (Being direct while at the same time composed); B15 (Being innovative, taking risks and having novel ideas), and B5 Being (able to build and mend relationships) are also quite close in their rankings but are low in terms of possession and importance (see Table 6.23).



**Figure 6.5: Possession vs Importance Ranking of Leadership Qualities**  
Source: Primary Data

### 6.3.3.2 Analysis comparing rankings for the traits by the two groups

This section addresses the secondary objective 4:

*To determine if an alignment exists between how leaders perceive how well they can perform their tasks are aligned with the employees' perception of their ability to do the task.*

The employees' rated their managers on the perceived ability to do each task using a rating scale of 1 = strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree, and the manager rated himself/herself on each task

in terms of how well he/she perceives they can accomplish the task using a rating scale where 1= not well at all to 5 = extremely well. A total of 32 trait items were assessed. Both questions were measured using a 5-point scale with 1 = poor rating and 5 = a good rating.

A Mann Whitney test comparing the mean scores for employees and managers on the traits were performed as depicted in Table 6.24 (a & b) below. Only two traits (ST2 & A3) that were found to be significant were reported (refer to Appendix 2 for the Mann-Whitney U test results for all the traits). Results from the Mann Whitney test indicate:

1. Employees rate their managers significantly higher ( $M=3.51$ ,  $p=0.013$ ) on their ability to anticipate the future based on what is known and their consideration of possible long-term outcomes than the managers' rated themselves ( $M=3.40$ ,  $p=0.013$ ).
2. That managers rate themselves significantly higher ( $M= 3.83$ ,  $p=0.022$ ) on their ability to reflect on their actions and decision and change things so that they work better than their employees rated them ( $M=3.14$ ,  $p=0.022$ )

**Table 6.24(a): Group Statistics – Employee and Senior Manager Traits**

			Descriptive Statistics	
Group			ST2 Is able to anticipate the future based on what is known and considers the possibilities and probabilities of each long-term outcome	A3 Is able to reflect on his actions and decision and change things so that they work better
employees	N	Valid	45	45
		Missing	0	0
		Mean	3.51	3.40
		Median	4.00	3.00
		Std. Deviation	.843	.889
	Percentiles	25	3.00	3.00
		50	4.00	3.00
		75	4.00	4.00
managers	N	Valid	65	65
		Missing	0	0
		Mean	3.14	3.83
		Median	3.00	4.00
		Std. Deviation	.864	.840
	Percentiles	25	3.00	3.00
		50	3.00	4.00
		75	4.00	4.50

Source: Primary Data

**Table 6.24(b): Mann-Whitney U Test – Employee and Senior Manager Traits**

Test Statistics <sup>a</sup>		
Traits	ST2 Is able to anticipate the future based on what is known and considers the possibilities and probabilities of each long-term outcome	A3 Is able to reflect on his actions and decision and change things so that they work better
Mann-Whitney U	1077.500	1104.500
Wilcoxon W	3222.500	2139.500
Z	-2.474	-2.299
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	<b>.013</b>	<b>.022</b>
a. Grouping Variable: Group		

Source: Primary Data

Thus, a significant difference was found to exist between how leaders perceive how well they can perform their tasks and the employees' perception of their ability to do the task for the following traits: anticipate the future based on what is known and considering the possibilities and probabilities of each long-term outcome and the ability to reflect on his/her actions and decision and change things so that they work better. No significant differences were found between employees and managers on the other 30 traits.

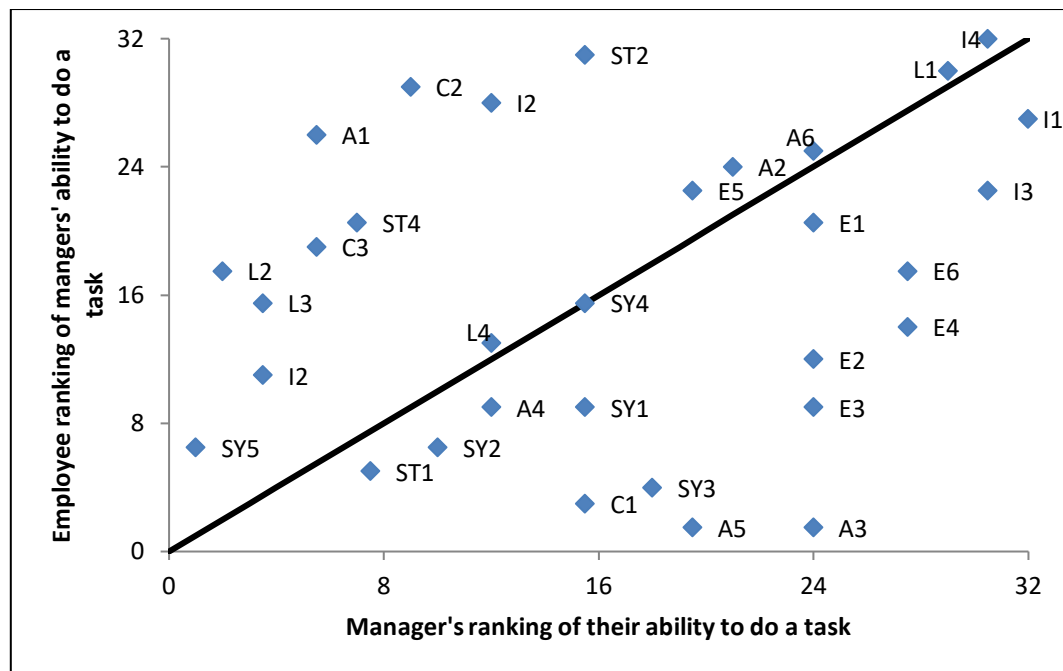
Managers felt that they were better able to reflect on their actions and decision and change things to work better than what their employees perceived. Reflecting on the findings of the open-ended question findings, managers found themselves *reflecting more* and *doing more deep thinking for themselves, the employees, and their decisions*. This helped them assess what was done, the outcomes and determine how it could have been done better.

On the other hand, employees perceived that their managers were better able to predict the future based on their knowledge of the current situation. They felt that they were very strategic, holistic and long-term thinkers. This could have been based on their managers being very responsive and proactive to the challenges that Covid-19 had presented, and their strategies created seemed to address the situation and future challenges that arose. It seems they perceived it as being a strong trait compared to the managers feeling on their ability to actually do it. The open-ended responses found that managers were *agile, adaptable, proactive, and looked for new ways to address challenges and tasks and meet the set outcomes*. The literature on leading in a VUCA environment calls for leaders to engage in this type of long-term holistic strategic critical thinking (Moore, 2015).

Figure 6.6 below depicts the results of the **ability to do a task: Employee's perception vs Manager's perceived ability**. An Independent Sample T-test was performed on the data. The p-value for all items are significant,  $p < 0.005$ .

In Figure 6.6, traits on/or near the diagonal line are ranked equally/similarly by both parties.

Traits above the line are the tasks for which the employee ranks the manager higher/better than he/she ranks him/herself. Traits below the line are those tasks for which the manager rates himself higher/better than the employee does.



**Figure 6.6: The ability to do a task: Employee's perception vs Manager's perceived ability**  
Source: Primary Data

The figure shows certain constructs from the SCAILES Model coming through more clearly than others. For example, the “L’s”, which is Learning, are above the line, while most of the “SY’s”, which is System and “E’s”, which is Emergence, are below the line. Traits near the origin are better ranked than those at the end of the line (right) are lower/worse ranked.

It is evident from Figure 6.7 that employees perceive the managers to do better in tasks that allow the team to brainstorm and propose solutions to problems in complex situations (SY5) and promote learning and development within the team, namely:

- L2 - Promote learning and the development of break-through ideas and concepts in my team
- L2 - Encourage experiential learning, where knowledge is applied in context, i.e. hands-on
- L3 - Encourage my team to set their own learning and development requirements

- L4 - Encourage continuous learning through deep engagement and involvement in a collaborative setting

Traits such as SY4 - Consider a wide range of possibilities and their inherent probabilities and their potential implications and L4 - Encourage continuous learning through deep engagement and involvement in a collaborative setting, are near/on the diagonal line indicating that both parties ranked these two traits equally or similarly. The mean score for SY4 for the employee was 3.51, and the senior manager mean score was 3.6, and for L4, it was 3.53 and 3.65, respectively.

In terms of **ranking of the traits by the employees and the managers**, the employees ranked trait SY5 (Allow others to brainstorm and propose solutions to problems in complex situations) as being best performed by their managers while the managers ranking for the same trait came in at 6.5, see Table 6.25. Senior managers felt the tasks they were best at performing were A5 (Make sound decisions quickly under pressure or when facing tight deadlines) and A3 (Reflect on my actions and decision and change things to work better). At the same time, the employees ranked it at 19.5 and 24, respectively. Senior managers felt the tasks they could not perform well were I4 - Encourage disruptive innovations that will establish completely new standards for improved efficiency and service delivery. However, employees felt that their managers did not have the ability to do well was thinking creatively and out of the box to catalyse new thoughts which result in novel ideas and concepts (I1). In terms of innovation and creativity, senior managers lack the required skills vital in a VUCA environment.



**Table 6.25: Leadership Traits Ranking Comparison – Senior Managers and Employees**

Trait		Emp Mean n=45	Emp rank	SM Mean n=65	SM rank
32	SY5	3.73	1	3.72	6.5
19	L2	3.71	2	3.58	17.5
15	I2	3.69	3.5	3.68	11
20	L3	3.69	3.5	3.6	15.5
7	C3	3.64	5.5	3.54	19
8	A1	3.64	5.5	3.4	26
4	ST4	3.6	7	3.52	20.5
1	ST1	3.6	7.5	3.75	5
6	C2	3.58	9	3.28	29
29	SY2	3.56	10	3.72	6.5
3	ST3	3.53	12	3.32	28
11	A4	3.53	12	3.71	9
21	L4	3.53	12	3.65	13
2	ST2	3.51	15.5	3.14	31
5	C1	3.51	15.5	3.82	3
28	SY1	3.51	15.5	3.71	9
31	SY4	3.51	15.5	3.6	15.5
30	SY3	3.49	18	3.8	4
12	A5	3.47	19.5	3.83	1.5
26	E5	3.47	19.5	3.49	22.5
9	A2	3.42	21	3.46	24
10	A3	3.4	24	3.83	1.5
13	A6	3.4	24	3.45	25
22	E1	3.4	24	3.52	20.5
23	E2	3.4	24	3.66	12
24	E3	3.4	24	3.71	9
25	E4	3.36	27.5	3.63	14
27	E6	3.36	27.5	3.58	17.5
18	L1	3.33	29	3.23	30
16	I3	3.27	30.5	3.49	22.5
17	I4	3.27	30.5	3.02	32
14	I1	3.16	32	3.35	27

Source: Primary Data

## 6.4 Summary of Chapter

The chapter has presented the statistical results of the primary data for the quantitative study. A significant agreement was established on all the leadership qualities for both the employees and senior managers. The findings do indicate there are differing perceptions as what senior managers perceive as being important qualities for them to have and what the employees perceive they possess, with senior managers ranking honesty, integrity and trustworthiness and being able to set a clear vision and direction as being the two most important qualities for leading in a volatile environment while employees felt that quality most possessed by the managers were being respectful, compassionate and sensitive. The top 5 qualities that managers perceive as most important for a volatile environment do not align fully with literature findings during the Covid-

19 pandemic. In terms of leadership traits, differing perceptions were again attained. Employees ranked their managers' ability to allow others to brainstorm and propose solutions to problems in complex situations as being best performed, while the managers ranked it 6.5<sup>th</sup>. Senior managers felt the tasks that they were best at performing were making sound decisions quickly under pressure or when facing tight deadlines and reflecting on their actions and decisions and to change things so that they work better, while the employees ranked it at 19.5<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, respectively. The key traits required to succeed in a volatile environment were rated mostly as being able to perform quite well as opposed to well or extremely well. The demographical variables of age, gender and qualification do not influence the manager's ability to perform their tasks at Eskom. Age does not influence the leadership qualities of the managers at Eskom. However, females rate Ethical Accountability higher than their male counterparts and managers holding an honours degree rate Ethical Accountability higher than those holding a degree pass only. Based on the findings, managers display certain qualities and traits for leading in a VUCA environment.

The following Chapter 7: Qualitative Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation, presents the qualitative study findings and the open-ended questions from the quantitative study.

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**CHAPTER 7:**  
**QUALITATIVE DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND**  
**INTERPRETATION**

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*“Leaders become great not because of their power, but  
because of their ability to empower others.”*

(John Maxwell, n.d.)

## 7.1 Introduction

The chapter presents the data analysis of the qualitative questions in both the employees and senior managers' questionnaires as well as the executive member questionnaire. The qualitative study sought to answer the following research objectives:

1. To assess the perceived impact of leaderships behaviour in achieving Eskom's goals.
2. To determine if the leadership qualities perceived to be important by the leaders at Eskom align with the leadership qualities required for a VUCA environment.
3. To determine if the leaders at Eskom possess the required leadership traits to succeed in a VUCA environment.
4. To ascertain to what extent had the leaders at Eskom changed their leadership approach during the Covid-19 pandemic.

To further unpack objective 4, the following research question (question 5) was asked:

*What do leaders at Eskom believe are the critical take-aways for them from the Covid-19 pandemic?*

The primary data were analysed using thematic and content analysis. This chapter addresses the above-stated objectives by reviewing the executive member questionnaire's response, followed by an analysis of the senior manager survey's open-ended questions. Lastly, recommendations of how managers may improve the leadership approach as postulated by the employees will be discussed.

## 7.2 Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Data

To identify themes or main thoughts in a set of data, Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) indicate thematic analysis as being the most preferred option. Thematic analysis recognises patterns within data. The data were analysed per the questions posed to the respondents. The themes emerged from the codes or nodes from the analysis being performed on the data. The themes for the study were extrapolated from the data from the open-ended questions in the senior manager and employee questionnaire.

The primary data for the senior manager open-ended questions were analysed in Nvivo 12 Pro to uncover trends and words that are similar in meaning to identify treemaps, word frequency and word/tag clouds and from this main and sub-themes. An inductive thematic analysis approach was followed, whereby codes, or as Nvivo calls them, "nodes", emerged from the data itself. There were 26 nodes identified. The findings from the open-ended question from the employee questionnaire on areas the employee felt their manager could improve on were analysed using thematic analysis. The survey findings are presented and integrated into the quantitative results'

findings and the open-ended question themes. To retain the richness of the data and support the discussions, the findings were presented using direct quotes (*in italics*) from the respondents' exact words.

**Word Frequency:** these are the words used most frequently based on specific parameters such as length, exact vs less exact matches. Nvivo creates categories which are then used to create a Tag/Word Cloud.

**Tag/Word Cloud:** these are a graphic representation of words, up to 1000 words. Words are displayed alphabetically and vary in font sizes. Words that are most frequently repeated appear in larger fonts. In this study, a 300 minimum word length was used. It is important to note that tag/word clouds do not display words based on importance but based on frequency (Better Evaluation, 2013).

**TreeMap:** is a diagram that shows hierarchical data as a set of nested rectangles of varying sizes. A treemap of nodes can be created to compare the number of coding references. A node with a large number of coding references would display as a large rectangle. The treemap is scaled to fit the available space best, so the rectangles' sizes should be considered about each other, rather than as an absolute number. (Nivivo 10, n.d)

### **7.3 Executive Member of Survey Analysis**

The executive member questionnaire attempted to address the above state research objectives and research question.

In total, seven members make up the executive team at Eskom. Of these seven members, only three members completed the open-ended questionnaire, and one member did not consent. Despite the reminders being sent out twice during September and October and a further request to the HR Department of Eskom in January 2021 to redistribute the survey, no other responses were received. A low response rate was anticipated based on the factors discussed in Chapter 5. Key terms were extracted from the responses for each question. It will be discussed and triangulated with literature findings, the quantitative results and the open-ended question results of the senior managers. In terms of the questions posed, the respondent answered as follows:

#### **7.3.1 What Leadership qualities do you believe are important for you as a leader of Eskom to have?**

The key terms that emerged from the data were *ethics, agility, flexibility, accountability, empathy and the ability to work as a team.*

The respondents felt that it was important for leaders to display and exude "*ethical behaviour, transparency and fairness; good work ethics; integrity, accountability and responsibility*". According to the quantitative study results, the most important leadership qualities for senior managers were *honesty, integrity and trustworthiness* (M=4.97,  $p<.005$ ), and the employees indicated that honesty, integrity and trustworthiness being one of the second most possessed qualities of their senior managers (M=3.80), see Table 6.23 in Chapter 6. Thus, it is pleasing to note that the leadership quality perceived to be important at the executive level is also an important quality for the senior managers. It is displayed in their leadership approach as indicated by their subordinates, which aligns to the goal of the Minister of Public Enterprises of restoring a culture of ethical leadership and practices is being realised (Eskom Integrated Report, 2018). However, is ethical leadership adequate on its own to lead in a volatile environment? According to the literature on leading in a VUCA environment, it is paramount for leaders to display agility, adaptability, flexibility, empathy, to name a few, as discussed in Table 3.4 (Chapter 3). In terms of the key qualities of Ethical Leadership as discussed in Chapter 2, it postulates that leaders should have qualities of trustworthiness, honesty, integrity, fairness, kindness, compassion and concern for others, responsibility and sustainability, justice, moderation orientations and behaviour that purposefully communicates ethical standards to followers. As per the study findings (both the quantitative and qualitative findings in section 7.4 below) and literature, leaders that displayed compassion, kindness, responsibility, trustworthiness, honesty, and integrity were successful in navigating through the Covid-19 pandemic; however, in addition to these qualities, they further displayed qualities of agility, adaptability, flexibility, proactiveness, strategic thinking, speedy, self-reflection, innovation, creativity and the ability to unlearn and relearn new ways of doing business. However, Respondents 2 and 3 stated qualities that were more in line with qualities cited by literature as key to having when leading in a VUCA environment, namely: "*strategic thinking, agility, flexibility, accountability, empathy and the ability to work as a team.*" Yet again, the qualities of accountability and empathy associated with ethical leadership have emerged and which is in accordance to the strategic imperatives for the executive members at Eskom. These qualities were highlighted as vital in the literature, quantitative and qualitative (section 7.4 to follow) study findings. Individuals having the ability to adapt to changes quickly and being flexible in their approach and thinking as situations unfold due to the fluidity of the situation whilst being empathetic and team-oriented not only enables the leader to embrace the sudden uncertainty with a degree of confidence but ensures the buy-in from his/her team as a person who is strong, committed and knows how to lead them out of this storm. Once that mindset prevails instead of anxiety, it is a breeding ground for teamwork, innovation, creativity and commitment to achieve the stated objectives. A sense of common shared goals and vision begins to exist among the team. Leaders in this environment must be able to see the bigger picture by connecting the dots and understanding the impact of the problem and decision on all stakeholders.

Leaders need to step back and evaluate strategic plans by assessing past actions taken, their outcome, and relevance to the present and future situations. The ability to anticipate the future based on what is known while planning for the unknown by conducting probability scenarios for each long-term outcome is a skill that is not easily acquired or found in many people. It is crucial for Eskom leaders in this ‘new world’ that the Covid-19 pandemic has created to develop and or refine their strategic creative, innovative thinking skills to thrive in this complex dynamic environment. Strategic Thinking traits emerged both in the quantitative factor analysis and the qualitative analysis (in section 7.4 to follow).

### **7.3.2 How would you describe your leadership style/behaviour?**

The key leadership styles that emerged from the data were again ethical and transformational leadership. Based on respondent 1 indicating ethics as the most important quality to have as a leader, it is not surprising to note that their leadership style is governed by “*Good Work Ethic*”. While Respondent 2 indicated that their dominating leadership style as “*transformational leadership with a high focus on ethics, governance and accountability*” while Respondent 3 stated “*I am very strong and steadfast on ethics and accountability. I believe in getting things done.*” Good governance and ethical leadership are the overarching frameworks that govern Eskom’s Board, Executive Committee and staff. Due to the high number of unethical practices that occurred in the past at Eskom, the Minister of Public Enterprises had set out his expectations of the newly appointed Board Members to help restore the culture of ethical practices and investor and stakeholder confidence in the entity by eradicating fraud, corruption and malfeasance (Eskom Integrated Report, 2018). For this to occur, it is paramount for the leaders at the top to display ethical leadership and good governance, so it begins to permeate to lower levels in the organisation (Ngambi, 2011). Transformational leadership is about the organisation and looking at its parts as a whole and transforming the individual’s morality, motivation to achieve a common goal as concerted by Afsar, Badir, Saeed, and Hafeez (2017). Leading in a VUCA environment, it is paramount to see each division/department of Eskom and their associated challenges as a part of the whole organisation and how the challenges impact the other divisions/departments and external stakeholders. An incorrect decision or action could have a ripple effect on other areas of Eskom due to the interconnected and interdependent nature of the entity, thereby causing further challenges for the organisation. The complexities presented by Covid-19 could not be addressed in isolation; however, it takes a very strategic holistic thinking individual to put all the fragments together to see the whole picture and the resulting impact it will have on the division and the organisation as a whole. According to the binomial test results (Table 6.6, Chapter 6), senior managers felt that they do well in their ability to see the big picture and think holistically and take into account a number of elements when thinking through problems, to help create well-informed strategies and decisions, which is very pleasing to note that the senior managers at Eskom are

strategic thinkers, as the first factor emerging from the factor analysis was Strategic as per Table 6.7, in Chapter 6. Thus, to achieve Eskom's stated objectives, the leaders and their managers need to have a focused mindset, and it is pleasing to note that Respondent 3 believes in "*getting things done*". This result-orientated mindset sets the tone for work ethic and performance delivery in the team.

### **7.3.3 Do you feel Your current leadership approach has helped to address Eskom's Mandate thus far? Explain in which areas and how.**

The respondents indicated Yes to this question. Areas noted were "*improving on processes and systems, meeting set objectives, service delivery and safety*". Respondent 1 did go on to say that "*Eskom needs committed, focused and hardworking employees.*" While Respondent 2 stated that their "*open, inclusive approach has encouraged teamwork and helped improve on the way things are performed as well as ultimately resulting in improved services.*" Respondent 3 indicated that he/she was able to achieve the stated objectives due to his/her "*leadership and team commitment.*" Based on the responses from the senior manager open-ended questions in section 7.4 below, it is very evident that the senior managers were committed and focussed in ensuring that strategies were revised to ensure that set outcomes were on the path to be realised. They frequently collaborated with their teams and displayed a lot of empathy, honesty and respect. The employees also cited these qualities as the most fundamental quality the managers possessed (respectful, compassionate and sensitive, M=3.87, see Table 6.23 in Chapter 6). Operating in a VUCA environment, empathy, respect, sensitivity, and understanding is vital to ensure the leader gets the buy-in from their team members. Teamwork is the goal of success. The data shows that Eskom's executive members leadership approach has filtered down to the senior managers and has contributed to them achieving their stated objectives in a very difficult environment due to their committed staff, teamwork, inclusiveness, and result-oriented approach.

### **7.3.4 The challenges impacting your leadership role and leadership behaviour change during the Covid-19 virus pandemic.**

In terms of challenges impacting their role as a leader, two respondents indicated that there were none. In contrast, one respondent indicated "*ageing infrastructure and debt*" as the challenges that impacted their leadership role.

Further to this, Respondent 1 indicated that their leadership approach did not change during the Covid-19 pandemic, with Respondent 3 indicating not really as "*I always used a very focus approach and constantly engage with my team on the tasks at hand*", however, the respondent does indicate that he/she "*did experience more empathy though.*" On the other hand, Respondent 2 indicated that their leadership approach had changed to some extent where he/she had "*became*



*more cognisant of my team needs and challenges. I made more frequent contact with the team to check on both their personal well-being and status of project deliverables.”* These behavioural changes were also expressed by the senior managers (as per section 7.4). Challenging times have been known too often to bring out people's emotional side, where a higher degree of empathy is expressed; however, they can remain unfazed by the changes for some. Leading in a time like Covid-19 required leaders to change their approach many times in a day, and leaders who were fluid in their approach were successful. To help one be so fluid in their thinking and approach, they need to adopt the worldview of thinking and the principles of Theory U. Having the ability to introspect, to understand one's weaknesses and challenges and find ways to turn their challenges into strengths in addition to hiring or working with team members that possess the strengths that one lacks, will assist leaders to become more accommodating and adaptable. Although some Eskom leaders did not experience a dramatic change in their behaviour as they believed their leadership approach was effective for leading during Covid-19, the pandemic did awaken the leaders' awareness and empathetic side.

### **7.3.5 Describe some of the steps you had taken to “steer the ship” forward during this uncertain time?**

The Covid-19 pandemic was an event that leaders could not foresee. Due to the size, complexity, and ramifications of the pandemic on the business and the staff, it was impossible to ascertain and plan. One of the critical traits successful leaders used during the pandemic was reassessing their business model and evaluating the key issues and goals that needed to be addressed, as cited by BDO New Zealand (BDO, 2020). It is comforting to note that the respondents displayed the same traits of other successful leaders, as Respondent 1 *“Focused on getting key issues dealt with”* Respondent 2 *“constantly evaluated the plans against my teams’ feedback and restructured as required”*. Similar sentiments of *“frequent team engagement and reviewing of strategies and what was impacting them from meeting the desired goals”* were expressed by Respondent 3. It is important that during a volatile time like the pandemic that leaders evaluate the business and categorise all issues and tasks in terms of importance and focus on the critical issues and items/operations that are fundamental to keeping the business afloat as it weathers out the storm. Many senior managers also stepped back and reprioritised and restructured to ensure that the most important outcomes were on the path to be met. They also looked for new ways to achieve the outcomes (as discussed in section 7.4 below). Respondent 2 also ensured there was *“frequent communication”* where their *“directives were clearer and specific”*. It does not matter how brilliant the plan is on paper or how many resources may be at the leader's disposal; if the leader does not know how to clearly communicate the plan to the implementors in a manner that they can understand, the plan is worthless. Also, suppose the leader does not know how to use their resources and what to do with the information being presented to them. In that case, they will be

unable to factor the changes into the restrategised plan and adequately utilise the resources at their disposal. Thus, strategic thinking and resourcefulness are essential qualities when leading in a VUCA environment. It is pleasing to note that these qualities and communication and teamwork were evident in the leaders at Eskom.

### **7.3.6 What were some of the positive and negative leadership behaviour traits/qualities you had observed among your team members during this virus pandemic?**

In terms of positives, Respondent 1 noted that there was *“more communication and better focus”* among the team members, while Respondent 2 highlighted the team's strength and commitment: *“strong committed team”*. Respondent 3 cites people's ability to *“communicate and work in a very productive manner from home”*. Negatives that were noted was that *not everyone adapts easily to change and can deal with anxiety* as Respondent 3 indicates *“the unknown is quite daunting and difficult to plan for.”* Respondent 2 noted the importance of having *“patience, understanding and compassion”* even when he/she *felt anxious*, citing that *“I had to be strong and composed for my team when at times I was fearful.”* Leaders must take care of their mental health first during a crisis, so they are in a better mental space to lead the team that is counting on them. The senior managers also found themselves communicating more frequently with their team members and had to be more alert to what was happening externally and internally and their impact on their team. Clear, concise and frequent communications are vital in a VUCA environment. Change is happening so quickly, and the situation is so fluid that managers need to be explicit and clear in their communications.

Further to this, they need to have more frequent check-ins on their teams both from a work and personal status. During the pandemic, leaders who did this successfully steered their organisation through the unknown (BDO, 2020). According to the senior managers at Eskom (see section 7.4 below), many found themselves doing more self-reflection and deep thinking at the end of each day. This helped them gain better focus and clarity in terms of how to lead their teams to achieve their set outcomes and, more importantly, ensure their team's positive mental health. A healthy worker is a productive worker.

### **7.3.7 What would you say were the greatest take-away(s) for YOU as a leader from this virus pandemic?**

The respondents' critical take-aways from this pandemic were *“Uncertainty of the environment; focusing on the priorities and mobilising resources; change is constant; continued learning and development and scenario planning; adapting to new ways and building resilience”*. Further to this, Respondent 2 stated, *“We must be prepared mentally, physically and emotionally to expect*

*the unexpected.*” According to Adams and Becket (2020), the third step in “Leading Through Crisis” is to assess “what is most urgent now”. BDO (2020) also emphasised the importance of focussing on priorities. These are vital traits of successful leaders, especially in complex, volatile environments. When leading in a crisis like a war (which the researcher personally felt Covid-19 was like), nothing is constant. Situations change in a split second, and decisions made in that particular moment, often a few seconds without any deep thinking or input from the team, are made under duress based on gut feel and past experience. Thus, soldiers often have these various training sessions where they are presented with sudden changes and where difficult decisions need to be made on the spot, requiring them to quickly determine what is essential and what is not and the way forward. This training helps equip them with the skills they will need when faced with real-life situations. Thus, Eskom leaders need to consider doing more scenario planning to better equip them for the unexpected. It is comforting to note that the executive members acknowledge the importance of focusing on priorities and not trying to achieve all tasks and goals and continued learning and development and scenario planning, which will equip them with vital skills Covid-19. Thus, to live happily and work productively in this VUCA environment, leaders at Eskom will need to condition their mindset to accept that change is constant and uncertainty is a given. Upon leaders beginning to accept this reality, their anxiety levels will begin to decrease, and they will seek new ways to work by adapting to the changing world and coping with the uncertainty, hence building their levels of resilience.

### **7.3.8 What key leadership traits do you believe are important for leadership at Eskom to possess, not only to survive through the crisis but to be able to revive, restore and or redesign the organisation for a new future?**

The critical leadership trait that Respondent 1 believes to be essential to possess post the Covid-19 pandemic that will help survive through the crisis and be able to revive, restore, and or redesign the organisation for a new future is that of “*ethical leadership*”. According to Brown, Treviño and Harrison (2005) cited in Wijesekera, Lalitha Fernando (2018, p. 120) describes ethical leadership as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement and decision making”. Characteristics found to be unique and vital to ethical leadership are trustworthiness, honesty, integrity, fairness, kindness, compassion and concern for others, responsibility and sustainability, justice, moderation orientations and behaviour that purposefully communicates ethical standards to followers (Eisenbeiss, 2012; Yukl et al., 2013; Engelbrecht, Heine and Mahembe, 2017). Keselman and Saxe-Braithwaite (2020, p. 1) say that to survive and thrive in a VUCA environment, a “rethinking of the most effective leadership style is required, one where leaders balance the delivery of quality...with being

responsible and accountable within fiscal boundaries, balancing ethical behaviour and quality outcomes.” However, one needs to ask, will these characteristics of ethical leadership be adequate to survive, revive, restore and or redesign the organisation for a new future? Would leaders who possess skills such as problem-solving, strategic and critical thinking, innovation, agility and adaptability like in strategic leadership, transformative leadership, complexity leadership, integrative thinking and entrepreneurial leadership while being underpinned by qualities of authentic, ethical leadership be more useful to take Eskom forward?

Respondent 2, on the other hand, asserts that the key traits that he/she believes are important is *“the ability to be visionary and see the bigger picture amidst the chaos while being composed and having humility. It is always important to learn new ways of doing tasks,”* with Respondent 3 also stressing on the importance of strategic leadership: *“Definitely strategic leadership, adaptability, agility, ethics, integrity and decisiveness.”* Literature has shown that to charter the turbulent waters of a VUCA environment successfully, it is vital for leaders to display strategic, transformational, integrative and complexity adaptive leadership skills. While ethical leadership traits are fundamental when leading a complex entity like Eskom, literature has indicated as well as the qualitative (as per section 7.4) and quantitative study results that it will alone not be adequate in a VUCA world. A combination of leadership approaches is required where strategic and transformational thinking prevails. Of the three responses, two leaders did display some qualities from these leadership approaches; however, due to the low response rate, it is difficult to generalise that all members embody the principles of strategic thinking or ethical leadership or if there is a mix of the two approaches or other approaches.

## **7.4 Senior Manager Open-ended Question Analysis**

To understand leadership in a volatile environment is best to ask individuals who have led their team during a volatile environment. Covid-19 pandemic is an excellent example of a volatile environment, and the survey was conducted when the managers were living and working through these turbulent times. Information was collected in real-time. Thus, first-hand information on how their leadership approach changed during this time, the factors that contributed to this, and the key lessons to be learnt will be of most value for planning for the future regarding leadership development and training for Eskom. The information will highlight the key tasks managers struggled with and where changes were made thereof.

Senior managers were asked to answer two open-ended questions as stated below, which addressed research objective 4 and research question 6:

- 1. Did YOUR leadership style/approach change during the Covid-19 virus pandemic? If Yes, please indicate how. Provide as much detail as possible.*

2. *What has been the key take-away points from the Covid-19 virus pandemic for YOU as a leader?*

A total of 65 managers responded to this question. Forty-five managers changed their leadership approach to some extent during this time, while 20 managers felt there was no need to do so. Using an inductive thematic analysis approach, the data were analysed using Nvivo12 Pro. Word Clouds and Trees Maps were formulated, and themes emerged as the category nodes were generated.

#### **7.4.1 Question 1: Change in Leadership Approach During Covid-19 Pandemic**

*“What you do has far greater impact than what you say.”* (Stephen Covey)

Leading during the Covid-19 pandemic, where the environment was painted with VUCA, is no easy task. As discussed in Chapter 3, a VUCA environment can bring out the best in a manager where their key strengths shine out or will be their ultimate downfall as the inherent weaknesses in their character, skills and leadership traits are brought to the surface. It takes a very strong-willed person to lead a team through a catastrophic storm with no clear path ahead and to be continuously strategising as they walk through the storm. Clear, strategic and analytical thinking and composure of the mind and interaction with people are required despite being surrounded by turmoil. Thinking on one's feet, clear communication and rallying the team together with a positive mindset are the essential qualities a leader needs to display, as discussed earlier in Chapter 3. Volini et al., (2019) state that a leader's ability to operate fluidly with all faith and commitment in an environment categorised by VUCA, rapid change, new technologies and business processes and systems will determine his/her effectiveness as a leader. Bennett and Lemoine, 2014; Kambhammettu, 2014; Centre for Creative Leadership, 2020 assert that it is vital for leadership in a VUCA environment to possess qualities such as understanding, collaboration, clarity, flexibility, agility, creativity/innovation.

This question addressed research objective 4:

*To ascertain to what extent had the leaders at Eskom changed their leadership approach during the Covid-19 pandemic.*

##### **7.4.1.1 Word Frequency and Word Clouds**

The word frequency and word cloud generated for the question on whether senior managers leadership approach changed during the Covid-19 pandemic identifies the words that frequently appeared. The larger the font size indicates the word was used most often, and the words in a smaller font size were used less frequently. The infographic in Figure 7.1 shows that words/terms

“team, understanding, challenges, staff, communication, and adapt” were most often used by the managers.

If we look at the word *Team*, the literature review is filled with notions of removing the silo mentality among employees and working together. The saying many hands makes the work lighter, and two minds are better than one, is the type of approach required to succeed in a volatile environment. Each member brings to the team a unique set of skills, experiences and knowledge that will add value in improving processes, solution-finding and innovation thinking. The word “*staff*” speaks to the manager's employees. A manager is only as successful based on his employees' contributions to the set goals. Treating people with empathy, compassion, *understanding*, and trust is vital to get the staff to buy into the shared vision and set goals. They will be committed to the organisation and the leader. Manager's at Eskom found themselves as being more empathetic and understanding of their staff during this time. As a leader, it is crucial to *understand* who their staff members are, their strengths, weaknesses, the challenges they are experiencing and what makes them happy. Leaders got to be genuine and authentic in their approach to them as people can sense when they are not authentic. Should this not occur, this could create a very hostile environment where sabotage of plans and strategies become rife, and harmony within the staff can be destroyed if employees feel they are false in their leadership. One of the essential qualities a leader in a VUCA environment must possess is that of *adaptability*.

A VUCA environment calls for leaders to be fluid and able to change, amend their thinking, strategies and plans to fit a situation in the quickest time possible. Managers at Eskom found themselves adapting more during the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of their approach to their staff, the business and themselves. Their *communication* styles had to change with them moving to more remote online communications; they had more frequent communication touch bases with the team. Things were changing very quickly, and information overload was the order of the day. Thus, it was imperative to ensure their communication was clear, explicit and easy to understand. These qualities have been cited by various researchers ( Moore, 2015; LDC 2016; Van Velsor et al., 2016; Daigle and Matthews, 2017; Donkor and Zhou, 2019; Towler, 2019; Centre for Creative Leadership, 2020) as being critical for leaders in SoE's to possess and for leading in environments characterised by VUCA. Botelho et al. (2017) allude that leaders who possess such qualities are driven to succeed due to self-effacement, self-confidence, assertiveness, and not ego or control.



**Figure 7.1: Leadership Behaviour Change Word Cloud**  
Source: Primary Data

#### 7.4.1.2 Key Themes that emerged from the Tree Maps

Three themes emerged from the treemaps analysis: a leader's disposition towards people, running a business, and themselves. Within these themes, various sub-themes had emerged. The discussion below will unpack and discuss these themes.

**Table 7.1: Key Themes and Subthemes – Leadership Behaviour Change During Covid-19**

KEY THEMES and SUBTHEMES	Responses
<b>Theme 1 - Disposition Towards People</b>	
1.1 Improved teamwork, collaboration and consultation	17
1.2 Less managing and more leading	13
1.3 More empathy, understanding and leading	26
1.4 A new way of communicating	13
1.5 People are agile	5
1.6 Trust in your team	7
<b>Theme 2 - Disposition Towards Running a Business</b>	
2.1 More Adaptability, Agility and Proactiveness	15
2.2 Unlearning old and rigid ways of doing things	22
- Innovative	8
- Proactive	4
<b>Theme 3 - Disposition Towards Self</b>	
- Alert	12
	6

Source: Primary Data

#### Theme 1: Disposition towards people

Disposition towards people was the first theme that emerged from the data, and it indicates how the managers' behaviour changed towards people, namely their staff, during the Covid-19

pandemic. Lampinen and Fifield (2020, p. 5) found in their study that the “golden rules of crisis leadership...listen and consult the experts, dare to make big decisions, be transparent and communicate openly in consensus.”

Eskom managers felt that their behaviour changed in 5 areas: Improved teamwork, collaboration and consultation; less managing and more leading; being more empathetic, listening and understanding; being less critical and more supportive; finding new ways of communicating; realising people are agile and trusting in the team. These behavioural changes exhibited by Eskom managers are in line with research scholars' findings on leadership conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic. Respondent 41 sums it up quite beautifully as to what were the main changes expressed by the managers: *“Be open to change, more communication, encouragement, showing more empathy, be more resilient, show more patience, show more care, increased focus on safety.”*

### **1.1 Improved teamwork, collaboration and consultation**

Managers found that they had to allow their teams to become more agile, thus improving teamwork and dynamics. This approach is recommended by Aziz corporate, an executive coaching consultancy that uses the Learning Agility Model by Korn Ferry Lominger when coaching leaders on the VUCA environment and how to build strong teams to flourish in this environment. They indicate that it is vital to create agility in 4 areas: mental, people, change and results, with self-awareness at the centre of this model. Creating an environment that enables collaboration based on trust and openness where the goal is to work together than against each other (Jordaan, 2019 cited in Kok and van den Heuvel, 2019; Sukhera et al., 2020) will help instil agility in the team. Moore (2015) highlights the importance of leaders creating an enabling working environment that will encourage agility and collaboration as it invites engagement, brainstorming, creativity and innovation.

This relinquishing of control also allowed teams to be more comfortable in their job and saw it as their managers trusting in their abilities and knowledge; hence it invited more significant innovation and creativity in their practices and thinking when responding to the challenges presented by Covid. Thus, there seems to be a clear shift in leadership approach where the Eskom managers could quickly shift from a more top-down management to leading from the centre management approach, aligning the principles of transformational, complexity adaptive and awakened leadership. As the data emerges, it will be interesting to note if awakened leadership characteristics continue to emerge due to the extreme situation brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. One can argue that Covid-19 may have been positive for leaders to reevaluate their leadership approach and move towards an inclusive cohesive approach.



Respondent 1 cited that the situation required him *“to allow my team to be more agile and innovative to adapt to the challenges imposed by Covid-19”*.

Covid-19 forced managers to move out of their comfort zones of doing things and find new ways of doing business and collaborating, as cited by one respondent. *“I had learnt to adjust to the new way of doing business and collaborating.”*

Managers realised they did not have to be physically present in the office to be productive. By allowing teams to collaborate had motivated and inspired them to produce creative ways of doing things.

Respondent 39 highlighted the greater use of technology *“I used technology a lot more when collaborating with my Team. I realised you do not have to be in the office to be productive. My Team was focused and eagerly provided fantastic ideas on how to meet our outcomes.”* To ensure a positive, productive experience in the use of technology, Respondent 42 cited, *“I had to strengthen relationships to thrive within the virtual context.”* The importance of relationship building and trust continuously emerges in the primary findings as well as the secondary data.

This manager realised the importance of engaging with their staff in finding new ways of working smarter. *“Due to remote working, constant engagement occurred which shed light on how important it is to engage with the staff on their tasks and look for new ways to do things better to ensure goals were met”*, cites Respondent 28.

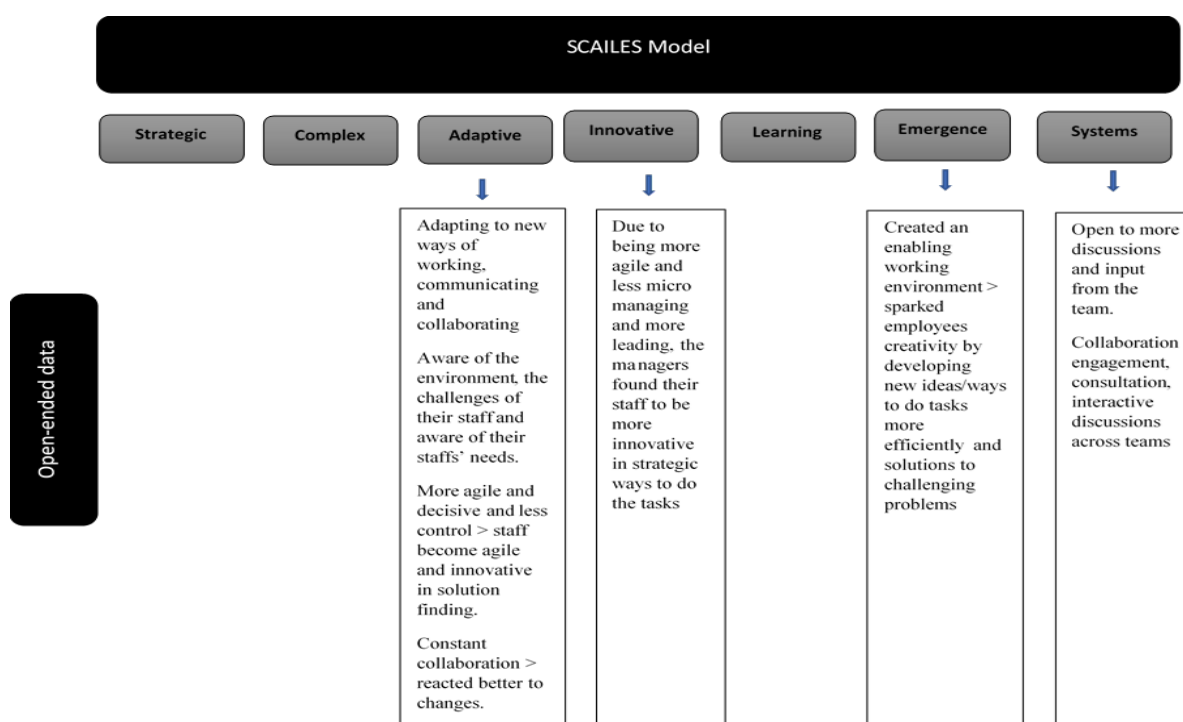
While other respondents began engaging more frequently and collaborating to ensure plans were in place to meet the set goals. Respondent 10 says, *“We frequently engaged in a more collaborative team setting and were focused on our outcomes/deliverables.”* Similarly, Respondent 21 said, *“I found myself engaging more with my team on a regular basis to ensure they are on the path to achieve their deliverables.”* Lampinen and Fifield (2020) found that collaboration results in a shared mindset, enabling a consensus to be reached much faster, creating a faster response to an action. This behaviour was seen amongst the Eskom leaders preventing response to action paralysis.

However, Respondent 45 found that they had to be more decisive in the decision making as time was of the essence, thus collaborated less. *“There was more need for decisive leadership and less time for lengthy collaboration. The speed at which things changed required immediate implementation of solutions.”* Literature also supports decisiveness in addition to collaboration. Based on the literature, the researcher agrees with Respondent 45 that in a volatile environment,

certain situations require on the spot decision-making, and consultation often is not an option. One has to trust in their abilities, knowledge and experience to make a decision for the team.

Further, managers found themselves doing more boundary spanning by working across departments and teams in solution-finding. Respondent 43 cited: *“Working more effectively across centres of excellence. Less critical and more supportive. Collaborative problem-solving.*

Collaboration, teamwork, delegation, consultation and working across departments are critical leadership qualities literature cites for leading in a VUCA environment. Sandahl (2019) and Sukhera et al., (2020) cite the setting of clear goals, having constructive inclusive interactions with the teams and across teams, and team leadership are vital qualities required to succeed in a volatile environment. It is pleasing to note that managers at Eskom displayed these essential qualities during the Covid-19 pandemic. Aligning the sub-theme findings to the SCAILES Framework, the findings align with the construct adaptive, innovative, emergence and systems requirements.



**Figure 7.2: Improved Teamwork, Collaboration and Consultation Alignment to the SCAILES Framework**

Source: Author (2020)

## 1.2 Less managing and more leading

Leaders of today lead and manage based on the set key performance indicators. However, during a crisis like the Covid-19 pandemic, Lampinen and Fifield (2020) and McNulty and Marcus

(2020) argue that leaders need to switch their approach to focus on future planning and anticipation of what is to follow. Some Eskom managers found themselves micro-managing less and leading more, while others were more involved but on a collaborative level instead of an instructional level. Some managers checked in on their staff to assess their emotional well-being and the support required, while others were more focused on the deliverables and how best they could support to achieve them. Based on the data that emerged, it is evident that there was a shift in the managers' leadership approach from a transactional, one-directional, micromanaging approach to one of a leading, inclusive and collaborative approach. Thus, leading in times of Covid, Eskom managers needed mental strength to deal with emerging challenges employing the team approach blended by collaborative and consultative efforts and in most cases, they needed to change their leadership approach while aware of what they are capable of. Faced with an extraordinary situation such as the Covid-19 pandemic, successful managers are often measured in terms of their extraordinary mental strength and the ability to change from common leadership styles to match the situation. It would appear that the Eskom managers rose to the occasion as they weathered the storm and continued to provide leadership in such an incredibly heartbreaking environment.

Respondent 18 said he *"Let them get on with day to day work. I checked in more to judge their emotional wellbeing and let them approach me when they required me."*

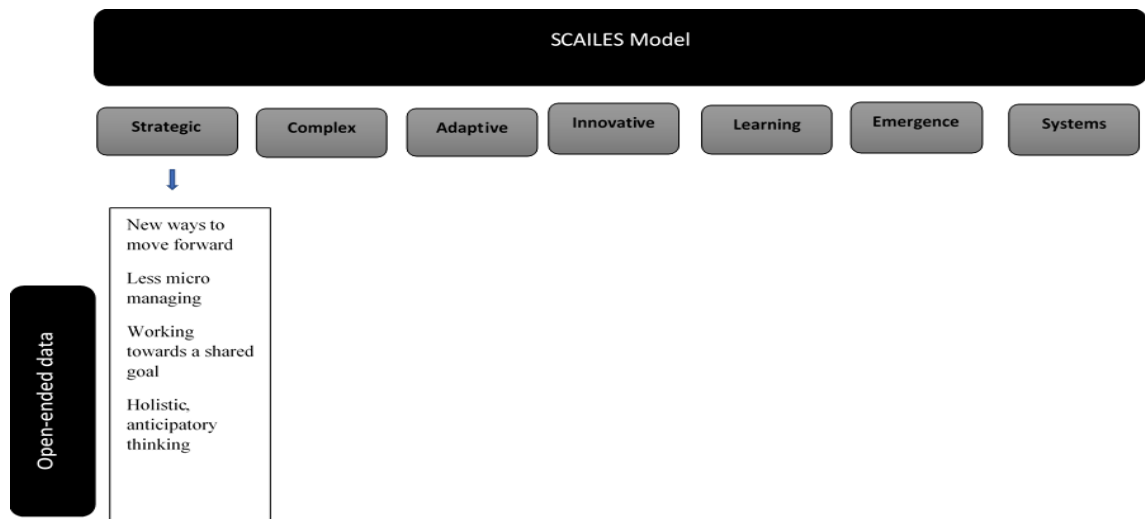
While respondent 5 stated, he needed to *"be actively involved in the team to lead the team."*

Respondent 42 states that *"I had to adapt my communication and leadership approach to ensure team members are working towards the same goal, whilst dealing with the impact of the pandemic."*

Leaders have to be always alert and assess the environment, plan and strategise while managers implement those plans. Many of the managers found themselves strategizing and looking for avenues to move forward. Respondent 12 states, *"I had to learn to look at situations from different angles and viewpoints and adapt and innovate accordingly."* While respondent 17 stated, *"I had to be mentally switched on all the time looking for ways to move forward."*

Eskom managers were always focused on the end goal and leading from the centre as opposed to top-down. They did regular status checks to ascertain if any challenges were anticipated, as Respondent 21 clearly shows this: *"I found myself engaging more with my team on a regular basis to ensure they are on the path to achieve their deliverables."* It is pleasing to note that this approach was also highlighted by researchers Foster et al. (2020) and Beilstein et al. (2020).

Managers at Eskom successfully rose to the challenges presented by Covid-19 and found themselves doing more strategic thinking aligning to the principles within the SCAILES framework construct Strategic. Researchers advocate the importance of leaders employing strategic thinking principles during volatile complex situations.



**Figure 7.3: Less Managing and More Leading Alignment to the SCAILES Framework**  
Source: Author (2020)

### 1.3 More empathy, listening and understanding

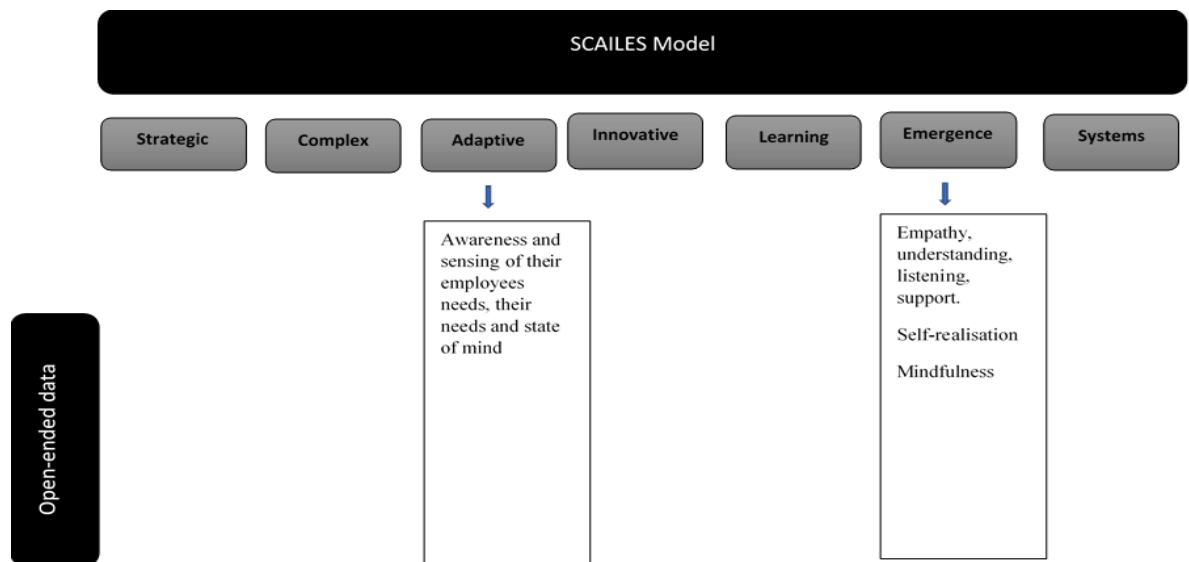
During Covid-19, managers became more aware; they found themselves more *compassionate, empathetic and understanding* to their staff and spoke less and *listened* more attentively. They found themselves *assisting* more, being *less critical and more supportive* as they had been *personally very anxious about Covid and the unknown and as they worked through their own challenges*. The Eskom managers showed genuine care and compassion to their staff. The qualities of “genuine concern...authentic care” is applauded by Geerts (2020) and many other researchers. Workers can easily decipher when their manager is not genuine or authentic in their approach or concern about their staff hence creating room for distrust to settle in and lack of commitment to be ignited. Such behaviours will reduce agility, speed in response to action, creativity, innovation and add to the complexity and challenges presented by the crises.

Managers experienced some realisations such as the importance of being empathetic, understanding and placing the staff needs before their own as key drivers for success. Quoting Respondent 2 realising “*the importance of being empathetic and understanding towards my staff and their challenges. I had seen another side of myself, a side of fear and worry and hence it made me become more aware when I was dealing with people*”, and Respondent 37 “*I put my staff first and their needs as their peace of mind is of utmost importance and linked to productivity.*”

Mindfulness was also experienced by managers as Respondent 4 states, *“I was more mindful of my subordinates state of mind as well as the complexities being presented to them”*, with Respondent 20 and 35 highlighting that they got a better *“understanding of personal challenges and pressures”* of their staff and *“assisted where possible.”*

With these realisations and being mindful of their staff needs, challenges and effort they put into their jobs, managers became more supportive, protective and defensive of their team. Respondent 35 states, *“I have learnt to have a lot more empathy with them and also in defending them wherever I hear Eskom bashing them.”* Respondent 27 also had a *greater awareness when dealing with people and the importance of supporting staff* and *not to take an individual for granted*. Further to this, managers *listened more* thus was able to *learn and adapt faster*, hence providing more timeous communication and obtaining *good feedback from organised labour* (Respondent 36). Doing deep listening and hearing the team's concerns and suggestions instead of a one-way communication style (Proches, 2020) is vital to building commitment and trust as well as making informed decisions.

Managers found themselves embracing principles of Emergence and Adaptive within the SCAILES framework constructs. Researchers (as discussed in Chapter 3) continuously emphasize the importance of being empathetic, supportive, understanding, and aware of your surroundings and sense the needs of your people in a VUCA environment and during a crisis. Pitstick (2020) and the Center for Creative Leadership (2020b) support these researchers as leaders who displayed these qualities during Covid-19 were better equipped to lead their team, embrace changes, and garner support from their team for them meeting their set objectives. Researchers (Forster et al., (2020); Prochers (2020); Robinson (2020); VanSlyke and Simons (2020)) postulate that it is vital for leaders to prioritise the mental health of themselves and their team during a crisis. The need for greater self-awareness, self-care (emotional, mental and physical well-being) and reflection became more paramount. Leading during the Covid-19 pandemic, Eskom managers have displayed that they could take care of their mental health and that of their staff more importantly. Managers are often evaluated on their performance by staff on their ability to address difficult situations timeously and effectively but, more importantly, on how they treat their staff. The Eskom managers seemed to have put their staff needs before their own and were extremely understanding and supportive during this very challenging time.



**Figure 7.4: More Empathy, Listening and Understanding Alignment to the SCAILES Framework**  
Source: Author (2020)

#### 1.4 A new way of communicating

Due to Covid-19 and the state of disaster having been declared with the country going into lockdown, managers had to find new ways of communicating with their teams. Further to this, they *communicated more frequently*, with the conversations focusing on key output areas and deliverables, the employees and their family's well-being, and their work projects' status. Communications had to be clear, precise and transparent. Proches (2020) equally asserts the importance of communication, with the communication being focussed, having clarity and early participation. Leaders had to be flexible and creative and *employ various communication mediums* to interact with the team and across teams. *Remote working occurred*, and with communications moving to various *online platforms and mobile phone mediums*. Managers had to *adapt their communication style*, as noted by Respondents 6 and 42. Greater collaboration and consulting had occurred. These mediums were used either for the first time or were not the preferred means of communication before the lockdown. Teams and managers had to *adjust to these different mediums* while considering *connectivity and data issues*.

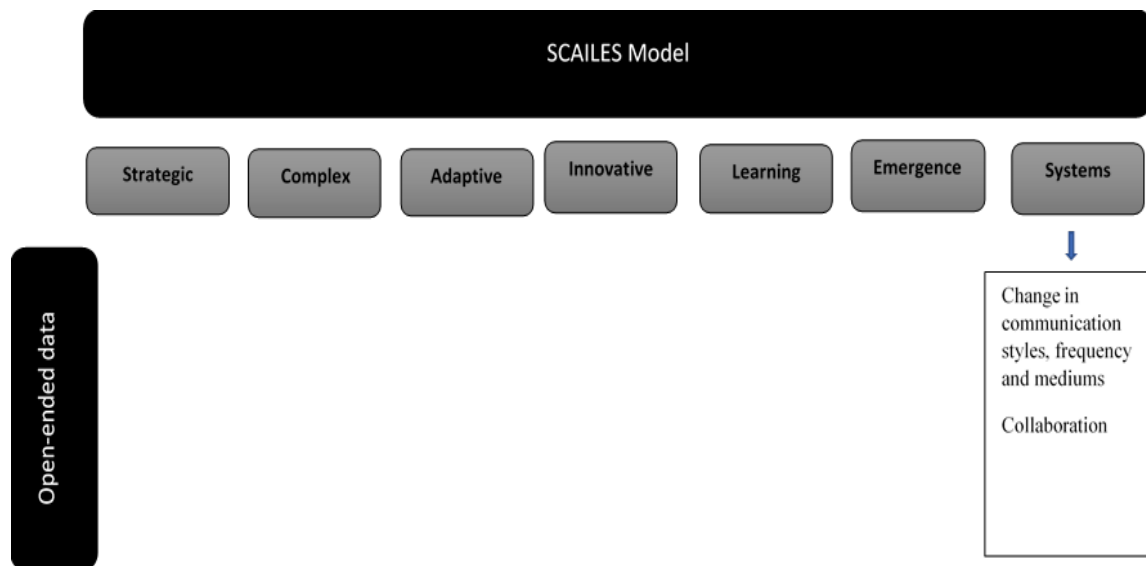
Further to this, meetings had to occur in an environment that was not conducive to work setting conditions. Disruptions by "*family members, responsibilities, noise, and connectivity issues*" were often experienced cites Respondent 38. Similar findings were found by the study conducted by Beilstein et al. (2020) that it is increasingly challenging to maintain "efficiency and productivity in a remote setting, which requires more trust and potentially more technical resources and impose a different kind of stress on the home-based worker" (p. 5). However, tolerance and understanding had prevailed among the Eskom managers as they were cognisant of

their employees' challenges. Eskom managers became more trusting as well as empathetic and understanding of their employees.

Managers also found that *frequent communications* with their team helped to keep the team focused and *provided a sense of support as well and improved the communications* as noted by Respondent 32 “*there has been much more frequent communication and feedback on issues affecting the business. In some aspects being isolated has actually improved communication*”. “*Communication was more timeous,*” noted Respondent 36.

One of the critical things managers had to learn very quickly was that communication changed very fast; as Respondent 19 asserts, “*I had to learn and accept that strategies were only relevant for the time and day it was communicated. The change happened so fast, and it was difficult at times to keep up with all the communications.*” Beilstein et al. (2020) and Proches (2020) signifies the importance of providing timeous, concise, reliable and relevant information based on their review of key lessons learnt during the pandemic. Beilstein et al. (2020) argue that communication should occur more frequently and in a consistent manner. The communication should be clear, transparent and “clearly distinguish between facts and assumptions and labels them” Beilstein et al. (2020, p. 2). In addition to the communication focusing on the business goals, it is equally important to focus on the person. The tone of the communication should embed empathy, understanding, and support to help build trust and resilience and dispense any false or contradictory information that may circulate. This helps reduce stress, anxiety, fear and promotes trust, productivity and a positive working environment.

The Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted business communication models, to say the least, requiring managers and their teams to find suitable mediums of communicating and learn how to use these mediums that many staff have not been privy to before the pandemic. Technology and its adoption for many can be very daunting, especially with the minimal time to learn how it works, ensure adequate network coverage was available in their area, and ensure they had enough data to work on these mediums. Online communicating platforms like MsTeams can be very data-heavy, requiring the user to have a large amount of data to cover the calls. The managers at Eskom and their teams transitioned reasonably well onto the new mediums. They understood the various limitations and challenges their teams had encountered with the new technology use. Clear, transparent and effective communication is a crucial skill and quality required for leading in a VUCA environment, with many successful leaders displaying this skill and quality during Covid-19 (BDO, 2020; Center for Creative Leadership, 2020b). The Eskom managers found themselves embracing the principles of Systems within the SCAILES framework reasonably well.



**Figure 7.5: New Way of Communicating Alignment to the SCAILES Framework**  
Source: Author (2020)

### 1.5 Trust in your team

Covid-19 had so many negatives, but one positive that managers took out of this was that they could *trust* their team *a lot more* to do the task and work remotely. Respondent 50 states, *“The positive of the pandemic is that it has erased the issue of remote working and whether we could trust our people to be productive. I am so happy that this change has happened.”*

Sandahl (2019) asserts that leaders should possess two of the essential qualities to navigate the VUCA world: *Trust and Accountability*. This is echoed by Helfand et al. (2020, p. 2), who further promotes “mutual accountability” within the team. The leader must ensure that trust prevails in the team by creating situations where members can build deeper interpersonal relations while also providing clear, direct roles and responsibilities and empowering and supporting the team is equally important. Managers realised that their team could *be trusted to work independently*. *“I allowed my team to self-manage and delegating to them more responsibility and accountability”*, asserted Respondent 26. Managers stepped back and *“Let them get on with day to day work”* (Respondent 18). With this trust and delegation of responsibility, Respondent 51 asserted that his team were *“actually more productive than they are in an office environment.”* To help build this trust, Baruch, Singh, Halliday and Hammond (2021, p. 41) stresses on the importance of ensuring employees “understand the how and why” of what is transpiring to be “empowered to problem-solving, initiate changes, and be committed to an environment of organisational excellence, seeking progress, not perfection.” Eskom managers realised they could trust their team to work remotely and fulfil their assigned tasks hence building greater trust, commitment, accountability

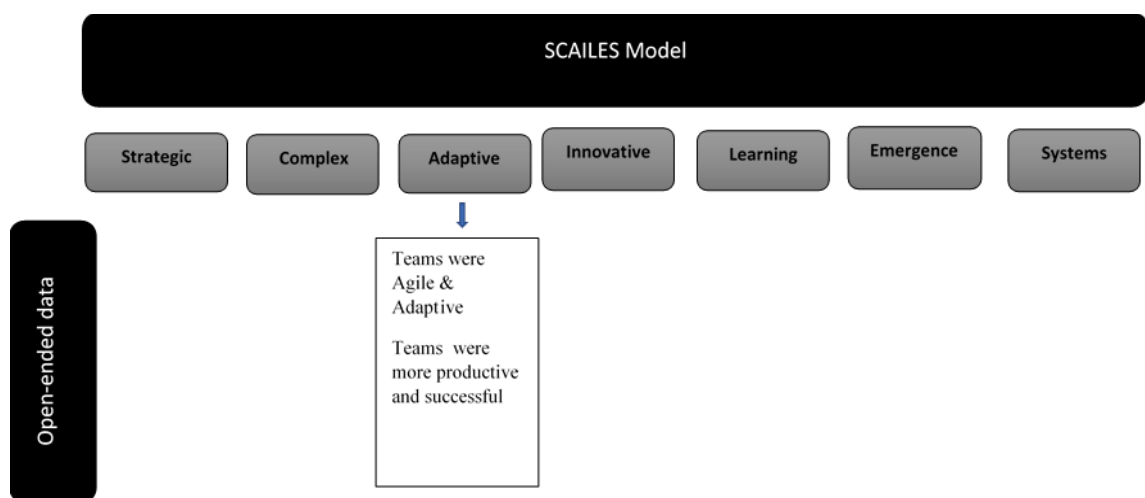


and motivation within the team. Even creativity was ignited within certain employees who sort to seek new ways to complete the task.

## 1.5 People are Agile

It is often said that one only realises one's strength and ability to adapt when faced with challenges. Covid-19 made many managers realise that people can *adapt and adapt quickly* (Respondent 37). Respondent 35 stated, "*We can adapt very quickly and find new ways of working. Eskom is still standing, and the essential staff is doing a phenomenal job.*" Respondent 43 highlights that "*We are much more adaptable than what we realise. Change under pressure takes place very quickly*". Respondent 46 was very surprised by how successful and productive people are even if they are not in their office, quoting, "*More than 80% of my staff (~500 people) have very successfully and productively worked from home, which was somewhat unexpected.*"

Eskom managers and their teams successfully embraced the Adaptive principles within the SCAILES framework, which was an essential requirement during Covid-19 ((BDO, 2020; Mutch, 2020; D'Auria and De Smet, 2020, Proches, 2020).



**Figure 7.6: People are Agile Alignment to the SCAILES Framework**  
Source: Author (2020)

### Theme 2: Disposition towards running a business

In theme 2, managers found themselves and their team *adapting* to the changing environment faster than they had anticipated. They were more *agile, proactive and learnt faster*. Managers were *focused on meeting the stated goals/objectives* but not at the expense of their team members emotional wellbeing. This called for them to be *more adaptable, flexible, open-minded, and understanding* in their thinking and approach. Respondent 13 stated that further to being adaptable and agile, he/she had to be "*creative as the situation was very fluid and filled with anxiety.*"

Within this theme, two sub-themes emerged: more adaptability, agility and proactiveness and unlearning old and rigid ways of doing things.

## 2.1 More Adaptability, Agility and Proactiveness

Majority of the managers had indicated that they had become more *agile* and had to *adapt* to the changing environment *under a short notice period* and where things were *outside of their control*. *Learning and change occurred at a faster pace*. Quoting a few respondents:

Respondent 1 stated that the situation required “*allowing my team to be more agile and innovative to adapt to the challenges imposed by Covid-19*”. At the same time, Respondent 29 highlighted, “*As a manager, you learn to accept that there are factors outside of your control and need to be flexible and adapt to changes*.” This resulted in a change in leadership approach as Respondent 45 stated, “*There was more need for decisive leadership and less time for lengthy collaboration. The speed at which things changed required immediate implementation of solutions*.”

Many managers had to use different thinking approaches as Respondent 4 stated: “*I had to think without the box most of the times and be very adaptable*”. At the same time, Respondent 36 cites, “*I learnt faster and adapted faster as the learning grew*.”

To be more proactive and agile, Respondent 44 indicated, “*I had to be mentally, physically and emotionally aware of my surroundings*” and “*I had to mentally be alert a lot more*” cited Respondent 10

Researchers in Chapter 3 have identified these essential qualities and traits of adaptability, agility and proactiveness as key to succeeding in a VUCA environment. Advocating this is Moore’s (2015) SCAILES Framework and Aziz Corporate (2018) Learning Agility Model that emphasises the importance of having agility when dealing with people, change, results, and the mind. It is evident from above that the Eskom managers possess these qualities and traits that have enabled them to guide their team through the Covid-19 pandemic. The ability to adapt allowed the managers to become more *efficient in their meetings, enabled them to make more informed decisions much faster* under challenging conditions, and brought out in them and their teams *innovative and creative ability*. This innovation and team brainstorming allowed them to *find solutions much easier and quicker*. They had become very *agile and flexible in their thinking, approach and understanding towards their fellow team members*, with many becoming more *resourceful, responsive, understanding and empathetic*. During the Covid-19 pandemic, it became an essential requirement for leaders and team members to multitask, be flexible, resilient while being calm and composed as they attempted to reduce the fears of their team members.

Despite how sombre the situation was and every day producing more complexity and challenges with the end nowhere in sight, leaders had to show optimism to the team members to help lessen anxiety, fear and build trust (Proches, 2020). The managers at Eskom delivered on this in “spades”.

## 2.2 Unlearning old and rigid ways of doing things

During Covid-19, managers had to change how they managed their team under new circumstances where little was known about tomorrow. This change had resulted in *innovative* thinking and approaches. They had to *move out of their comfort zones*. *“I had to adapt my communication and leadership approach to ensure team members are working towards the same goal, whilst dealing with the impact of the pandemic. I had to refocus the required output and method of output. I had to strengthen relationships to thrive within the virtual context”* (Respondent 42). At the same time, Respondent 7 said, *“I had to rethink the ways I communicated and strategised”* and *“I had to learn to adjust to the new way of doing business and collaborating”* (Respondent 8).

Managers and their teams had to *work remotely* and *engage in communications in different ways and mediums*. *More frequent catch-up calls* were conducted. Communications became more focused and frequent as managers embraced the greater use of technology. Respondent 33 highlights that *“Remote management was never a consideration in the past. COVID-19 proved that it could work.”* Similar sentiments were expressed by Respondent 46 *“More than 80% of my staff (~500 people) have very successfully and productively worked from home, which was somewhat unexpected.”* Respondent 39 indicated, *“I used technology a lot more when collaborating with my Team. I realised you do not have to be in the office to be productive.”* Respondent 18 noted the greater use of *“WhatsApp and email than the direct one on one talks”*.

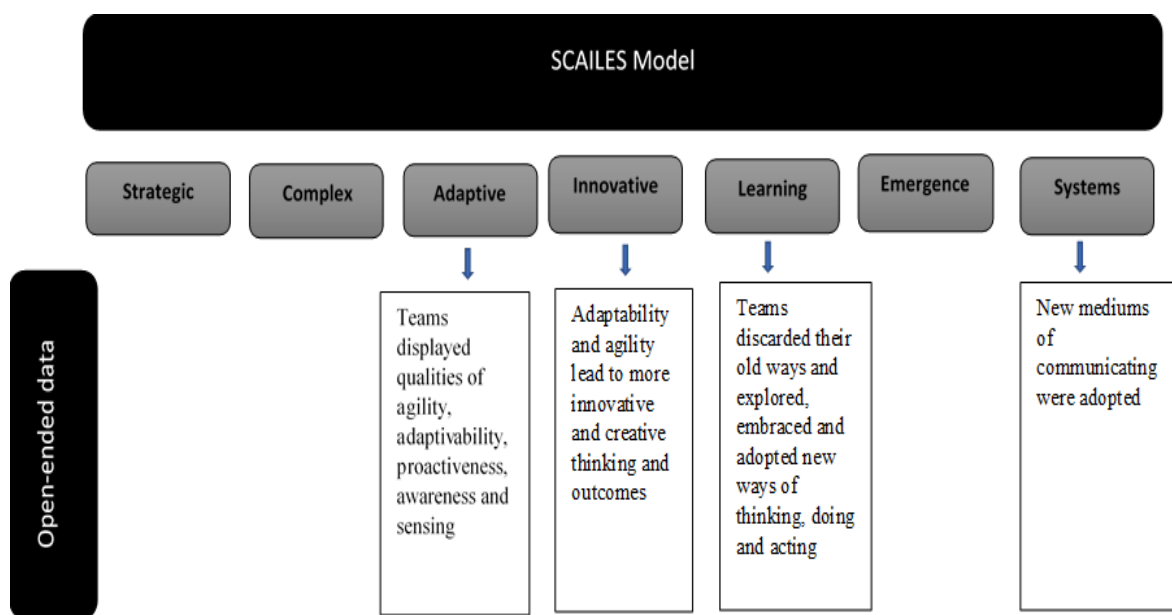
Managers found themselves *unlearning their old ways* while embracing and *learning new ways* of doing, thinking, and acting relevant to the time and context. Respondent 12 cites, *“I had to learn to look at situations from different angles and viewpoints and adapt and innovate accordingly,”* with Respondent 4 discarding the box mentality of thinking, *“I had to think without the box most of the times.”* Similar sentiments of *innovation and creativity* were expressed by Respondents 1 and 13 as well.

Managing, communicating, place of work and making decisions like it was done in the past become archaic, as those strategies and means proved futile during Covid-19. Theory U and the SCAILES Framework highlight the importance of managers changing their thinking, behaviour and restrategising to new situations. It also notes the importance of discarding old ways and adopting new relevant ways that fit the current situation as managers move out of their comfort

zones. Connor (2021) highlights that managers that succeeded during Covid were more focused on the outcome and not the process. Managers at Eskom *learnt new ways to thrive in such turbulent times* by:

1. *accepting that the factors were outside of their control;*
2. *that change is inevitable, and the importance of embracing it;*
3. *adjusting to the new ways of doing business;*
4. *being more flexible in their thinking and actions and*
5. *looking at situations from different angles and views.*
6. *focusing on achieving the set goals while being future-focused and looking for ways to improve.*

Aligning the theme two findings to the SCAILES Framework, the findings align to the construct adaptive, innovative, learning and systems requirements.



**Figure 7.7: Disposition towards Running a Business Alignment to the SCAILES Framework**  
Source: Author (2020)

### Theme 3: Disposition towards self

Managers also found themselves doing *more self-reflection, and deep thinking* hence became *extra supportive of their team*. They became *less critical and demanding but more supportive*. As they experienced the challenges and anxiety of Covid-19, they began to *introspect* and think about their team and what they could be feeling. Managers also noted that they had to be more *alert*, with some being mentally switched on all the time. Some managers had seen another side to themselves as Respondent 2 states, “*I had seen another side of myself, a side of fear and worry and hence it made me become more aware when I was dealing with people*”, while Respondent

40 stated that *“Covid has helped me see my weaknesses and the importance of embracing change and adapting quickly”*

The leadership approach changed where it became *“less critical and more supportive. Collaborative problem-solving”* (Respondent 43), while other respondents cited that they *“found myself doing more deep thinking and consulting with my Team more. I became more supportive and understanding of my Team as I personally was very anxious about Covid and the unknown”* and *“a deepening of leading my-self in order to lead others”* (Respondent 30). *I introspected more and got a better understanding and picture of the situation.”* (Respondent 30) Respondent 9 stated, *“I had to reflect on the challenges my family and I were experiencing and then think about how my staff might be feeling and ensure that I put them first as I am only as good as my team are.”*

Theory U and Reflective Leadership (Dileep, 2020), especially during a crisis, calls on leaders to introspect and go deep within their minds to understand their thinking about the current situation; they need to sense the environment, the people around them and what they are going through and let go of the old ways of thinking and doing. They need to adopt the “double-loop.. a process of looking at the crisis individually and collectively” to gain a shared understanding and critical reflections to create a mental model that will accept the possible and the impossible and can quickly change the negative situation to a positive (Dileep, 2020, p. 11). According to Adams and Becket (2020), Leading Through Crisis stipulates that the first three steps a leader needs to undertake are to first orientate themselves as to what is happening, make sense of it, and then triage by ascertaining what is most important. Respondent 7 indicated precisely this: *“I had to look within myself to get a better sense of myself and my surrounding”*. Deep thinking was also expressed by Respondent 22, with many managers having found themselves *reflecting more at the end of each day*. This reflection and deep introspection resulted in managers becoming more empathetic, understanding and supportive as Respondent 24 states he, *“had to become empathetic and understanding of my staff and their challenges. I had to be more adaptable and open-minded and understand my subordinates’ difficulties and anxieties.”* Similar sentiments were expressed by Respondent 40, *“I also became more aware of the challenges my staff were under and the importance of my support and understanding”*. Respondent 41 found that he/she had to be *“open to change, more communication, encouragement, showing more empathy, be more resilient, show more patience, show more care, increased focus on safety.”*

Respondent 14 highlights, *“I had to be more cognisant of my team and their emotions and challenges and ensure I communicated more clearly and regularly.”*

Respondent 6 states, *“I had to self-reflect and adapt my communication and leadership style to be more flexible and accommodating. I had to be more vivid and explicit in my requirements and had taken into account the teams’ viewpoints.”*

Managers found themselves *unlearning old ways* of managing and leading and *adapting and adopting new ways of doing, thinking and collaborating*. They had become more *strategic, decisive, resourceful, agile* and, more importantly, *empathetic, understanding and supportive towards their team*. Further to this, being alert at all levels all the time was the new normal. *“I had to be mentally switched on all the time looking for ways to move forward,”* cited Respondent 17. Respondent 10 highlights, *“I had to mentally be alert a lot more and found myself trusting my staff a lot more”*, which is one of the critical tenants of Theory U and the SCAILES Framework construct Adaptive. Managers need to be alert and aware of what is happening around and within them to react quickly and effectively. Being able to sense the external environment and the emotions within the team is very important as well. Copresencing, teamwork and trust are vital for succeeding in an environment categorised by VUCA, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. It is pleasing to note that the managers at Eskom did embrace the principles of Reflective Leadership, Theory U and Awakened Leadership as they became more aware of their surroundings, the team’s challenges, their weaknesses and realised that they had to abandon their old ways of thinking and doing and work with the team to find solutions and get the task completed. The next section will summarise the key findings of the change in leadership approach.

#### **7.4.1.3 Key findings from the change in leadership approach**

The study found that leaders had to **become more agile**. A breakdown in the leadership structures into a flatter structure occurred, allowing for more agile collaborations and engagements across team members and departments. Leaders found themselves **micromanaging less** while **awarding greater responsibility and flexibility to their team to do their assigned tasks**. They learnt that their team could perform well without them being present and are responsible and do not need them to be actively involved by micro-managing. They did appreciate having check-in calls on status updates and collaborating on ways forward. This involves managing less and leading more by empowering and upskilling their workforce and improving their agility, adaptability, and flexibility whilst keeping a watchful eye on the markets. These fundamental qualities and traits are evident in the literature on leading in a volatile environment and the SCAILES framework. The quantitative study also highlighted qualities such as agility, collaboration and engagement, empowerment, adaptability and flexibility, as essential qualities for a volatile environment (means >4.6,  $p < 0.005$ ). Senior managers ranked these qualities 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> (as depicted in Table 6.22, in Chapter 6 section 6.3.3.2), while their employees

felt of these four qualities, their manager possessed qualities of empowerment and enabling (ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>) and flexibility, adaptability and versatility (ranked 8<sup>th</sup>), with collaboration and agility ranking 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> respectively. It is pleasing to note that these qualities of the managers were shown during the Covid-19 pandemic.

A definite shift was noted in **learning to unlearn traditional management approaches** to adopt new ways to lead and manage, which was to incorporate and include staff into the solution-finding process and ensure that they have sufficiently empowered them to be a part of the response and the innovation. Innovation was noted as key, significantly, as the markets have changed. It requires agility, proactivity, transparency, responsibility and accountability, which are the key ingredients to succeed in a VUCA environment. Theory U advocates for leaders to go within and unlearn old ways and thinking and relearn new ways and mindsets to embrace change and open the platform for innovation and creativity to emerge. It alludes to the importance of the leader being present mentally, conceptually, emotionally and physically in their work situation. Managers at Eskom found that they were doing more of this during the Covid 19 pandemic. Theory U further speaks about co-presencing, collaborating and brainstorming with the team to crystalise and synthesis innovative and creative strategies. Reflecting on the quantitative results (as depicted in Table 6.22, in Chapter 6 section 6.3.3.2), senior managers ranked honesty, integrity and trustworthiness as most important (ranked 1); responsibility, accountability and goal-orientation at 8<sup>th</sup> place and agility, proactiveness and alertness at 9<sup>th</sup> position. Employees felt the qualities their managers displayed the most during a volatile time like Covid-19 were honesty, integrity and trustworthiness (3<sup>rd</sup> place), followed by responsibility, accountability and goal-orientation (5.5<sup>th</sup> place). To discard old ways of thinking and adopt new ways and embrace copresencing, it is vital for leaders to be open to and accepting of differing viewpoints. Employees saw this quality quite evidently during the Covid-19 as they ranked it 3<sup>rd</sup>. Managers ranked this quality at number 11 in terms of importance to them.

One element that often appeared was **Staff** and the need to focus on human resources over processes. Managers found themselves being empathetic towards their staff, could easily relate to and understand their challenges, saw them as people and empathised with them as they were going through the challenges of Covid-19 themselves. They also found themselves listening more and speaking less. They listened to their input and what they had to say and tried to better understand them and their viewpoints. Further to this realisation was how paramount their employees are to their success and the business's success. The “I/me” mentality was replaced with the “our/team” mentality. This required unlearning old ways of managing and tapping into their team. Respondent 23 wrote, *“these challenging times brought out the best in my Team, and it showed*

*me my areas of weaknesses. I need to change from my old way of managing and thinking to a new collaborative, inclusive manner. I need to be more alert, flexible and communicate better.”*

As depicted in Table 6.22, in Chapter 6 section 6.3.3.2, employees felt the quality that their managers possessed the most (ranked 1) during a volatile environment like Covid-19 was respectfulness, compassion and sensitivity to their needs.

**Collaboration** and **engagement** with their staff also were recurring elements, and managers realised the importance of collaboration and engagement in driving innovation. It was quite evident that they invested in their staff and upskilling them to possess the necessary skill to be responsive and equipped for the new normal.

**Communication** during the pandemic was found to be a key factor. Managers found that decisive, transparent, effective and clear communication and leadership to their employees was vital to reduce anxiety. Ensuring the clarification of tasks and changes is also critical. Managers ensured a focus on the set goals by creating clear guidelines. Having a shared vision among the team helped create the team's comrade and work towards the set targets.

There is a prevailing sense that teams and leaders need to **collaborate more**. Create a more conducive environment for brainstorming and innovation. Set clear directions, be transparent and communicate clearly, timeously, honestly, accountably, and transparently when communicating with their team. Thus, leaders must be clear, decisive, and lead rather than managing. They should utilise communication to inspire, drive and listen to members' input whilst directing this push and momentum from below. These sentiments are advocated in the literature of leading in volatile environments. Theory U asserts the importance of creating an enabling environment that allows team collaboration and diverse views so disruptive innovations and creative thinking and strategies can emerge. Setting explicit guidelines followed by clear, effective communication and a shared vision are the underpinning variables to ensure success.

There has been a need to **remove complacency in thinking and actions** and do things because they have "always been done that way", ridding the mental models of the rigidity in thought, hierarchy and management. Covid-19 has proven that mindsets operating on archaic models will not suffice. Innovation, creativity and proactive strategic critical thinking are essential. Another realisation that management had reached is that **people are more agile than anticipated and can adapt quickly**.

Thus, when speaking about the changes that managers made to their leadership, they swapped the words agile for adaptable. They had to change their leadership style and move from manager to



leader. In so doing, they had to adapt the way they worked with people, allowing for more consultation, adapting their style of communicating, adapting their attitude towards and understanding of people, being more empathetic, and seeing their team members as people as opposed to a number. In so doing, they realised just how agile people were and how important they are in allowing for and driving innovation with their leaders. They **became more in touch with their staff through shared experiences** of undergoing and exposure to Covid-19. By seeing and understanding what their families are going through and their own personal struggles with the uncertainty and anxiety being produced by Covid-19, they were more empathetic and understanding of staff's emotions. They saw the need to be **alert, scan the surroundings and adapt**, lead personnel, and collaborate more to harness the team's strength and divergent views to generate success. There was a need to be innovative and proactive during Covid-19. Reflecting on the vital leadership tasks that employees perceived their managers to do better in, (refer to Figure 6.5, Chapter 6 section 6.3.3.2) are tasks that allow the team to brainstorm and propose solutions to problems in complex situations and promote learning and development within the team, namely:

- Promote learning and the development of breakthrough ideas and concepts in their team.
- Encourage continuous learning through deep engagement and involvement in a collaborative setting.

Traits such as considering a wide range of possibilities and their inherent probabilities and their potential implications; and encouraging continuous learning through deep engagement and involvement in a collaborative setting, both parties ranked these two traits equally or similarly (15.5 of the 32 items) in terms of how well senior managers perceived they did the tasks compared to how employees perceived their ability to perform the task. Managers thought they did well in reflecting on their actions and decisions and their ability to change things to work better, while the employees ranked it at 24 as not one of the tasks they performed well. Encouraging disruptive innovations that will establish completely new standards for improved efficiency and service delivery, managers felt they did not perform well. In contrast, their employees felt that they did not have the ability to do well was to think creatively and out of the box to catalyse new thoughts, resulting in novel ideas and concepts. In terms of innovation and creativity, senior managers lack the required skills that are quite vital in a VUCA environment.

The commonality of human emotion is the key driver of the change here. As they experienced their own emotions and anxieties, they saw this in others and connected with them as people, which they did not do before. This behaviour change drove the acknowledgement of the team's invaluable contribution and collaborative efforts. Theory U and Awakened Leadership emphasise

the importance of going within, reflecting, understanding your strengths and weaknesses, seeing the piece as some of the whole, and knowing when to have the confidence to say I do not know.

Aligning to the Theory U model, it is quite evident that managers had undergone the first four stages (Scharmer, 2007b, pp. 9-10):

1. “Holding the space: listen to what life calls you to do”. They listened to their hearts, to their staff and created an environment that was supportive and enabled collaborative discussions.
2. “Observing: Attend with your mind wide open”. They observed and listened to their staff without judgement as they were going through similar anxieties, and they became more mindful and aware of their staff and their needs.
3. “Sensing: Connect with your heart”. They became more empathetic, understanding, supportive and realised they all form part of the whole, going through similar challenges and anxieties while working towards the same goal.
4. “Presencing: Connect to the deepest source of yourself and will”. They did a lot of self-realisations and deep thinking to better understand themselves and their staff, abandoned their old way of thinking, and became more mentally, emotionally, and conceptually present. They found themselves working together as a team and across teams.

Based on the study's findings thus far, it seems the managers have embodied the principles of Awakened Leadership (Marques, 2010). The Eskom managers became aware of the changing environment and the situation's fluidity and began to self-reflect, do more deep thinking, and think more broadly. They encouraged the mindset of teamwork, support, engagement, reciprocity, and togetherness, which led to an improved and better understanding of the situation, their weaknesses, their teams' personal challenges, greater collaboration, productivity, and innovation among the team members. This mutual inclusivity, trust, accountability, transparency, empathy, and understanding decreases tension and animosity amongst the team and an increased shared vision. With the anxiety and increased stress levels caused by the pandemic, this awakened leadership style will reduce the employees' work stress and help improve the quality of the team members and the leader's lives. Marques (2010) postulates that some of the characteristics of wakeful leaders are “adaptability to different circumstances; drive; passion and commitment to achieve their goals; resilience; using failures as lessons for growth; a clear vision of the bigger picture and the future; and clear formulation of their values.” The managers at Eskom did display some of these characteristics of Awakened Leadership. Further to this, Eskom managers also displayed key traits of strategic leadership (Hughes, Beatty and Dinwoodi, 2014): expressing and focusing on the strategic vision, motivating and influencing the employees to attain that vision,

understanding the interdependent and interconnected complex nature of Eskom, continuously scanned the environment and adjusted their leadership approach and strategies to accommodate the change. They were future-focused and embraced change.

## 7.4.2 Key Take-Aways from Covid-19 Pandemic

To help formulate the recommendations and the creation of a feasible leadership framework that supports the sustainability of Eskom in a volatile environment (research objective 5), managers were asked the following question:

*What do leaders at Eskom believe are the critical take-aways for them from the Covid-19 pandemic?*

### 7.4.2.1 Key Themes that emerged from the Tree Maps

A total of 65 managers responded to this question. The key theme that emerged was Business Success, with four sub-themes that had emerged from the treemaps analysis, and within these sub-themes, various themes had emerged, as shown in Table 7.2 below. The discussion below will unpack and discuss these themes. The discussion will be centred around subthemes 1-4, taking into account elements that emerged within each sub-theme.

**Table 7.2: Key Themes and Subthemes – Key Take-Aways from Covid-19 Pandemic**

KEY THEME and SUBTHEMES	Responses
<b>BUSINESS SUCCESS</b>	
<b>1. Greater Care of the Staff</b>	12
Empathy	7
Leadership and HR Focus over Process and Management	10
Trust and Empowerment	14
<b>2. Improve Flexibility and Agility</b>	29
Scan the Market, Plan, Strategise and Restrategise	12
Input and Decision-Making Power	9
Teamwork, Engagement and Collaboration	25
Upskill and Empower	5
<b>3. Self-care and Family Support</b>	4
<b>4. Unlearning Old Ways and Being More Proactive and Innovative</b>	25
Accountability	5
Communication	9
Transparency	5

Source: Author (2020)

## 1. Greater care of the staff

One of the critical variables required for an organisation's and managers success is its people. A total of 12 citations indicated the importance of staff's mental and physical well-being. Within this theme, three additional sub-themes emerged from the analysis, namely: Empathy; Leadership and HR Focus over Process and Management; and Trust and Empowerment. Adams and Becket (2020) emphasise the importance of taking care of the organisation's human side when leading through a crisis. Managers need to have compassion, authenticity, caring and resolve. Connor (2021) states that leaders who were successful during the Covid-19 pandemic "prioritised compassion over professionalism." These qualities of compassion, understanding, empathy and staff well-being emerged from the senior managers' data at Eskom.

Managers noted that they need to be more cognizant of their team, their emotions and their challenges. Key terms used most often were *"staff are your assets, put people first, safety, staff wellbeing, understanding and support of staff, trust, empathy, listen, upskilling, learning and change."*

Managers at Eskom put their team members needs before theirs as they had realised the value and contribution of their team members as Respondent 9 stated, *"I put them first as I am only as good as my team are"* and with Respondent 2 making a compelling statement *"take care of your people if you want them to take care of your business. People first and operations will follow and be successful."* *"Your staff are your assets"* (Respondent 21).

Further to this, the importance of keeping in touch was also noted, *"touching base with the team to keep the sense of togetherness and morale whilst working from home"* (Respondent 31)

Working through the pandemic, managers realised that not everyone adjusts well to change and the importance of listening to their team and being open to their ideas as Respondent 28 and Respondent 2 respectively cites: *"Listen twice as much as you speak. Staff want to be heard. Do not take things for granted as change is constant and not everyone adjusts well"* and *"Listen more and be more open to my staff and their ideas."* Further to this, *"trust in your team is vital"* (Respondent 10) as *"People can be trusted to work independently"* (Respondent 18) and *"work from home"* (Respondent 43) as they have proven to be *"actually more productive"* (Respondent 50). Similar feelings were expressed by Respondent 35, *trust in your team. Show empathy and listen more."* Covid-19 has proven that managers do not need to be with their team physically to be effective in what they do. Literature advises managers to delegate tasks, hand out more accountability and responsibility while providing more of a leadership facilitator role than micro-managing. Respondent 29 displayed this by advising on *"giving your team shared goals and*

*responsibilities and allowing them to do their job while you check-in if they require support” as being “most helpful.”*

A VUCA environment is continuously changing, and the staff need to be equipped with vital skills, as postulated by Moore (2015). Managers must encourage continuous learning and create an enabling environment that allows for learning to take place. These points were echoed by Respondent 2; *“Encourage upskilling and development of my staff to equip them with skills necessary to weather unpredictable times.”* Having leaders and staff with the right skills, experiences, knowledge and training are critical for surviving in a volatile environment (LDC, 2016; Volini et al., 2019; Kok and van den Heuvel, 2019). Leaders and their staff must be trained in the presencing perspective; otherwise, they will continue to repeat behaviours that are not fit for purpose and are dysfunctional. Knowledge and experience attained through experiential and immersive learning are far greater than textbook information (Moore, 2015). According to the quantitative results, Table 6.25, Chapter 6, managers often ‘encourage experiential learning, where knowledge is applied in context, i.e. hands-on (L2) and encourage their team to set their learning and development requirements (L3)’.

Respondent 44 summons up all the sentiments quite eloquently and which is in alignment with literature (Sandahl, 2019; Adams and Becket 2020; BDO, 2020; Center for Creative Leadership 2020) *“Change is a definite and it is important to train our people to accept change and look for the opportunities in the challenges. Teamwork and constant engagement, and collaboration are vital. Transparency and accountability and knowing you have trustworthy team players are vital.* Change can be viewed both from a positive or negative light. In a positive light, it open doors to new opportunities and or improved ways of doing things. However, it can be very threatening, causing much insecurity and anxiety as many people do not adapt easily to change. The leader or the manager's role is to help ease the team's anxiety by providing a clear plan of action. Mistakes do happen, especially in complex, chaotic, challenging situations, and it must be known that it is ok as long as one can learn from it as quickly as possible and the error is rectified. Individuals who have evolved in their worldview of thinking and often self-reflect and adopt the Theory U model of thinking tend to view change positively. Respondent 47 alludes the *“That change is not always bad and is a useful driver for fresh thinking, that flexible schedules and working from home enable people to perform at their best - one does not have to fear that outputs are compromised.* Working from home helped people gain confidence in themselves and their abilities. It increased productivity while some found it extremely difficult, *“It has been more difficult to manage people who are working from home as they had excuses for not being readily available. Working from home after all the years of working from the office was more difficult,”* as cited by Respondent 55. However, the respondent did indicate that *“Technology (MSTeams)*

*made the situation better*". Thus, it is important *"to embrace the new way of working and adapting it to suit everyone's needs"*, states Respondent 44. Managers also had *frequent catch-up calls* with the teams to check their mental well-being and do *status check-ins* to determine what *assistance was required* to complete their tasks. These behaviours helped lessen anxiety among the team, and team members were found to be *more collaborative* and *innovative in their thinking* as they *looked for new ways to complete tasks*. From the data, the mentality of *"we all are in this storm together, and we will weather it together"* constantly came through. *Team Work* was the order of the day. The focus was on *"results and service delivery and not micromanagement of staff"* (Respondent 54).

*Honesty when communicating with the team*, the setting of *clear goals* and providing *good direction to staff on how to achieve the goals* (Respondent 15) is vital to build trust and ensure all members are clear as to what is done.

Senior Managers at Eskom in their statements have corroborated with Sandahl's (2019) critical qualities of trust, accountability and team leadership and Pflaeging Vollmer, Hermann, and Carvalho (2012) cited in LDC (2016, pp. 16-17) on the creation of a results-oriented culture, the promotion of self-development, the creation and setting of clear guidelines, leading from the centre, provision of accurate timeous information and the adjusting of targets to the current situation as being some of the essential qualities for leading in a VUCA environment based on their experience of managing and leading through the Covid-19 pandemic. The managers have gone on further to display characteristics of an Awakened leader, namely of building relationships, authenticity in the well-being for their staff where the focus was on staff health and achieving the stated goal as a team in the best way possible, not at the expense of the well-being of their staff, was evident. They were not profit, or production or micromanagement focused but that of results-oriented.

## **2. Improve flexibility and agility**

*"COVID has taught us that being complacent is a recipe for disaster. Leaders must be vigilant, alert and responsive to adapt quickly to changes and different situations on short notice"* (Respondent 28).

Within this theme, four subthemes emerged, namely: Scan the Market, Plan, Strategise and Restrategise; Input and Decision-Making Power; Teamwork, Engagement and Collaboration and Upskill and Empower. *Agility, adaptability, flexibility, proactiveness, responsiveness, alert, strategise and re-strategise, adapt to change, empowerment, upskilling and scan the environment*

were the recurring terms used by the senior managers as vital take-away points from the pandemic.

Covid-19 has proven the *flexibility* of many positions as it does not require the physical presence of an individual, with *remote working being effective*. “People can work virtually as long as their outputs/deliverables are clear,” stated Respondent 54. For this to be possible, *trust* in the team and the manager needs to prevail as well. Staff adapted to and adopted the new ways of working and communicating through technology using various *online platforms*, which may be the standard way going forward as it is cost-effective, saves time and is more efficient.

“The world is unpredictable; thus, as leaders, we need to be adaptable for different situations at short notice,” wrote Respondent 51. It is crucial in a crisis to allow for *flexibility* to increase response time. During Covid-19, the situation was extremely fluid, and people had to be able to change and or *adapt* in a short space of time; as Respondent 3 stated, “there is no certainty in business, and we have to be adaptable and respond quickly to change.” Thus, decision making in a volatile environment requires *proactiveness, decisiveness, creativity and innovation*, with leadership being *flexible, adaptable and agile* in their leadership approaches. This can be achieved by having up-to-date, relevant information by regularly “constantly reviewing the market and our strategies are a must if we wish to survive and thrive,” cites Respondent 3 and *soliciting input from the team and engaging in discussions* to make informed decisions. However, according to Table 6.25, Chapter 6, the trait “A1- Adeptly sense environments and be aware of changes which may influence their actions and strategies” was not perceived as a trait that the managers did well as it ranked 26<sup>th</sup>/32; however, the manner that they executed their decisions made it seem to the employees that they did to this well. Thus, Covid-19 has indicated to the managers; this is an area of weakness for them, and it is something that they need to do more often going forward. An area that managers felt that they performed well was making ‘sound decisions quickly under pressure, or when facing tight deadlines (A5)’ however, employees ranked it at 19,5/32. Due to this gap in perception, it should be an area that managers reflect on to establish if their decisions were, in fact, sound, transparent, practical and easily implementable. Strategies may sound and look good on paper, but does it work. The team members who implement it can determine the gaps and weaknesses.

Respondents 2, 5, 7 and 15 cite the importance to *listen more and be open to new suggestions, ideas and innovations*, and the notion of *collective brainstorming and strategy creation* emerged as well. These are the fundamental principles underpinning Theory U and Moore’s SCAILES Framework for leading in a VUCA environment. It is pleasing to note that the Eskom managers view these traits as necessary when leading in a volatile environment. Further to these traits,

managers must also listen to all views and be able to sieve through unnecessary information. Respondent 5 expressed this sentiment, be “*open to all views and shift through unnecessary clutter to allow clear thinking*”. Respondent 13 asserted that his “*team is strong, and if they are provided with a context and given the opportunity to take responsibility, they would put forth ideas*”. This can be corroborated with the quantitative results, where employees rated their managers as best being able to allow others to brainstorm and propose solutions to problems in complex situations (SY5)’ while the managers ranking for the same trait came in at 6.5, see Table 6.25, Chapter 6. However, in terms of showing ‘a genuine interest in the generation of productive ideas and solutions and acknowledge the idea regardless of their source (E3)’, employees did not feel their managers did this well as it ranked 24<sup>th</sup>/32, with managers perceiving themselves as doing this quite well, ranking it at 6<sup>th</sup>. Employees also felt that managers did not adequately ‘create an environment that enabled the unrestrained emergence of new ideas, concepts and perspectives (E1)’ and neither ‘set the tone so that individuals feel encouraged and feel a sense of openness and trust so that meaningful dialogue and exchange can take place (E2)’. Managers expressed that their worst trait was the ability to ‘encourage disruptive innovations that will establish completely new standards for improved efficiency and service delivery (14)’. At the same time, employees also attested to it being one of the worst performed traits. Managers also scored and rated themselves poorly in the ability to ‘think creatively and out of the box to catalyse new thoughts which result in novel ideas and concepts’. At the same time, employees indicated it as being their worst performed trait. Innovation and creative thinking seem to be a weakness for the managers, which is a crucial requirement for leading in a VUCA environment. Going forward, managers need to create an enabling environment so employees feel comfortable expressing their ideas and views. They also need to encourage disruptive innovations and show a genuine interest in their teams’ ideas. This sentiment was echoed by Respondent 39, who indicated that he/she would need to “*create a more conducive environment for brainstorming and innovation*”.

Apart from being agile, it is also essential to be “*non-fearing*” and resilient so your team knows they have a strong leader whom they can turn to and rely upon. Some managers employed “*lean thinking skills*” that “*proved to be a key success,*” stated Respondent 59. Lean thinking focuses on adding the most value to the task by minimising waste, reducing cost, labour effort and the number of tasks required to achieve the desired outcome in the most cost and time-efficient manner. Corroborating these study findings are the findings of BDO (2020), Centre for Creative Leadership (2020) and Baruch et al. (2021), which found that leaders who had focused on the essential tasks; strategised and restructured, performed operation excellence, used lean tools and evaluated and reflected on the strategies implemented during the Covid-19 pandemic, were able to successfully weather the storm of the pandemic with minimal impact on their business. In a crisis, it is not easy to focus on all aspects or tasks to be completed. It is like when a house is



burning, and there is a person trapped in it. The firefighter has to be fearless, resilient, decisive, quick and strategic in his approach as he navigates the burning house, continually changing his direction as the walls begin to collapse before and behind him as he navigates to find a path to get to the person and take him/her out safely. This is the most critical task. In contrast, his team members begin to put off the fire. It calls for immense teamwork and support. The Eskom managers rose to this challenge during the Covid-19 pandemic and led their team with courage, resilience, and agility. They worked as a committed team towards one shared goal.

*Greater teamwork, clearer communication* of shared goals, vision and plans among the team members are essential in a VUCA environment. Managers across the board reiterated the importance of *constant engagement and collaboration with the team and other departments*. These engagements and boundary spanning collaborations gave rise to “*great ideas and results*” (Respondent 21). “*Teamwork = success*”, stated Respondent 37.

Further to this, Respondent 8 stated, and it was echoed by other managers to “*strategise and re-strategise all the time. Do not be complacent. Look for new innovative ways to ensure excellence*”, as Respondent 17 states “*, Business models must not be cast in stone*”.

*Engagement, reflection and collaboration* are critical components of effective strategising; however, to do this, team members and managers must embrace change; as Respondent 37 states, “*we have to continually adapt to the environmental changes, and our staff must be open to change. Creating an environment that enables change and ideas are vital.*” “*Adapting to change is key to maintain and fostering good relations,*” wrote Respondent 38. One only knows how strong and adaptable they are when confronted with a challenge as they are suddenly removed from their comfort zones and complacent ways. Covid-19 has proven to many that “*we are much more adaptable than what we realise. Change under pressure takes place very quickly and works*” (Respondent 42). People will not necessarily change their mental models if no forceful drivers exist that require them to step out of their comfort zones and assess if their behaviour and thinking are relevant to the current context. Covid-19 virus pandemic can be categorised as one of those forceful events that required people to do things they had never imagined, pushing them to their extreme limits, with many realising how fast they can adapt. At first, it was scary and filled with anxiety, but as time passed and they became more accustomed and familiar with the changes, they embraced it better. Thus, it is important for leaders and managers “*to be able to rapidly embrace change at any given time as to proactively manage challenging situations that are unforeseen such as Covid*” (Respondent 56). “*Consolidation, Co-operation and Collaboration are vital going forward,*” cited Respondent 26.

To successfully embrace change, managers, leaders, and staff must have the required and sufficient skills for a crisis. One may be required to multitask, work across functions remotely, adopt new technology, think out of the box and provide creative, innovative strategies and solutions. To do this, Respondent 56 states I will “*encourage upskilling and development of my staff to equip them with skills necessary to weather unpredictable times*” and the “*new world*” (Respondent 19). Training and development taken into account the changes in Covid-19 will help broaden one’s practical skills and conceptual knowledge.

Managers at Eskom stated that to *survive and thrive*, it is essential to be *alert* by “*constantly adapting and modifying the direction and the path to attain the goal. Strategize and re-strategise based on the environmental stimuli*” (Respondent 12) by “*constantly reviewing the market and our strategies*” (Respondent 3) to “*make informed decisions under difficult situations*” (Respondent 63). While Respondent 62 “*believes “strategic thinking, innovation, agility and adaptability is critical for surviving turbulent times.”* These are vital skills and traits for leading in a volatile, complex environment, as discussed in chapter 3.

The human being is strong and resilient with the “*ability to adapt to extreme situations, to still collaborate and make plans to resolve issues and provide solutions*” (Respondent 31). Covid-19 has proven to the managers at Eskom how strong and committed their team are,

### **3. Unlearning old ways and being more proactive and innovative**

Being habitual and routine in a VUCA environment exposes one to significant risk. With globalisation and the rapid advancement of technology, the dynamic nature of the markets, the way we do business, customer needs, and the political and natural environment are continually changing, making business models redundant in a very short space of time. Adding a black swan event like Covid-19 to an already tumultuous environment has proven to be catastrophic for businesses, society and government globally. “*Covid-19 has taught us that being complacent is a recipe for disaster,*” cites Respondent 28. Covid-19 has led to “*the disruption of leadership behaviours that build on the familiar. We need to break down old ways of thinking and doing things*” (Respondent 30). “*Covid-19 has proven that mindsets operating on archaic models will not suffice*” (Respondent 65).

Leaders, managers and employees that were able to reflect, assess the situation, abandon their old mental models of thinking and doing, come together as a team, brainstorm and collaborate to finding new ways relevant for the current situation were found to be successful in navigating the organisation through the difficult period. “*Change being constant*” was a recurring sentiment among managers; thus, as Respondent 7 cites, it is essential to “*think holistically and to the future*

*also planning for the unexpected,” as “change is real and our teams and leadership must be prepared to move out of comfort zones to learn new ways to thrive in such turbulent times”(Respondent 6). To do this, it is essential to “continuously learn and unlearn and relearn the ways we do things” (Respondent 7) and be “ be more proactive, strategic and innovative in my thinking”( Respondent 41) and “embrace the new way of working and adapting it to suit everyone’s needs” (Respondent 43). The International Monetary Fund Education for Life report indicates that “many, if not most people, will need to retool and learn new skills several times during their working life” (Riad, 2017, p. 1). The report says business models are shifting, hence dictating a change in required skills, leadership competence, vision, and business strategic thinking, problem-solving, and planning. Managers and leaders, especially post-Covid-19, need to be able to solve complex problems innovatively using skills such as logic, critical thinking and evidence-based reasoning in the quickest time frame.*

Respondent 29 goes on to say that *“leaders must be vigilant, alert and responsive to adapt quickly to changes and different situations in a short notice”* while also learning to be *“be more flexible in my thinking and actions. Being agile, responsive and adaptable is the ingredients of the new normal”* (Respondent 2).

Leaning on the principles of Theory U and Moore’s SCAILES Framework, Respondent 8 advises to *“engage, reflect, collaborate. Strategize and re-strategize all time. Do not be complacent. Look for new innovative ways to ensure excellence,”* with Respondent 25 highlighting the *“need to be more aware of the environmental changes and plan more proactively.”* Moore (2015) propagates the vitalness of visionary and out of the box thinking to succeed in a VUCA environment. Respondent 52 corroborates *“the importance of getting people to think beyond the horizon and to adapt to change.”* At the same time, Respondent 65 spoke about removing *“complacency in thinking and actions,”* citing *“innovation, creativity and proactive strategic critical thinking”* as essential. In addition to these qualities, managers also cited the qualities of *accountability, adaptability, transparency, and trustworthiness.*

For some managers, Covid-19 had *“brought out the best”* in their Teams while it revealed their *“areas of weaknesses”* as cited Respondent 22 and helped him/her identify areas of self-improvement: *“I need to change from my old way of managing and thinking to a new collaborative, inclusive manner. I need to be more alert, flexible and communicate better.”* Failure of interventions often arises due to poor communication. Managers can create the perfect plans on paper; however, if they do not communicate them clearly and in a manner that is easily understood by the team, confusion, anxiety and conflict sets in, causing the perfect plan to become ineffective, costly and time-consuming. Respondent 18 alludes to the importance of

communication by stating, *“communication is key. You must be able to articulate what is required and then step back to allow others to follow through.”*

Further to this, *frequency of communication, honesty when communicating and the use of different communication mediums* recurrently emerged from the data. Failure to communicate honestly, clearly, timeously and in the language and terms that are easily understood by the team in the appropriate format and sizeable amounts can easily overwhelm the team members, especially when faced with a crisis. According to the quantitative statistical results, effective clear communication was ranked the 4th most important leadership quality by Eskom managers.

#### **4. Self-care and family support**

One of the key points that emerged from the data and literature was the importance of self-care, mental and emotional well-being, and *safety*. To lead effectively through a crisis and succeed, the leader's/manager's and that of his team's mental and emotional well-being are paramount. Very few people have a high level of resilience and can handle sudden changes and disruptions. Thus, it is paramount as step 1 is to check one's personal mental and emotional health and that of his/her team members (Center for Creative Leadership 2020, VanSlyke and Simons, 2020; Adams and Becket, 2020). Tasks can only be completed if the leader/manager and their workers are of sound body and mind, postulates VanSlyke and Simons (2020). Managers at Eskom prioritised the mental and emotional health of their Team as well as their own. Further to this, focus on the safety of the team members was critical as well.

Respondent 41 states the importance of *“family support during tough times and focus more on personal safety, self-management and personal discipline are key and very important.”* Similar sentiments were expressed by Respondent 56 and Respondent 20, further highlighting safety and well-being and the importance of staff to the organisation, *“Focus of safety and wellbeing of staff. Your staff are your assets.”* This statement is compelling as an organisation can have the best plans, strategies, equipment and materials. However, if they do not have the staff to implement and manage the processes, nil can be achieved. A happy, healthy staff compliment = productivity and service delivery = profits = sustainability of the organisation. This is vital when leading through a crisis like Covid-19.

#### **7.4.2.2 Main findings based on the key takeaways from Covid-19**

*“Our History can be an impediment to our progress if we ONLY depend on it as a radar for our future”* (Respondent 49). *“Change is constant and the importance to constantly learn, unlearn and relearn as we adapt to new situations”* (Respondent 48).

*“Teamwork, collaboration and creative, strategic thinking sessions are important. Remove complacency in thinking and actions. Covid has proven that mindsets operating on archaic models will not suffice. Innovation, creativity and proactive strategic critical thinking are essential”* (Respondent 65).

Change is inevitable, and how managers and leaders respond to the changes will determine if the organisation succeeds or fails. Based on the thematic analysis, the essential qualities and traits managers have taken away from the pandemic to help them lead post the pandemic are:

- ❖ Empathy; Supportive; Caring; Understanding; Trust; Honesty; Humility; Safety
- ❖ Accountability; Responsibility; Agility; Proactive; Decisiveness; Responsiveness; Speed
- ❖ Communication; Collaboration and Engagement; Boundary Spanning; Open to Ideas; Flexibility
- ❖ Innovative; Accommodating; Adaptive; Inclusivity; Listening; Teamwork
- ❖ Clarity and Transparency in the setting of goals and vision and directing the team thereof
- ❖ Lead more - Focus on results; Service delivery; Empowerment; Team well-being and development
- ❖ Self-management; Self-care and Self-reflection
- ❖ Strategic analytical holistic thinking; Learning; Change is constant; Adoption of new systems and technology; Planning, strategising and restructurising; Environmental scanning; Sensing, Probing and Awareness
- ❖ Unlearning and learning; Upskilling; Brainstorming; Innovation; Solution Seeker

These essential qualities and traits that had emerged from the qualitative data corroborate with quantitative results of the One-sample T-test for the leadership qualities presented in Table 6.1 that indicated all leadership qualities were significantly important,  $p < 0.005$  at a 95% confidence level as well as with literature findings in chapter 3 for leading in a complex, volatile, crisis environment (Moore, 2015; LDC 2016; Van Velsor et al., 2016; Daigle and Matthews, 2017; Donkor and Zhou, 2019; Towler, 2019; Beilstein et al., 2020; Centre for Creative Leadership, 2020; D’Auria and De Smet, 2020; Dileep, 2020; Geerts, 2020; Haedrich, 2020; Helfand, 2020; Proches, 2020; Robinson, 2020; Sukhera, Richardson, Maniate and Chan, 2020; Mutch, 2020). Thus, indicating that the senior managers at Eskom possess most of the qualities and traits required to lead in a VUCA environment. The senior managers have displayed vital traits common to Complexity Leadership Theory, Theory U, Integrative Thinking, Ethical Leadership, Authentic Leadership, Transformative Leadership, Entrepreneurial Leadership, Crisis

Leadership, Servant Leadership, Reflective Leadership, Awakened Leadership, Strategic Leadership and RARE Leadership.

## 7.5 Employee Open-ended Question Analysis

To help formulate the recommendations and the creation of a feasible leadership framework that supports the sustainability of Eskom in a volatile environment (research objective 5), employees were asked the following question:

*“Recommend area(s) they felt their manager could improve on.”*

Out of a total of 45 employees, 36 employees responded to this question. The data was analysed using content analysis, where key terms, concepts and or words were extracted. Table 7.1 below lists the key areas employees felt that their managers could improve on. Based on responses that were greater than or equal to three, employees felt other areas that managers could improve on were:

**Clearer, effective and frequent communication** (7 responses) by managers was cited as a critical area of improvement. Surprisingly, communication was also cited as one of the key takeaways by management and areas of improvement. Literature cited earlier also indicated that one of the essential qualities successful leaders employed during the Covid-19 pandemic was clear, concise and frequent communications.

**Innovation and creativity** (5 responses) are an area of weakness for the managers. The quantitative results on the traits analysis and the qualitative results highlighted the lack of innovation and creativity among managers and the need to focus on it. Also, managers need to encourage and allow time for innovation and idea generation among their team members (3 responses).

**Adaptability and agility** are vital qualities for leading in a VUCA environment. Managers and employees (5 responses) highlighted the importance of focussing on these qualities.

To survive and thrive in a VUCA environment, managers have to be **strategic thinkers** where they are always scanning the market, reviewing plans based on the past, present and future circumstances while taking into account various controllable and uncontrollable factors. They must be continually looking over the horizon and for better ways to achieve the stated goals. Employees (4 responses) highlighted the need for managers *“should concentrate on strategic planning for the BU instead of interfering or engaging on grassroots staff and problems”*. Current state and future planning in a VUCA environment and a crisis have also proven complicated. The

qualitative analysis also highlighted the importance of strategic planning and thinking. The quantitative results – factor analysis on senior manager leadership traits (Table 6.9, Chapter 6) revealed that a significant 74% indicated that they could perform the key tasks under the ‘Strategic’ factor either well or extremely well,  $p < .0005$ . Some of these key traits with a factor loading  $> 0.7$  are:

- Anticipate the future based on what is known, considering the possibilities and probabilities of each long-term outcome.
- Link the past to the present, as well as to the future, as a single continuum of dynamic interactions.
- See the big picture and think holistically about how different aspects affect one another.
- Step back and think through plans and decisions, connecting future outcomes to today’s planned actions, and develop a credible path to achieve the desired state.
- Adeptly sense environments and be aware of changes which may influence my actions and strategies.
- Navigate what is known while accounting for what might not be known.

In addition to managers being strategic thinkers, they must be problem-solvers as well. Covid-19 provided numerous challenges for managers, which had to be solved very quickly and under immense pressure. Employees (3 responses) felt that managers need to focus on their **problem-solving skills**, and this skill is a key required for leading in the VUCA environment based on the literature review in Chapter 3. Going forward, a more significant number of scenario brainstorming sessions could help managers and team members become better problem solvers.

**Understanding, honesty, and transparency (3 responses) is key to attaining** team buy-in and comrade. Based on the quantitative results, managers indicated honesty, trustworthiness, and integrity as their most important qualities. The employees ranked it as the 3<sup>rd</sup> most possessed quality of their managers according to Table 6.23. Senior managers indicated under key takeaways the importance of being honest and transparent to the team and showing an understanding of their needs and circumstances. These are key qualities that align with the seven constructs in the SCAILES framework for leading in a VUCA environment.

**Table 7.3: Employee Recommendations for Areas of Improvement**

Key Term or Concept	Responses	Key Term or Concept	Responses
Clearer, effective and frequent communication	7	Show genuine interest in the personal development of staff	1
Innovative and creative	5	Set clear directions	1
Adaptable and agile	5	Release control and allow the team freedom to think and act	1
Strategic thinking	4	Quicker response to an action	1
Understanding	3	Provide feedback	1
Problem-solving	3	Proper investigation and communication of problems that hinder success	1
Honesty and transparency	3	Proactive	1
Encourage Innovation and Ideas	3	Openness	1
Risk-taking	2	More flexible working conditions	1
Listening skills	2	Manager's self-care	1
Leadership skills	2	Look to the past, present and future	1
Inclusivity in problem-solving and decision making	2	Learn new ways of thinking and doing	1
Flexible to change	2	Learn from past mistakes	1
Empathy	2	Higher EQ	1
Decisive	2	Greater resilience	1
Collaborative	2	Focus on strategic planning	1
Think quickly under pressure	1	Do not be driven by production	1
Take the team into confidence	1	Create more brainstorming sessions	1
Support the team	1	Composure	1
Compassion	1	All the time to explore new ways of doing things	1
Challenge the status quo and not only go with the flow.	1	Allow more networking and sharing and generation of ideas	1
Bringing ideas to fruition and cease doing things at the last minute.	1	Accountability	1
Ability to follow through on promises	1	Allow flexibility to make mistakes and learn	1
Alert	1		

Source: Primary Data

According to the Future Jobs Report 2020 (World Economic Forum, 2020), as per Table 7.4 below, the top 10 skills in 2015 compared to 2020 changed slightly in their order of importance, with quality control and active listening being replaced by emotional intelligence and cognitive flexibility in 2020. However, in 2025, it is quite evident that majority of the skills deemed necessary in 2015 and 2020 will no longer be relevant in 2025. Critical, analytical, problem-solving thinking skills that incorporate originality, innovation and creativity will be the critical skills required for the future. Technology development, adoption and use, and the importance of self-management skills such as flexibility, managing stress, building resilience, and ensuring active continuous learning takes place, should be prevalent among tomorrow's leaders. These skills align with the SCAILES framework proposed by Moore in 2015. This study's primary findings align with these findings of Future Jobs Report, 2020, except for technology use and monitoring and control and technology design and programming. The use and adoption of technology for more effective and efficient communication did emerge from the study; however,



there was no great emphasis placed on the design, development, monitoring and control of it. These are vital areas to consider by the management of Eskom as having the latest technology not only saves time and money but makes work easy and more efficient. This is key to succeeding in a globalised technology-driven market.

**Table 7.4: Top Skills comparison: 2015 versus 2020 versus 2025**

	<b>2015</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2025</b>
<b>1</b>	Complex Problem Solving	Complex Problem Solving	Analytical Thinking and Innovation
<b>2</b>	Coordinating with Others	Critical Thinking	Active Learning and Learning Strategies
<b>3</b>	People Management	Creativity	Complex Problem Solving
<b>4</b>	Critical Thinking	People Management	Critical Thinking and Analysis
<b>5</b>	Negotiation	Coordinating with Others	Creativity, Originality and Initiative
<b>6</b>	Quality Control	Emotional Intelligence	Leadership and Social Influence
<b>7</b>	Service Orientation	Judgement and Decision Making	Technology use and monitoring and control
<b>8</b>	Judgement and Decision Making	Service Orientation	Technology Design and Programming
<b>9</b>	Active Listening	Negotiation	Resilience, Stress Tolerance and Flexibility
<b>10</b>	Creativity	Cognitive Flexibility	Reasoning, Problem Solving and Ideation

Source: World Economic Forum (2020)

Robinson (2020) asserts, in the article *Post-Crisis Leadership: How leaders can embrace chaos*, leaders need to ensure that they exude qualities of empathy, creativity and proactiveness, with Mutch (2020) and D'Auria and De Smet (2020) postulating a unifying vision and motivating teams towards a single purpose, caring for people, building a sense of community and strong bonds, collective thinking and culture and reinstating normalcy. Leaders need to immerse themselves in the team and be actively involved as they connect with their employees and relevant stakeholders. The article further indicates the importance of using data to inform decision-making, future crisis planning, business remodelling and innovation creation (Robinson, 2020). Forster et al. (2020, p. 1) stress the importance of planning and decision-making being an “iterative process with feedback loops that instruct the next steps” during the recovery phase. Based on the primary study findings and literature, the critical leadership qualities and traits required to succeed in a

volatile and crisis environment like the Covid-19 pandemic can be grouped into six key constructs:

1. Problem Solving and Strategy
2. Working with People
3. Emotional Intelligence (EQ)
4. Leadership
5. Innovation and Creativity
6. Learning and Development
7. Self-Care
8. Technology

These eight constructs will be used to formulate the leadership framework for leading in a volatile environment in Chapter 8.

## **7.6 Summary of Chapter**

The chapter has presented a discussion, analysis and interpretation of the open-ended questions for senior managers and the employees. The data was analysed using content and thematic analysis and dovetailed with literature sources, and the quantitative results were applicable. Of the 65 senior managers, 45 managers had changed their leadership approach on three levels: personal, managerial, and employee. Based on the results, senior managers behaviour change had aligned with the leadership traits and qualities required for leading in a VUCA environment, as discussed in chapter 3 and the theoretical frameworks of Theory U and SCAILES Framework. Managers found themselves being more empathetic, understanding, supportive, collaborative and engaging. At the end of the day, they reflected more and found themselves thinking more deeply and understanding their weaknesses. Amidst the chaos, challenges, and anxiety, they realised their team's importance and that they could trust and depend on them, with many team members showing greater productivity due to remote working. The situation forced them to relinquish varying degrees of control and increase delegation, accountability, which allowed the emergence of ideas and innovative solutions from their team members. Managers had to abandon their old ways and adopt new ways relevant to the situation and realised the significance of continuous learning, unlearning, and relearning to survive and thrive. The next Chapter 8: Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations, presents the conclusions, proposed framework and recommendations of the study.

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**CHAPTER 8:**  
**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND**  
**RECOMMENDATIONS**

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*"Failing to prepare is preparing to fail. The great leader anticipates and plans for significant disruptions."*

(Forster et al., 2020)

## 8.1 Introduction

The previous chapters (chapters 6 and 7) analysed and discussed the quantitative and qualitative research findings. This chapter will present a summation of the findings, conclusions, recommendations of the entire study and the development of a feasible leadership framework and process that supports the sustainability of Eskom in a volatile environment. The conclusions made from the study provides key insights to policymakers, ministers and board of directors by proposing a new leadership approach to address the current gaps and a leadership framework for Eskom and other SoEs, were applicable, that support organisational efficiency, effectiveness and governance in a volatile environment since they extend practical implementations and suggestions for organisations operating in a volatile environment. These study findings can inform development training programmes for leaders and help introduce leadership behaviour changes in Eskom and other SoEs, where applicable. This study pursued to develop a feasible leadership framework that supports the sustainability of Eskom in a volatile environment.

To achieve this aim, the study sought to assess the perceived impact of leaderships behaviour in achieving Eskom's goals, to determine if the leadership qualities perceived to be important by the leaders at Eskom align with the leadership qualities required for a VUCA environment and to determine if the leaders at Eskom possess the required leadership traits to succeed in a VUCA environment.

In addition, the study sought to ascertain to what extent had the leaders at Eskom changed their leadership approach during the Covid-19 pandemic and develop a feasible leadership framework that supports the sustainability of Eskom in a volatile environment.

To help gain more in-depth insight into the key research objectives, the study further sought to establish if there is a relationship between demographic data and leadership qualities in the senior managers; to determine if there is a relationship between demographic data and leadership traits in the senior managers; if there are similar perceptions on what senior managers perceive as being important leadership qualities to have and what the employees perceive they possess and if an alignment exists between how leaders perceive how well they can perform their tasks is in alignment with the employees' perception of their ability to do the task.

The study employed a mixed-method research design. Online semi-structured and open-ended questionnaires were used to collect data from the employees (see Appendix 8), senior managers (refer to Appendix 7) and executive members (refer to Appendix 9) at Eskom. Due to Eskom's policy and regulations and the researcher not being an Eskom employee, interviewing the executive members was impossible. The researcher developed the research instruments for all

three sample strata—the questionnaire development aligned with the study aim and research objectives.

The semi-structured senior manager questionnaire collected information on the leadership qualities perceived to be most important in a volatile environment, leadership traits required for leading in a volatile environment, leadership behaviour changes during the Covid-19 pandemic and the leadership takeaways from the pandemic. The last two questions in the questionnaire were open-ended and were used to collect the qualitative data on behaviour change during Covid and lessons learnt during the pandemic that will inform the future leadership approach (Appendix 7: Senior Executive Questionnaire). The employee questionnaire, semi-structured, assessed their manager's possession of leadership qualities, the performance of leadership behaviour traits and recommended areas of improvement. The last question on recommendations was open-ended (Appendix 8: Employee Questionnaire).

The open-ended questionnaire assessed the executive's leadership approach, leadership style; the leadership qualities they perceived as important; the key challenges impacting their leadership role, and how did Covid-19 impact their leadership approach (Appendix 9: Executive Member Questionnaire).

Using the online survey method, a total of one hundred and thirteen (113) questionnaires were successfully completed and received, indicating a response rate of 30%. The responses were checked for applicability and usability for the study.

The data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 22.0 for the quantitative data analysis and Nvivo 12 Pro for the qualitative data analysis. The data retrieved from the open-ended questions of both the senior managers and the employees were analysed using Nvivo 12 Pro. Due to the executive members' low response rate, the researcher performed a content analysis on the executive members' data and extracted for common statements or words. These were triangulated with the senior manager data open-ended results and literature.

The section to follow provides a summary of the critical findings per the research objectives.

## **8.2 Summary of the main findings based on research objectives**

### **8.2.1 Research Objective One: To assess the perceived impact of leaderships behaviour in achieving Eskom's goals.**

The research question corresponding to the above objective was:

*What is the perceived impact of leadership behaviour on achieving Eskom's goals?*

Research results based on the executive member survey data indicated that leadership behaviour did have an impact on achieving Eskom's goals. Areas that the executive members cited were improving processes and systems, meeting set objectives, service delivery and safety. Challenges that affected their performance were ageing infrastructure and high debt. The literature review findings also revealed the impact of past CEO's behaviour on Eskom's finances, operations, work culture, investor and stakeholder relations, and service delivery to the people at large. However, the impact based on the literature review findings does highlight the impact as being negative.

### **8.2.2 Research Objective Two: To determine if the leadership qualities perceived to be important by the leaders at Eskom align with the leadership qualities required for a VUCA environment.**

The research questions corresponding to the above objective was:

*Do the leadership qualities perceived to be important by the leaders at Eskom align with the leadership qualities required for a VUCA environment?*

*Does a relationship exist between demographic data and leadership qualities in the senior managers?*

The One-sample T-test for the leadership qualities presented indicate that all qualities were significantly important to senior manager,  $p < 0.005$  at a 95% confidence level. The mean scores for the leadership qualities were significant and  $M > 3$ , indicating a significant agreement to the leadership qualities statement. The senior managers cited *honesty, integrity and trustworthiness* and *being able to set a clear vision and direction* as the two most important qualities a leader should have for a volatile environment, followed closely by being able to think clearly under pressure and communicate effectively; being able to embrace diversity and change; being able to think conceptually, holistically and strategically; being able to act in a decisive and timely manner; being able to communicate effectively and in transparent manner; being agile (responsive), alert and proactive to changes while being responsible, accountable and goal orientated.

On the other hand, the results of the One-sample T-test to test significant agreement/disagreement if managers had possessed the leadership qualities, based on employee responses, to lead in a volatile environment indicated significant agreement ( $p < 0.005$  at 95% confidence level). Employees felt that the top six qualities most possessed by their managers were that being of respectfulness, compassion and sensitivity; honesty, trustworthiness and integrity; being open to

and accepting differing viewpoints; the ability to empower, equip and enable others; the ability to be positive, upbeat, and optimistic; and being responsible, accountable and goal orientated.

Further analysis was done to test if these perceptions differ between employees and managers. Results from the Independent T-test were significant ( $p < 0.005$ ), indicating that managers placed higher importance on all the qualities than what their employees had agreed as to as the qualities they had perceived their managers had possessed. The mean scores for the managers for all the qualities were higher than that of the employees.

Factor analysis performed on the data revealed two key factors, namely: **Strategic Collaborative** (Being able to communicate effectively and in a transparent manner; working collaboratively and interactively with others to solve problems and future planning; being open to and accepting differing viewpoints; and being able to empower, equip and enable others) and **Ethical Accountability** (Being able to act in a decisive and timely manner and being able to communicate effectively and in a transparent manner). Significant importance (agreement to the statements) was shown for all the quality factor groupings where the p-value was  $< 0.005$  at a 95% confidence level.

To test if an association exists between demographic data and leadership qualities, the hypothesis testing results found that age does not influence the managers' leadership qualities at Eskom. However, females rated Ethical Accountability higher than their male counterparts and managers holding an honours degree rated Ethical Accountability higher than those holding a degree pass only.

In terms of the qualitative analysis results findings, the managers' key qualities displayed during the Covid-19 pandemic were empathy, understanding, support, communication, adaptability, flexibility, agility, goal orientation, accountability, transparency, collaboration, reflection and self-awareness, compassion, and strategic thinking. Qualities of creativity, innovation, risk-taking, decisiveness, timeliness, resourcefulness and the ability to set a clear vision and direction were not so evident.

Thus, the results of the findings can conclude that leadership qualities perceived to be important by the Eskom leaders do align to some extent with the leadership qualities required for leading in a VUCA environment. The top 5 qualities that managers perceive as most important for a volatile environment do not align fully with literature findings specifically on leading during Covid-19, but they align with the general findings of leading in volatile, complex environments. Covid-19 pandemic has identified gaps in their leadership, which the managers have noted under key take-aways from Covid-19.

### 8.2.3 Research Objective Three: To determine if the leaders at Eskom possess the required leadership traits to succeed in a VUCA environment.

The research question corresponding to the above objective was:

*Are the leaders at Eskom equipped with the required skills and qualities to succeed in a VUCA environment?*

*Is there an alignment between how leaders perceive how well they can perform their tasks is in alignment with the employees' perception of their ability to do the task?*

*Does a relationship exist between demographic data and leadership traits in the senior managers?*

To determine the senior managers' ability to perform a task based on the seven key constructs of the SCAILES Framework for leading effectively in the VUCA environment, senior managers indicated how well they could perform the various tasks. The results of the Binomial Test showed that senior managers were able to perform well only two tasks out of a list of 32, namely: the ability to see the big picture and think holistically and take into account a number of elements when thinking through problems, to help create well-informed strategies and decisions. Their worst trait was encouraging disruptive innovations that could establish completely new standards for improved efficiency and service delivery.

The One-sample T-test was applied to the data to test for significant agreement/disagreement on how employees rated their managers' perceived ability to do each task. The results showed significant agreement for 29 out of 32 items ( $p$  values  $< .005$ ). There was no significant agreement that the managers could do the following tasks well:

- The ability to think creatively and out of the box to catalyse new thoughts results in novel ideas and concepts ( $M=3.6$ ),  $p=.360$ .
- To routinely develop unique new solutions using input from various individuals ( $M=3.27$ ),  $p=.083$ .
- Encourage disruptive innovations that will establish completely new standards for improved efficiency and service delivery ( $M=3.27$ ),  $p=.083$ .
- Factor analysis results performed on the senior manager data extracted four trait factor groupings: **Strategic, Collaborative, Problem-Solving and Learning**. A One-sample Binomial Test on the four factors found a significant proportion indicated that they could perform the 'trait' at least 'quite well'. A significant 74% indicated that they could perform



the key tasks under the 'Strategic' factor either well or extremely well ( $p < .0005$ ). These traits are (According to Moore, 2015, SCAILES Framework):

- Anticipate the future based on what is known, considering the possibilities and probabilities of each long-term outcome.
- Link the past to the present, as well as to the future, as a single continuum of dynamic interactions.
- “See the big picture and think holistically about how different aspects affect one another.”
- “Step back and think-through plans and decisions, connecting future outcomes to today's planned actions, and develop a credible path to achieve a desired state.”
- “Adeptly sense environments and be aware of changes which may influence my actions and strategies.”
- “Navigate what is known while accounting for what might not be known.”

On the other hand, the factor analysis extraction performed on the employee data revealed four factors: **Enabler; Strategic, Holistic Thinking; Learning and Innovative Thinking** and **Adaptable Agile**. These extraction results align with the senior managers' open-ended questionnaire results (as per chapter 7). The managers at Eskom created a very enabling environment during Covid-19 for their teams. They relinquished control on certain aspects to their team, gave them greater freedom to be agile and brainstorm new ways of completing the tasks. They created an environment that was positive and very collaborative. Furthermore, the managers found themselves doing more deep constructive thinking on solving the problems and completing tasks as quickly and easily within the confined constraints that the Covid-19 pandemic had presented. They became more strategic in their thinking when approaching and solving problems, engaging with their team, and adapting reasonably quickly to the changing environment and new ways of working and communicating.

Comparing the mean scores on the employee and manager data results, the Mann Whitney test indicated that employees rated their managers significantly higher ( $M=3.51$ ,  $p=0.013$ ) on their ability to anticipate the future based on what is known and their consideration of possible long-term outcomes than the managers rated themselves ( $M=3.40$ ,  $p=0.013$ ) and that managers rated themselves significantly higher ( $M= 3.83$ ,  $p=0.022$ ) on their ability to reflect on his actions and decision and change things so that they work better than their employees rated them ( $M=3.14$ ,  $p=0.022$ ). Thus, a significant difference was found to exist between how leaders perceive how well they can perform their tasks and the employees' perception of their ability to do the task for the two above stated traits. In terms of differences between employees and managers on the other 30 traits, none were significant.

To test if an association existed between demographic data and leadership behaviour traits factors, hypothesis testing found that the demographical variables of age, gender and qualification do not influence the manager's ability to perform their tasks at Eskom.

Thus, senior managers at Eskom are equipped to some degree with the appropriate skills and qualities to succeed in a VUCA environment. They may not be able to perform all 32 tasks well but do display key traits that align to 6 constructs of the SCAILES framework: strategic, complex, adaptive, learning, emergence and systems. Innovation, creativity, out-of-the-box thinking and novel ideas are areas in which they will need more significant development.

#### **8.2.4 Research Objective Four: To ascertain to what extent had the leaders at Eskom changed their leadership approach during the Covid-19 pandemic.**

The research questions corresponding to the above objective was:

*How did the Covid-19 pandemic shape leadership behaviour at Eskom?*

*What do leaders at Eskom believe are the critical take-aways for them from the Covid-19 pandemic?*

The qualitative analysis results, analysed using Nvivo 12 Pro, on the open-ended questions in the senior manager survey revealed that most managers had changed their leadership approach during the Covid-19 pandemic. A change occurred on three levels for the senior managers: personal, managerial/running a business level and employee level.

1. **Personal** – they found themselves self-reflecting more. As they personally experienced Covid-19, they realised their own fears, anxiety, and weaknesses; hence, they became more empathetic, compassionate, supportive, and understanding towards their staff.
2. **Managerial** - they became aware of other people and could relate and see them as people. They also became very agile, adaptable, decisive, proactive in their actions and decision making. They became very inclusive, trustworthy, and flexible in their leadership approach and found themselves more open to other people's ideas. Teamwork and the creation of a team-oriented environment occurred. Employees felt more comfortable, accepted and felt free to share their ideas and do more scenario planning. They realised that to succeed during this time, they relinquished more control and responsibility to their staff and was very surprised how productive, efficient and innovative they can be. They realised that the old way of doing and thinking proved irrelevant and outdated to meet the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic; hence abandoned those old ways and began adopting new ways of thinking, doing and acting. In addition, they also found themselves strategising more and reprioritising projects, followed by constant monitoring and evaluation. Delegation of tasks

and frequent check-ins occurred more than usual. The managers began building greater resilience and EQ as the pandemic progressed over the months.

3. **Employee** – they acknowledged the efforts and contributions of their employees with trust, collaborative engagements and frequent communications as the seeds to succeed in the business. They acknowledged and attributed their success and that of Eskom's to their employees and considered them as assets. They were more empathetic, supportive and understanding of their staff needs and challenges. They prioritised staff mental, emotional and physical wellbeing.

The executive members also expressed that they had become more empathetic and understood their teams' needs and challenges. They also did more frequent check-ins with their team to assess their well-being and the status of the project deliverables.

In terms of the pandemic's key take-aways, both the executives and senior managers expressed similar sentiments. Senior managers acknowledged that change is inevitable. It is essential for them and their team to embrace change and do more scenario planning and restrategising to manage situations better as disruptions occur. Building resilience within the team and themselves and learning to be more accommodating to others viewpoints by creating an enabling environment and setting time aside for employees to do more brainstorming, scenario planning and explore their creative/innovative abilities. It is crucial for people to feel comfortable and safe to share their thoughts and ideas in this space.

Further to this, they felt it is essential to sharpen their strategic, analytical, holistic thinking and planning skills while leading more, listening more and being results-oriented. To succeed in the new world, it is essential to have high emotional intelligence, better self-management and self-care, and learn to abandon old rigid ways of doing and thinking and be more adaptable, agile, flexible, responsive, and collaborative. Frequent communications that are clear and specific play a vital role in the team's effectiveness and efficiency. To build trust in a team, they need to show accountability, trustworthiness, honesty, clarity, and transparency in setting the goals and vision. Areas they need to work on were innovation, creativity, problem-solving skills, greater relinquishing of control, and empowering their team. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the team had proven they could work unsupervised, and they are productive, able to multitask and are insightful novel strategy developers if they are given the opportunity.

Executive members acknowledged how uncertain the environment is and the importance of changing mental models, focusing on priorities and mobilising resources. Learning should be ongoing. The critical leadership traits the executives felt were important for leadership at Eskom to possess, not only to survive through the crisis but to be able to revive, restore and or redesign the organisation for a new future were that of ethics, strategic thinking, visionary, adaptability,

agility, integrity, decisiveness and learning, unlearning and relearning to keep abreast of the changing environment.

### **8.3 Summary of Main Conclusions**

The study has elucidated thought-provoking findings and observations irrespective of the constraints and limitations posed to the researcher in conducting this research.

The study's general conclusions are that the Eskom managers place high importance on all the leadership qualities for leading in a volatile environment and have shown in the employee survey and the open-ended questions that they possess a majority of the qualities for leading a volatile environment.

As evidenced by the Binomial Test results, one sample test, factor analysis, the independent sample test and the qualitative results, Eskom managers are equipped to some extent based on the SCAILES framework, with the required skills and qualities to succeed in a VUCA environment. They possess traits within the constructs of Strategic, Adaptive, Emergence, Systems and Learning of the SCAILES framework. Traits within the constructs Innovative and Complex requires an urgent focus on, in addition to out of the box and holistic thinking and problem-solving.

Further, the study found that the senior managers changed their leadership approach during the Covid-19 pandemic and noted key take ways from the pandemic to improve their leadership going forward.

### **8.4 The Proposed Leadership Framework**

*"Why should we want to return completely to the status quo when the desired goal can also be achieved in a way that promotes wellbeing, productivity and environmental sustainability."*  
(Haedrich, 2020)

The Covid-19 pandemic has tested leaders, governments, and society at large, their levels of resilience, agility, flexibility and emotional intelligence. The severity of the pandemic's impact on the institution/organisation/businesses varied based on the respective leadership responses.

In this section, the proposed feasible leadership framework that supports the sustainability of Eskom in a volatile environment is presented.

The proposed framework is based on the integrated findings in Chapters 6 and 7 and the literature review. Further to this, the proposed framework addresses the research objective five that suggest,

development of a feasible leadership framework that supports the sustainability of Eskom in a volatile environment.

Based on the key takeaways of the senior managers, areas of improvement recommended by the employees, the executive member responses and literature, the essential skills and traits to succeed in a volatile environment can be grouped into eight key areas to form the WELSPITL Framework, as depicted in Figure 8.1 below.

The proposed framework and leadership process (in section 8.5) is addressed to the leaders and managers at Eskom and any other interested stakeholders, SoEs and organisations since they extend practical implementations and suggestions for organisations operating in a volatile environment.

It will enable leaders to better understand and untangle the complexity of leading in unprecedented volatile times, like the present.



**Figure 8.1: WELSPITL Leadership Framework**  
Source: Author (2021)

### **8.4.1 Interpretation of the Proposed Leadership Framework**

The study findings have found that a volatile environment, like what the Covid-19 environment had presented, requires leaders to react in a very different manner. The proposed framework of leadership traits and a leadership process has been created with the 'new world' in mind, and it is not only limited to a volatile environment. The current market and business environment call for a leadership framework and process relevant to the changing landscape. It calls for leaders to adjust their leadership approach as the environment changes and steer the organisation to safer grounds while not compromising quality, safety, set goals and employee wellbeing.

This framework incorporates the key findings of the preliminary study, the literature on lessons learned during the Covid-19 pandemic and integrates the fundamental principles governing the leadership frameworks of Theory U, Reflective Leadership, Integrative Thinking, Authentic Leadership, Complexity Leadership Theory, Community Leadership, Network Governance Leadership, Entrepreneurial Leadership, Transformative Leadership, Awakened Leadership, Servant Leadership, RARE and Ethical Leadership.

#### **8.4.1.1 Working with People**

For employees to function at their optimum, they need to be skilled and work in an environment that is conducive to new ideas, where employees feel safe to share their suggestions and feelings without being discriminated against. Leaders need to create an enabling environment that encourages creativity, ideation and solution-finding. Creativity pods/hubs are encouraged to be created where employees with their leaders can take time out to brainstorm new ideas, do scenario planning and co-create. The environment should be relaxed and interactive. The environment must be cooperative, collaborative and inclusive where everyone's voice matters and their suggestions are genuinely acknowledged. Leaders need to inspire their employees to believe in themselves and make them aware of their contributions to the team's knowledge gap. For workers to function optimally and build trust and resilience in the team, they need to be empowered with the right skills, resources and support. Leaders need to strengthen their ability to perform and make the right decisions. To further build trust and commitment in the team as well as share the responsibilities and delegation of tasks and responsibilities should occur. The requirements of the task and the employees' associated roles and responsibilities should be explicit, clear, and structured so that duplication of work is avoided. Covid-19 has shown that employees can be trusted and that the leader is not the nuclei, but all employees are key influencers. Collective leadership and accountability exist.

The work environments are very complex systems with a network of teams that are interdependent. Leaders need to ensure that the silo mentality is removed and promote open, collaborative discussions among employees across teams, departments, and various stakeholders, so a holistic understanding of the problem and strategies' impact is attained. A shared vision must permeate the organisation to create synergy and a symbiotic relationship where everyone wins. In the team, 'We' mentally and social harmony must prevail at all times. Further, leaders must be mindful of their employees' mindsets, behaviours and cultures when addressing difficult situations. Leaders need to create safe feedback channels and show empathy, understanding, and care when addressing concerns. They need to be available, and feedback provision must be timeous. Focus on people is equally important as the focus on the job. Goals can only be fully achieved by the people in the organisation; thus, it is vital to ensure their wellbeing and a positive work environment. Leaders need to identify the employee needs, weaknesses, strengths, challenges and remove barriers limiting them. They need to re-energise the team by putting in interventions and support mechanisms to help them build their resilience and become a better version of themselves. Leaders must motivate, develop, aid and grow with their employees while showing a great deal of patience.

#### **8.4.1.2 Emotional Intelligence (EQ)**

During volatile situations or a crisis, some people can cope better than others. Due to the instability of the situation, fear and anxiety may engulf some employees as the uncertainty becomes more real and the future is unknown. Employees may already be experiencing a myriad of personal challenges, and with the added stress of a volatile environment, it may impact the individual's work performance and health. Thus, this calls for leaders to be more conscious and mindful in their tone, words, actions and behaviours. They need to think with their head as well as their heart. They need to identify their inherent biases and learn to manage them. Their body language should be open, approachable, and one that invites engagement. The tone should be relaxed and exude calm, interest, and empathy, while their personality should be charismatic, confident and motivating, sending out positive composed vibrations to the team. This will create an enabling environment where employees feel safe expressing themselves, their ideas and sharing their challenges. In volatile situations, employees want a sense of protection and security and know that they can rely upon and trust their leader to get them through it. Thus, the leader needs to show composure and confidence that he/she has the situation under control and a plan going forward. Employees can easily sense if their leader is afraid and unsure of what to do. Leaders need to protect their employees by acting as a barrier to negativity or false information that may impact the team, thus creating stability within the team.



Employees like to feel acknowledged, especially during difficult times when they had put in much effort despite their immense challenges; thus, it is essential for leaders to acknowledge their staff's contributions, successes and show gratitude. This builds trust and motivation in the staff.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, leaders at Eskom and worldwide, based on literature, found themselves doing more deep thinking, self-awareness and self-reflection as the pandemic unfolded and processed the challenges being experienced. Based on this, they became more self-aware of their strengths and limitations and gained a deep understanding of their employees' different realities, events and situations. They realised how critical it became for them to abandon their old mental models and create new ways of thinking, doing, and behaving. One can only fully understand the gravitas of a situation if they quieten their mind and go within and internalise what is transpiring and how it is affecting them, and the impact their thinking and behaviour has on the current situation. Leaders need to engage in enlightenment to gain a clearer perspective of the challenges by using reason, evidence and growth to help address the challenges and create a better working environment for everyone. They need to become agents of change and co-creators of future plans, vision and contingency activities (Geerlof, 2020).

The 'new world' that is filled with VUCA requires the continuous reflective behaviour of leaders as well as leaders being aware of their social surroundings and the role they play and the impact thereof. Leaders need to encourage their team to self-reflect as well. When dealing with people, leaders also need to exert self-control in how they approach and respond to situations. Things said in haste or without much thought could damage team morale and project success. They need to listen more assiduously to their staff, delve deeper into what is trying to be conveyed, reflect on the situation and show fairness, consideration and evidence of deliberation in their actions. Open, honest, respectful communication should prevail at all times.

#### **8.4.1.3 Leadership**

Volatile environments and crises often do not allow for deep deliberation and consultation on every strategy due to the fluidity and urgency of the situation; thus, leaders need to ensure that they continuously scan the internal and external environment and have relevant real-time information that is easy to understand so they can act decisively. They need to proactively assess the probability and possible impact costs of the threat. To help aid in this decision making, regular status update meetings should be held with the team and their leaders. Ensure the information sharing process and communication are clear, specific, transparent, and understandable for all; hence, mitigating the spread of false rumours and inaccurate information. Refrain from using jargon and complex terminology. The communication intent must clearly stipulate the purpose, provide context if required, the required tasks, the desired outcome and the due date (if required).

Important messages should be repeated. However, it is also essential to highlight the positives: the good that is being done, employee achievements and the opportunities that arose out of the challenges.

Further to this, the 'new world' calls for leaders to be alert and responsive to the changes. They need to constantly assess their mental models, unlearn old ways and thinking, and relearn new ways of thinking and doing. They need to display agility (mental, emotional, people and results), adaptability, and flexibility to quickly strategise and respond to the changing environment. Situations like the Covid-19 pandemic called for leaders to be highly resourceful and take risks that they ordinarily would not have taken. Having real-time relevant and accurate information and the team's commitment will help leaders be proactive and resourceful. To build this commitment and trust in the team, leaders must continuously interact with the team, get involved and understand what the challenges and bottlenecks are. Create a network of teams and engage in collaborative open, constructive discussions. The team must be able to rely on the leader to action plans and fulfil promises made. They need to display integrity, responsibility, accountability in all their actions and decision-making. This culture of zero-tolerance of unethical behaviour and practices must permeate the work environment to build trust in the leader and team members. Leaders need to show humility and support their employees by being empathetic, understanding, and tolerant of their prevailing circumstances. Being predictable, honest and authentic in their responses and behaviour builds trust and comradery in the team. It is also important that leaders understand and show tolerance that mistakes do happen, plans are imperfect, and they should approach them as lessons to be learnt and an opportunity to improve/reconfigure rather than being punitive. Leaders must not only talk the talk; they must also walk the walk; they must be role models. They must lead from the centre instead of the top and have the confidence to say 'I do not have all the answers' and relinquish control at times to allow for collective ideation. A "polycentric, multilevel, participatory leadership presence in which everyone can become a leader" (Geerlof, 2020, p. 5). An inclusive leadership approach should be adopted. They must be courageous, realistic, but optimistic about the future as this provides the team with the motivation they require to strive ahead and innovate. They must vividly visualise (and map it out) and translate the future path in a manner where it feels real and possible to the team.

#### **8.4.1.4 Self-Care**

VUCA environments are mentally, emotionally and physically draining. A leader must ensure that he/she is of optimal health to lead their team, especially during difficult times. Thus, it is crucial for leaders to take care of their health. Do not let one's emotions get the better of them. They need to remove themselves from the situation for a while and focus on their mental and emotional health. They must not attempt to solve all the problems; focus on the most important

ones, like in Eskom's situation, keeping the lights on. It is essential for them to speak to someone they trust or seek help from a medical professional about their fears, anxiety and issues that are stressing them. They often help one to see things from a different angle hence improving the mental and emotional state. Leaders need to spend time with loved ones, socialise, exercise, get a good night's sleep and eat healthily. In addition to their own mental and emotional wellbeing, leaders should put in place facilities and resources to support their staff as well. Staff should be encouraged to have a work-life balance. This will improve the leaders and employees' stress tolerance levels and build greater resilience and coping strategies. Getting in tune with one's spirituality and employing more deep, reflective thinking and mediation have become the new daily routine for many successful leaders.

#### **8.4.1.5 Problem-Solving and Strategy**

To successfully navigate and thrive in a VUCA environment, leaders need to be very strategic, critical and analytical in their thinking. Leaders must be able to join all the dots as well as the missing dots to form a complete picture of the situation to ensure that it encapsulates the impact it has on the interdependent, integrated complex networked nature of the business. A holistic view is required. To break through the storm that volatile environments create, leaders must employ and encourage disruptive thinking. Stand out, break the norms and traditions, set new standards and ways of doing. Be different, think out of the box, better yet, think without boundaries.

Leaders must set a clear vision and direction for the organisation and ensure this vision is clearly communicated to the team, so a shared vision and goal are enculturated.

Furthermore, leaders must anticipate the future based on what is known and consider each long-term outcome's possibilities and probabilities while linking the past to the present and the future as a single continuum of dynamic interactions. To achieve this, it requires them to step back and think through plans and decisions, connecting future outcomes to today's planned actions, and develop a practical path to achieve the desired outcome. Leaders will need to consider several elements when thinking through problems as they navigate what is known while accounting for the unknown to help create well-informed strategies and decisions. The importance of constantly scanning the environment and having an effective knowledge management system providing real-time information becomes paramount. Sensing, awareness and probing are vital skills the leader must have to help them investigate the root causes of the problem. They need to constantly question what is happening, why it is happening, and the impact. A problem-solving, solution-seeking mindset is required, and this thinking should permeate the entire organisation. Leaders must have a pre-emptive mindset and constantly undertake scenario planning exercises to help

leaders better prepare for crises or unexpected challenges. The creation and reviewing of contingency activities should always form part of the planning and strategising sessions.

#### **8.4.1.6 Innovation and Creativity**

Covid-19 has taught us that tried and tested old ways of doing and thinking will not suffice in this VUCA environment. To survive and thrive in a VUCA environment, it is paramount for leaders to be disruptive in their thinking. They need to continuously evaluate their strategies and business models to see if they fit for purpose and meet the current business environment's requirements. Leaders need to think out of the box and look for creative, novel ways to re-invent the business and how they do things to sustain the business, remain competitive, and thrive. Leaders need to encourage creative thinking and allow for the unrestrained idea generation process to occur. Debrief, and brainstorming sessions should be a norm in the various departments. Time should be set aside to allow employees to explore their creative, innovative nature. This can be done by developing creativity pods/hubs that allow employees to freely express their ideas and suggested solutions. Sources of inspiration both from the leader and the external environment should be used to ignite the creative spark. Original, novel and innovative ideas that improve processes, systems and efficiency should be acknowledged and rewarded.

#### **8.4.1.7 Technology**

We are in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, where technology is has taken over our lives in terms of how we live, work, shop, to name a few. Before the Covid-19 pandemic and nationwide lockdowns, many organisations like Eskom did not employ remote working or communication mediums like Skype, MS Teams, Zoom in their daily communications structures. Many processes had to become automated, requiring more significant investment in information technology systems and their staff's upskilling to use these new technology processes and mediums. Going forward, there will be a greater need for leaders to explore the development of technology to automate and streamline processes and systems for improved service delivery and production efficiency. Policies should be created that support the development and enhancement of the organisation's digital infrastructure. Employees will need to be enculturated to accept and adopt these advancements in technology. Relevant training and upskilling will need to form part of the employees' continuous learning and development plan. To help managers unpack and make sense of the vast amount of information presented to them daily, relevant and reliable information and knowledge management systems need to be put in place. The data obtained from these systems must be real-time and user-friendly and easy to understand and interpret.

As the business landscapes change even further post Covid-19, leaders need to revise their business and communications models that allow for the easy, efficient and cost-effective way of

communicating and engaging with a network of teams across departments and geographical regions and time-zones. Time and space should not be a barrier to effective timeous engagement.

#### **8.4.1.8 Learning and Development**

The world post-Covid-19 more than requires leaders to ensure life-long learning becomes part of the organisation's culture. Both leaders and their team need to have the appropriate knowledge and skills for their required jobs; however, they need to ensure that they continuously reskill and upskill themselves while keeping abreast with the developments in their specified fields. Leaders are encouraged to develop a learning and development plan with their employees to form part of their performance evaluation. In volatile environments, leaders and their employees must multitask, thus ensuring that cross-skilling training is undertaken. On the job training and development, simulations and exploration sessions will help build the team's required skills to adequately prepare them for future challenges. The exploration and simulation sessions must help build independent, creative, innovative, critical thinkers that equip them with relevant skills to address the problems presented in the 'new and future' world context. Constructive expert and peer feedback must be provided to the team. Employees must be encouraged to share their learnings, new skills, or task with the other team members. This will ensure shared learning occurs hence fostering group learning and more significant skill development. Apart from the hard skills to be learnt, leaders must also ensure employees and themselves are equipped with the relevant softs skills required to function optimally in the team. Learning, unlearning, relearning, upskilling, and cross-skilling must form part of the organisational culture's DNA. Observe the patterns in which mistakes and failures occur and use them as learning, development, and improvement opportunities.

### **8.5 The Proposed Leadership Process**

Policymaking's linearity does not consider or accommodate feedback loops, time delays, cause and effect relations that are often distant in time and space, leading to policy resistance, unintended consequences, and counter-intuitive behaviour. These blinds spots and gaps do affect leadership's behaviour, actions and speed of response. Covid-19 has forced leaders worldwide to "re-create their own new normalcy" (Robinson, 2020, p. 117). The pandemic has forced leaders out of their comfort zones and complacency attitudes to proactively seek out creative ways to meet their stated objectives. The pandemic has taught them that it is not business as usual, and many of the impossibles can become possible with a bit of innovation and creativity. Further to this, Lampinen and Fifield (2020, p. 3) stress the importance of leaders understanding and assessing what the new normality in the new world is. This understanding is the basis for succeeding in the future and addressing future challenges.

Based on the primary study findings and literature on lessons learnt from the Covid-19 pandemic, leaders were always caught in a loop where there was a constant back and forth in decision making and collaboration, undoing and redoing of tasks, strategising and re-strategising and prioritising and reprioritising. Leaders found themselves doing a lot of deep thinking and reflection and becoming more aware of their surroundings. They had to be so fluid, flexible and adaptable like a loop as their approach changed continuously as the situation had changed. Creating a perfect strategy is nonexistent. Leaders need to work towards a practical solution that will always have room for improvement. Constant experimentation, reassessing, revising, and re-implementing the strategies will help streamline the process in an imperfect world with imperfect people. Preparation, willingness to change and adapt is the key to future success. Scenario planning for different eventualities will help leaders be better prepared for unplanned events in a volatile environment. The provision of and access to appropriate resources needs to be factored into a basket of contingency plans.

The pandemic has caused leaders at Eskom and worldwide to reassess their capabilities, so they can successfully begin to recalibrate and restore the organisation's vision to navigate the 'new world' post the pandemic. The recovery phase of a crisis requires strong leadership. In conjunction with the WELSPITL Leadership Framework, the following seven-step leadership process is recommended to help managers navigate a volatile environment successfully, as illustrated in Figure 8.2 below.

## WELSPITL Leadership Process for Leading in a Volatile Environment

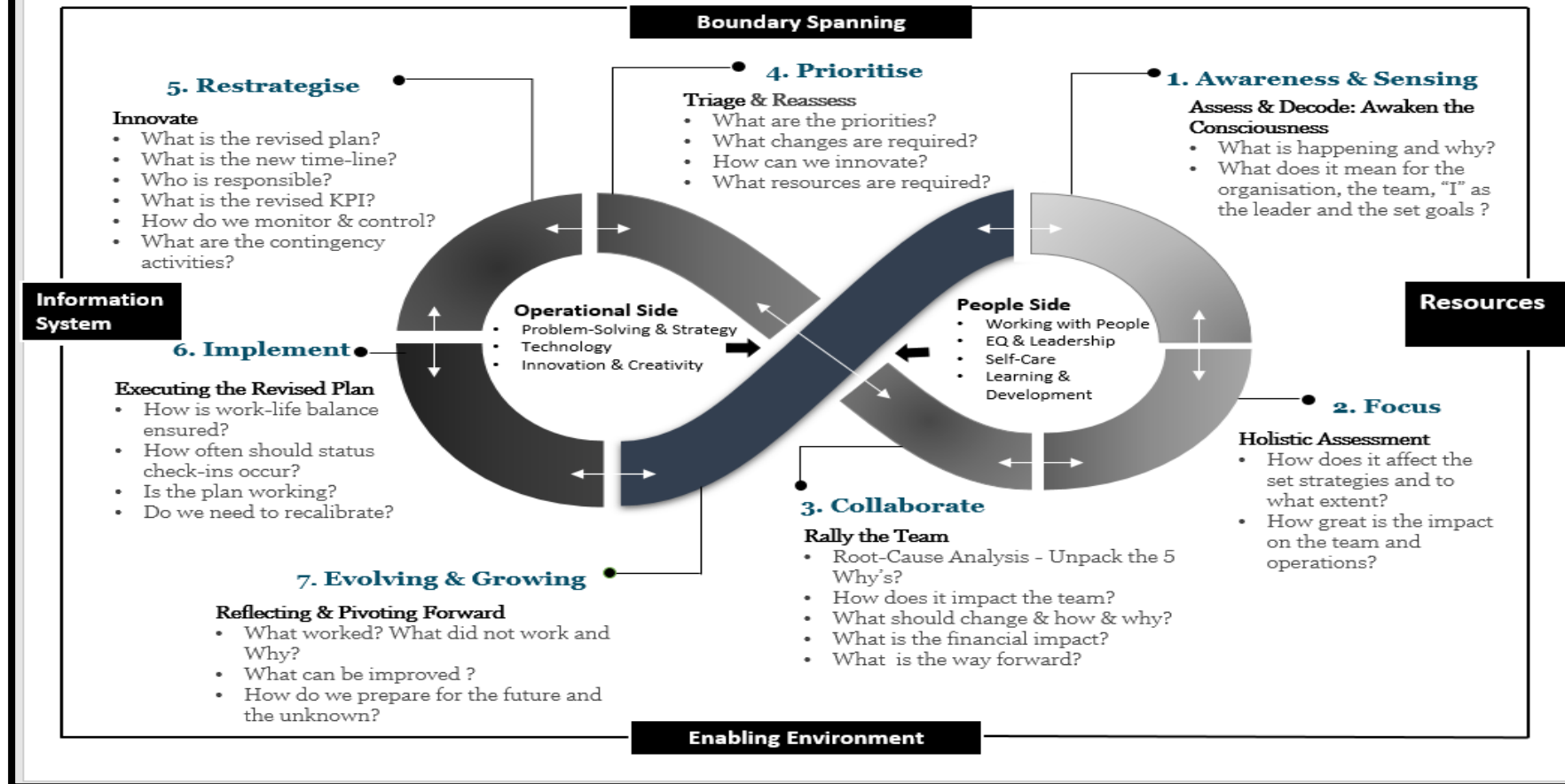


Figure 8.2: WELSPITL 7-Step Leadership Process for Leading in a Volatile Environment

Source: Author (2021)

### **8.5.1 Interpretation of the Proposed Leadership Process**

Leading the team in a VUCA environment is very challenging and marked with much sweeping uncertainty. If leaders act too quickly without much deliberation and thought, they can be accused of overreacting and causing undue anxiety, stress and cost. However, if they wait for the crisis to unfold to deeper depths, they can be accused of being complacent and irresponsible. When to respond to a crisis can be a double-edged sword.

Based on the primary study findings and literature, especially on responses to the Covid-19 pandemic, the following seven steps are proposed for Eskom leaders and other organisations leaders to follow when leading in a volatile environment. The first three steps speak to the people side of the business. As per WELSPITL Leadership Framework, the leadership traits: Working with people, EQ, Leadership, Self-care and Learning and Development are dominant during these three stages. Stages four to seven aligns with the operation side of the business. The key traits required to navigate these steps successfully are Problem-Solving and Strategy, Technology and Innovation and Creativity as per the WELSPITL Framework. The process is iterative, with feedback loops that include critical questions the leader and the team would need to consider for each step. For the leadership process to be effective, leaders must create an enabling environment where consultation and collaboration occur across teams, departments, and stakeholders. Individuals feel safe and free to share their thoughts and ideas. Creating a knowledge management information system that provides relevant, real-time information in an understandable format is required. The use of visual information boards is encouraged. The required resources are available to perform the tasks. Creativity pods are created to allow for the easy immersion of ideas and solutions.

The two-way arrows indicate that leaders may be required to move back and forth in each stage as the conditions change, showing a constant reflective, flexible, adaptive decision-making approach. Getting it always right in a volatile environment will be challenging to achieve as the goal post constantly changes. Thus, it is more important to be practical on the desired outcome hoped to be achieved, adaptable, and act quickly and decisively in the changing environment. Do what is most important and as best as you can with the available resources. The pandemic has shown the need for managers to begin adopting more lean problem-solving and operational excellence skills to maximise the use of resources, efficiency and time.

Further to this, leaders are encouraged to also adopt the Shingo Guiding Principles as per Table 8.1. Certain principles and their associated behaviour have been integrated into the WELSPITL Framework.



**Table 8.1: Shingo Guiding Principles**

<b>Principle</b>	<b>Behaviour</b>
<b>Respect every individual</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve employees in improving the work and solving the problem.</li> <li>• Provide coaching for problem-solving.</li> <li>• Show respect.</li> </ul>
<b>Lead with humility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide consistent leadership engagement where the work happens.</li> <li>• Employees can report issues with confidence.</li> <li>• Provide support and an enabling working environment.</li> </ul>
<b>Seek perfection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work toward simplifying work and processes.</li> <li>• Seek progress as you work towards "perfection".</li> <li>• Look for practical solutions.</li> <li>• Seek innovative/creative ideas and solutions.</li> </ul>
<b>Embrace scientific thinking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore ideas without fear of failure.</li> <li>• Use a structured approach to problem-solving.</li> </ul>
<b>Focus on the process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the process that created the error.</li> </ul>
<b>Ensure quality at the source</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop countermeasures to prevent problems from re-occurring</li> <li>• Employ operational excellence and quality measures.</li> </ul>
<b>Improve flow and pull</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that needed resources are available when required.</li> <li>• Do regular inventory checks and audit suppliers.</li> </ul>
<b>Think systemically</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eliminate barriers that prevent the flow of ideas and information.</li> <li>• Ensure that the issues for the day are understood by those who are affected.</li> </ul>
<b>Create constancy of purpose</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearly communicate the direction of the organisation.</li> <li>• Clearly state the vision and create a shared focus.</li> </ul>
<b>Create value for the customer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work to understand customers' needs and expectations.</li> <li>• Create a customer-centric work culture.</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from Baruch et al. (2021, p. 38)

#### **8.4.2.1 Awareness and Sensing**

The first step requires the leader to step back, identify, assess the situation and decode what is happening. He needs to awaken his consciousness, make sense of the situation as it unfolds, and understand why it is happening. Leaders must refrain from trying to quickly fix the problem without assessing how big the problem is and what is causing it. This step adopts the principles of Awakened Leadership and Theory U. At this stage; the leader needs to ask himself the following questions:

- What is happening, and why?
- What does it mean for the organisation, the team, "I" as the leader and the set goals?

#### **8.4.2.2 Focus**

Once the leader has internalised and made sense of what is happening, he/she needs to conduct a holistic assessment of the impact the situation has on the organisation and the team. At this stage,

key principles of Theory U, Awakened Leadership and Strategic Leadership are adopted. Key considerations are:

- How does it affect the set strategies, and to what extent?
- How great is the impact on the team and operations?

#### **8.4.2.3 Collaborate**

Once the leader has conducted a holistic analysis, the team should meet. The team should collaborate on understanding what is happening, why it is happening, and its impact. Engage the team using thinking questions to encourage dialogue and help solicit practical suggestions for immediate implementation. Leaders must be divergent in their thinking and employ collective thinking, and ideation must occur. Narrow thinking and the blame game must be abandoned. At this stage, key principles of Theory U, Awakened Leadership, Lean Problem-Solving, Reflective Leadership, Complexity Adaptive Leadership Theory, Integrative Thinking, RARE Leadership, Community Leadership, Entrepreneurial Leadership, Network Governance Leadership and Strategic Leadership are adopted. The key considerations are:

- Root-Cause Analysis - Unpack the 5 Why's?
- How does it impact the team?
- What should change & how & why?
- What is the financial impact?
- What is the way forward?

#### **8.4.2.4 Prioritise**

Upon completing the root-cause analysis and understanding the associated impact of the challenge, the leader with his team must categorise in terms of importance what the key projects are. A review of the processes and resources required to achieve the project outcomes and how best can the process be adapted to achieve the desired goal must be undertaken. Leaders should consult employees on the work process changes and brainstorm innovative ways to improve processes and systems while being mindful of the unintentional repercussions. At this stage, key principles of Reflective Leadership, Complexity Adaptive Leadership Theory, Integrative Thinking, RARE Leadership, Community Leadership, Entrepreneurial Leadership, Network Governance Leadership and Strategic Leadership are adopted. The key considerations are:

- What are the priorities?
- What changes are required?
- How can we innovate?

- What resources are required?

#### **8.4.2.5 Restrategise**

Once the key priority areas/projects have been deliberated on and agreed to, the leader must create a revised strategic plan. Innovation and creativity in the strategic plan development are encouraged. When there is insufficient clarity and the response required is immediate, like with coronavirus, it is good to have “specific immediate actions” (Tourish, 2020, p. 4), looking at what is most important, urgent and causing the most challenges. As clarity improves, short to long term plans need to be restrategised. Lampinen and Fifield (2020, p. 2) stress the importance of leaders “resetting the focus” to help create some kind of stabilisation. Collaborate with the team on the way forward. At this stage, the key principles of Complexity Adaptive Leadership, Integrative Thinking, Transformative Leadership, Entrepreneurial Leadership and Strategic Leadership are adopted. The key considerations are:

- What is the revised plan?
- What is the new timeline?
- Who is responsible?
- What is the revised KPI?
- How do we monitor & control?
- What are the contingency activities?

#### **8.4.2.6 Implement**

The revised strategic plan is now ready to be executed. Leaders must be available and visible. They need to conduct Gemba walks to observe the implementation process and better understand it and the associated challenges in real-time. Leaders must engage with the staff and listen and take note of their highlighted challenges and proposed solutions. At this stage, the key principles of Gemba Kaizen, Complexity Adaptive Leadership, Integrative Thinking, RARE Leadership, Transformative Leadership, Reflective Leadership and Strategic Leadership are adopted. The key considerations are:

- How is work-life balance ensured?
- How often should status check-ins occur?
- Is the plan working?
- Do we need to recalibrate?

#### **8.4.2.7 Evolving and Growing**

In the final stage of the process, the leader and his team hold a debrief session. A reflection on what has been done, the positives and the negatives experienced are unpacked, and the final result/end product is discussed. Areas of improvement are brainstormed. Key aspects of Theory U, Awakened Leadership Strategic Leadership and Reflective Leadership are adopted here. The key considerations are:

- What worked? What did not work and Why?
- What can be improved?
- How do we prepare for the future and the unknown?

### **8.6 Way Forward**

The pandemic has provided leaders, especially at Eskom, and researchers an excellent opportunity to learn from their mistakes, build on their weaknesses, convert them to strengths, and create new processes, systems, and structures that will allow them to be in a better position to face the future unknowns.

Eskom leaders must shift from a “wait-and-see mindset to a test-and-learn approach to business” (Connor, 2021). Eskom leaders who anticipate and plan for change while constantly looking into the unknown underpinned with a human-centred approach will be well prepared for future VUCA events. Dynamic, innovative, future-focused leaders solve complex business challenges by critically evaluating, reflecting on and reassessing challenges within and external to the organisation, and in this case Eskom.

It is proposed that this leadership framework and process guide management and leaders at Eskom and in general to lead effectively in a volatile environment. The key points noted were the importance of learning, the symbiotic and synergistic relationship between team members and other stakeholders within the department and across departments, and the creation of an enabling supportive working environment. Leaders and managers can only grow, embrace change, and change their mental models if they begin adopting the principles of Theory U, Reflective Leadership, Complexity Adaptive Leadership, RARE Leadership, Transformative Leadership, Awakened Leadership and the proposed WELSPITL leadership framework and process, thereby becoming more resilient and agile, hence responding positively to changing environment. The pandemic has highlighted the relevance and importance of adopting empathy, proactiveness, lean thinking and tools for organisational success.

## **8.7 Recommendations**

The following recommendations are postulated based on the primary study findings, the literature on lessons learned during the pandemic and leading through a crisis. The recommendations are addressed to the senior management and leaders at Eskom and leaders in other industry sectors as they propose relevant, practical, and implementable suggestions in the current environment. The proposed recommendations will provide a good basis for the implementation of the WELSPITL Framework. The following key recommendations are postulated:

### **8.7.1 Creation of Creativity and Brainstorming Pods**

The study has found that the environment in Eskom is not conducive to ignite creativity, innovation and the emergence of unrestrained ideas among the employees. Thus, it is proposed that creativity brainstorming pods are created in the various departments to allow team members to brainstorm ideas, do scenario planning and explore innovative ways of improving the processes and systems. Scenarios can be easily mapped out on visual boards where collective deliberation consensus can be reached. These pods must be rooms where people feel safe to contribute their thoughts and ideas and are fully equipped with the required resources and tools to aid in their brainstorming and scenario planning sessions. Further, leaders need to dedicate time to the staff's work schedule to allow them to engage in these creative and problem-solving sessions and create mechanisms to support and back up the teams' meeting sessions.

### **8.7.2 Application of LEAN Tools**

The secondary study research found that managers who successfully navigated the Covid-19 crisis and successfully managed to meet the organisational objectives had employed LEAN problem-solving tools such as the 5 Whys, prioritisation of projects, visual boards, and Gemba Walks, operation excellence and the Shingo Guiding Principles. It is proposed that Eskom leaders explore implementing operational excellence strategies and tools in their decision making to better streamline projects, processes and systems, resulting in greater efficiency, effectiveness, decreased cost and improved service delivery.

### **8.7.3 Enhanced Managerial Development Programme**

The business and work environment has evolved and changed dramatically after the Covid-19 pandemic. This changed environment requires leaders to upskill themselves and equip themselves with the necessary leadership skills required for leading in a VUCA environment. Leaders at Eskom lack certain leadership qualities and traits to lead in the VUCA environment successfully. Mutch (2020, pp. 19-20) provides some critical questions that need to be asked as part of their

leadership development and appraisal to prepare for the future crisis and to lead in the ‘new world’ that is VUCA characterised:

### **Personal Disposition**

- “What do leaders see as their strengths? In what ways do they display these strengths (e.g., adaptability, integrity)? How do others see their strengths?
- Do they use their strengths to good effect? Are their strengths honed for a crisis situation (e.g., is information communicated clearly and effectively)?
- Are they conscious of their limitations? Do they take steps to mitigate their limitations (e.g., upskilling, delegating)? How do others view their ability to discern their strengths and limitations?
- Do they appear to have a recognisable and credible leadership style? Can they articulate and justify their approach?” Mutch (2020, pp. 19-20)

### **Contextual Disposition**

- “In what ways do leaders display the necessary skills to lead a crisis situation or volatile environment? (e.g., managing the fast flow of information, appraising the constantly changing situation and keeping calm under pressure)?
- In what ways do leaders model how to operate in a crisis/volatile environment (e.g., building and sustaining strong teams or distributing authority as needed)?
- How are decisions made? How well do leaders understand the wider system and the flow-on effects of decisions?
- How well do leaders manage complex tasks simultaneously or balance competing priorities and interests effectively?
- How are they guiding their organisation or community through the unpredictability yet providing a sense of stability and confidence?
- To what extent do people come first in the crisis response?
- Do leaders show that they have a sense of the big picture and of short-, medium-, and long-term planning needs and implications?
- How well does the response exemplify the organisation’s or community’s vision and values?” Mutch (2020, pp. 19-20)

### **Relationship Disposition**

- “Do leaders provide a vision that resonates with those they are leading? In what ways have they built a collective culture that is inclusive and responsive rather than reactive and divisive?

- In what ways do leaders build trust, reinforce values, and communicate these values effectively?
- In what ways do leaders display the value of sustaining key relationships, whether they were built prior to the event or needed to be established because of the event?
- How successful are they in bringing and keeping the organisation or community together beyond the initial response phase?
- How do leaders nurture the strengths and abilities of informal and emerging leaders in preparation for and during a crisis event?” Mutch (2020, pp. 19-20)

Leaders must undertake continuous training and development at Eskom to ensure that they possess the relevant skills and qualities for their context. The training must help disrupt the leaders' current mental models and ways of doing things and help them self-reflect, unlearn, and relearn new ways of doing things to improve strategy development, problem-solving, and team leadership. They need to upskill and reskill to build on their strengths and improve on their limitations, knowledge and leadership gaps.

#### **8.7.4 Creation of a Knowledge Management Information System**

Warnings of potential crisis, customer and competitor behaviour changes occur all the time and at any time. To be able to hear and or see it, it is important to break through the noise, the clutter, the ambiguity, false information and the big data. The preliminary study has found that information can often be distorted or false, thus creating more chaos and uncertainty. Due to the extreme pressure and speed at which decisions are made, information is not often communicated to all parties, reducing transparency, impacting decision-making, trust and commitment. Similar findings were found by Fified (2020). To effectively lead in a volatile environment, managers and leaders need to stay abreast, thus requiring accurate, relevant information in an understandable format and in real-time. The information must omit technical jargon, and lengthy voluminous reports must be refrained from. Thus, it is proposed that a knowledge management information system is created at Eskom that will continuously gather, retrieve and process the volumes of information into pieces of information that the leadership and their team can easily understand at Eskom. This information will be the pinnacle to informed evidence rationale decision making that is free of emotion and bias. The data should be categorised into “potential, strategic, tactical and operational intelligence and compared to data collected from other sources” (Dileep, 2020, p. 14).

## **8.8 Implementation Plan**

To convert this conceptual framework and recommendations into reality, the proposed 6-point implementation plan, as depicted in Table 8.2, is recommended to Eskom leaders and managers. The six key focus points are:

1. Introducing the WELSPITL Leadership Framework and Leadership Process;
2. Development of the knowledge management information system;
3. Creation of creativity/brainstorming pods;
4. Use of operational excellence tools;
5. Upskilling and training; and
6. Implementation of the WELSPITL Leadership Framework.



**Table 8.2: 6-Point WELSPITL Leadership Implementation Plan**

Point	Period	Task	The change agent	Role players	Expected outcome
<b>Introduction of WELSPITL</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Nov – 31 <sup>st</sup> Dec 2021	Introduce the proposed WELSPITL Leadership Framework and Leadership Process to Eskom leaders/managers to create awareness.	Executive Members & HR	HR, and other senior managers	Every employee to understand and appreciate the relevance and practicality of the WELSPITL Leadership Framework in the current working environment.
<b>Knowledge management Information System</b>	02 <sup>nd</sup> Jan – 28 Feb 2022	Creation of a knowledge management information system at Eskom that will retrieve current big data and process it into pieces of information that the leadership and their team can easily understand.	Executive Members, HR & IT	HR, IT, Finance, respective managers/leaders	This information will be the pinnacle of informed evidence decision making.
<b>Creativity/Brainstorming Pods</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Mar – 31 <sup>st</sup> Apr 2022	Creativity/brainstorming pods should be created in the various departments to allow team members to brainstorm ideas, do scenario planning and explore innovative ways of improving the processes and systems.	Executive Members & HR	HR, IT, Finance	Creating readiness and stimulating employee and managers creativity and innovative abilities to improve processes, systems and decision-making.
<b>Operational Excellence Tools</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> May – June 30 2022	Eskom leaders to explore implementing operational excellence strategies and tools in their decision-making.	Executive Members & HR	Respective managers/leaders	To better streamline projects, processes and systems, resulting in greater efficiency, effectiveness, decreased cost and improved service delivery.

<b>Upskilling and Training</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Jul – 31 <sup>st</sup> Aug 2022	Leaders to upskill themselves and equip themselves with the necessary leadership skills required for leading in a VUCA environment. Leaders must undertake continuous training and development at Eskom to ensure that they possess the relevant skills and qualities for their current context.	HR	Respective managers/leaders	This will help disrupt the leaders' current mental models and ways of doing things and help them self-reflect and unlearn and relearn new ways of doing things to improve strategy development, problem-solving, and team leadership.
<b>Implementation</b>	Sept 2022 onward	Full Implementation of the WELSPITL Leadership Framework and Process.	Executive Members & HR	Respective managers/leaders	A leadership style and decision-making process that addresses the current changing and difficult working environments.

Source: Author (2021)

## **8.9 Suggested Areas for Future Research**

The study findings provide insightful first-hand information of managers leading through a VUCA event like the Covid-19 pandemic, highlighting critical areas in leadership approach that need improvement and development to be considered effective for leading in a volatile environment with a prolonged crisis as the Covid-19 pandemic has presented. The following suggestions are postulated.

- This study findings serve as an initial base for future research in areas of SoE's leadership qualities and traits and leading in a volatile environment. This study's focus was limited to a single country, South Africa, and a single SoE, Eskom. Thus, similar studies must be conducted on other SoEs in South Africa and abroad to determine if a correlation in the findings exists and increase the generalisation of the findings.
- The researcher proposes that a longitudinal study is conducted across various SoEs, public and private sectors entities in South Africa to develop a set of standardised leadership qualities and traits for leading in a volatile environment. A multiple mixed methods research design is recommended, such as sequential, concurrent and transformative designs using a combination of data collection methods. These methods could include but are not limited to surveys, interviews, focus groups, action research and grounded theory. These findings will produce a comparative analysis of leadership qualities and traits for leading in a volatile environment across the various sectors. Thus, contributing to the body of knowledge on SoEs, leadership and the curriculum design for South African universities on leadership in a volatile environment for both the public administration and leadership discipline.
- Leadership scholars can further analyse leaders' leadership dynamics in SoEs and identify positive and negative leadership traits and recommend what they should be in that given context.
- The researcher proposes a comparative analysis between Western and African leadership approaches in a volatile environment to determine if similarities and/or differences exist between these two leadership approaches.
- There is further scope for conducting further research on applying LEAN strategies and tools for effective leadership in a VUCA environment.

## **8.10 Summary of Thesis**

Volatile environments undeniable bring about difficult choices for leaders. If these choices are guided by relevant, up-to-date information with a shared common goal and interest of the team,

the decision-making process can be less stressful for the leader. Managing and leading through a crisis and volatile environment requires a very different and unique skill-set. To date, the leadership frameworks adopted by leaders have proven to be archaic and ineffective in leading through radically volatile, uncertain, ambiguous and complex environments. The Covid-19 pandemic has revealed the inherent gaps in leaders' current leadership approach across various industries and globally.

Regarding Eskom, the rising electricity costs, the continuing implementation of load shedding across the country, and rising debt and government bailouts are indicative of these gaps. The 'new world' that the Covid-pandemic has created further adds to the rising challenges that the Eskom leaders face as customer finances declines. The revenue return of Eskom decreases, adding further financial challenges to the overflowing cup of challenges the leaders at Eskom face. Leadership theories have been challenged with the urgency to create new ones relevant to the current environment enveloped with VUCA. Leadership in the 'new world' requires leaders to ask uncomfortable questions, disrupt their thinking, attack their current mental models and reconfigure them by learning to address the ambiguous challenges with somewhat indeterminate solutions. Leaders are being challenged to reassess and reconfigure how they lead and do business to serve all stakeholders' needs. They are required now to be more of an influencer, change agents, motivators, mentor, guide and coach. The need to constantly consider the impact of their decisions on the triple bottom line: profit, people and planet, which grows even more important.

This study has identified the need for a feasible leadership framework that will equip leaders with essential qualities and traits for effectively and efficiently leading Eskom, and other organisations based on the practicality of the framework, and their people in a volatile environment, like the present one created by the Covid-19 pandemic. The study has highlighted that leaders cannot navigate a VUCA environment in isolation and need to adopt an inclusive, collective, reflective leadership approach while having a holistic understanding of the interdependent, interconnectedness and integrative nature of departments, processes and systems that impact service delivery. Due to the surmounting challenges Eskom faces, which the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated, the entity requires a leadership approach that has a strategic, integrative, transformative lens that can effectively and efficiently turn around the organisation. Responsible and Ethical Leadership is relevant when leading an entity as large and complex as Eskom; however, as the problems within Eskom grows, debt continues to rise while profit levels are still on the decline and service delivery to the people of South Africa decreases; this calls for the entity to relook at the leadership framework that governs the entity.

It is proposed that adopting the WELSPITL leadership framework and leadership process that is unique to the South African environment and was developed within the context of a VUCA

environment and a black swan event is sought to replace Eskom's current leadership framework. This framework and leadership process do not seek to undermine the current leadership framework at Eskom but, rather, provide a framework relevant to the current environment, and that would positively aim to improve service delivery, increase efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of Eskom going forward. Due to the complexity of the entity and the myriad of inherent challenges it possesses, Eskom cannot rely on a single leadership approach developed in a time that is not relevant anymore to address its current challenges and meet its stated objectives. This means moving away from the Ethical Leadership approach to an integrative approach to managing and leading Eskom. An approach that considers the key characteristics of multiple approaches to form one composite approach that is easily adaptable and interchangeable to the changing environment is required. The WELSPTIL framework is a composite of key characteristics from leadership theories that are relevant for leading in a volatile environment, namely: Reflective Leadership, Integrative Thinking, Transformative Leadership, RARE Leadership, Strategic Leadership, Complexity Adaptive Leadership Theory, Awakened Leadership, Entrepreneurial Leadership, Network Governance Leadership, Community Leadership, Ethical Leadership, Authentic Leadership, Servant Leadership and Theory U. Integrated into this mix are key principles of LEAN problem-solving tools and the Shingo Guiding Principles.

The integrated nature of the WELSPTIL Framework allows for collective thinking, ideation and solution forming while factoring in greater reflection, accountability, monitoring and control mechanisms. Strategies are formed based on root-cause analysis and are evidence-based. The framework calls for an enabling working environment, creating an organisational culture of non-fear, teamwork, result-orientation, innovation, creativity, togetherness, compassion, support, shared vision and common goals. This framework and leadership process creates a stronger team identity, commitment, cooperation, communication, promotion of transparency, code of ethics and accountability while promoting co-leadership, copresencing and co-creation to improve and accelerate service delivery to the people of South Africa – that is, keeping the lights. The framework promotes life-long learning, heightened EQ levels and managing self-care, which are essential attributes for staying relevant in the knowledge economy and surviving in a VUCA environment.

This leadership framework approach is relevant to the current environment as it moves away from the top-down bureaucratic task-orientated approach to one of participation, inclusivity, collective and result-orientated leadership. Leadership is not a person or entity but more of a relational process between a networked, interdependent, integrated organisation of systems, processes and people. It allows leaders to function in a complexity mindset, where they can comfortably think,

act, and lead in a VUCA environment while unifying their team's experiences and knowledge towards a shared vision in a flexible, agile manner. It will help Eskom identify the key leadership qualities and traits their leaders should possess to successfully manage and lead their respective departments. Leaders who do not possess these qualities and traits should undergo management development programmes to build these key traits. The proposed leadership process will help Eskom leaders identify weaknesses and gaps quickly and provide guidance on the steps to be taken individually and collectively. Solutions will be better thought-out, more relevant and practical due to the root-cause analysis, boundary spanning, brainstorming and collaborative efforts of the entire team. This will lead to quicker turn-around times, improved utilisation of resources, greater efficiency, decreased cost, and improved service delivery to the people of South Africa. The leadership framework also proposes that leaders should adopt more human-side qualities of empathy, humility, understanding, fairness, trust, nurturing and support of team members. These qualities continuously emerged from the primary and secondary data. This helps build trust, commitment and motivation in the team, enhancing productivity and creativity, resulting in positive results-oriented work culture.

The study concludes that specific leadership qualities and traits are needed for leading in a volatile environment and that invaluable lessons have been gleaned from managers and leaders that have successfully managed to navigate the Covid-19 pandemic crisis. The Covid-19 pandemic, although a catastrophic crisis of diabolical proportions, can be viewed as an opportunity to reassess our world views, our behaviours, our strengths and weaknesses, our business models and communication mediums and our role in society and our organisations to restrategise to embrace new thinking, business and leadership models, diversity, engagement, presencing and the drive for excellence. It provides Eskom and society at large the opportunity to turn possible desired future states into reality.

The study found that Eskom leaders possess traits relevant for leading in a volatile environment; however, they lack key strategic, problem-solving, emergence and innovation/creativity traits. The leadership qualities considered important for leaders to possess in a volatile environment were also considered important by the Eskom leaders; however, the top 5 qualities that managers perceive as most important for a volatile environment do not align fully with literature findings based on the leadership qualities deemed most important and had successfully enabled leaders to navigate the challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic. They do, however, align to qualities deemed important to possess for complex, volatile environments. Leaders at Eskom did change their leadership approach during the Covid-19 pandemic to be more empathetic, supportive, understanding, trusting, agile, flexible and adaptable. They also found themselves doing more

deep thinking and listening as well as self-reflection. A greater degree of resilience was built among the leaders and their employees.

The WELSPITL Framework attributes and process, a multidimensional and multifaceted leadership framework, is appropriate for the 'new world' and the inherent diversity and complexity of Eskom and the South African environment. The WELSPITL leadership framework, the process and the implementation plan will support the sustainability of Eskom in a volatile environment.

*“What leaders need during a crisis is not a predefined response plan but behaviours and mindsets that will prevent them from overreacting to yesterday’s developments and help them to look ahead.”*

(D’ Auria and De Smet, 2020)

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## **APPENDIXES**

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**APPENDIX 1:**  
**APPROVAL LETTER**

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**Date:** 26/11/2019  
**Names:** Shamola Pramjeeth  
**Student Number:** 961077824  
**Proposed qualification:** PhD  
**Panel decision:** Approved  
**Title: Ideal Leadership for State-Owned Enterprises in South Africa: A case study of ESKOM**

Please attend to the following and submit for ethical clearance:

1. The study population should go beyond ESKOM to include relevant stakeholders that includes government, customers, municipalities
2. What does previous research say?
3. Define organizational performance in the context of the study
4. There is lack of relevant theoretical framework.
5. Candidate could include the Chaos, Complexity and Systems Thinking approaches and adjust the implications of the theories to the entire research process. Most of the theories used have become outdated

**Best regards**

Dr Emmanuel Mutambara  
Academic Leader: Higher Degrees and Research  
Graduate School of Business & Leadership  
University of KwaZulu-Natal (Westville Campus)  
South Africa  
**E-Mail: Mutambara@ukzn.ac.za**

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**APPENDIX 2:**  
**STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OUTPUT**

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# Mann Whitney U & Wilcoxon Test on Employee and Senior Manager Traits

## Statistics

Group			ST1_	ST2	ST3	ST4	C1	C2	C3	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5_	A6_	I1_	I2_
employees	N	Valid	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45
		Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		Mean	3.60	3.51	3.53	3.60	3.51	3.58	3.64	3.64	3.42	3.40	3.53	3.47	3.40	3.16	3.69
		Median	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	4.00
		Std. Deviation	1.031	.843	.991	.889	.944	.941	.981	.883	.783	.889	.894	1.100	.863	1.127	.821
	Percentiles	25	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	2.00	3.00	2.00	3.00
		50	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	4.00
		75	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
managers	N	Valid	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65
		Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		Mean	3.75	3.14	3.32	3.52	3.82	3.28	3.54	3.40	3.46	3.83	3.71	3.83	3.45	3.35	3.68
		Median	4.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	4.00
		Std. Deviation	.919	.864	1.032	.970	.950	.820	.812	.932	.849	.840	.914	.911	1.090	1.096	.903
	Percentiles	25	3.00	3.00	2.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	2.00	3.00
		50	4.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	4.00
		75	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.50	4.00	5.00	4.00	4.00	4.00

Source: Primary data

		Statistics																
Group		I3	I4	L1	L2	L3	L4	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	SY 1	SY 2	SY 3	SY4 _	SY5 _
employee N es	Valid	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45
	Missi ng	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Mean	3.27	3.27	3.33	3.71	3.69	3.53	3.40	3.40	3.40	3.36	3.47	3.36	3.51	3.56	3.49	3.51	3.73
	Median	4.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
	Std. Deviation	1.009	1.009	.929	.815	.701	.815	.963	1.053	1.031	.883	.944	.957	.843	.943	.869	.869	.837
	Percentil 25 es	2.00	2.50	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	2.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	2.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
	50	4.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
	75	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
manage N rs	Valid	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65
	Missi ng	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Mean	3.49	3.02	3.23	3.58	3.60	3.65	3.52	3.66	3.71	3.63	3.49	3.58	3.71	3.72	3.80	3.60	3.72
	Median	4.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
	Std. Deviation	.937	1.008	1.057	.827	.844	.959	.954	.906	.723	.945	.921	1.044	.947	.910	.851	.915	.910
	Percentil 25 es	3.00	2.00	2.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
	50	4.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
	75	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	4.00	4.50	4.00	4.00

Source: Primary data

Test Statistics <sup>a</sup>																
	ST1	ST2	ST3	ST4	C1	C2	C3	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	I1_	I2	I3
Man	1372	1077	1285	1380	1223	1179	1324	1230	1449	1104	1316	1221	1459	1351	1424	1299
n-	.500	.500	.500	.000	.000	.500	.500	.000	.000	.500	.500	.000	.500	.000	.500	.500
Whit																
ney																
U																
Wilc	2407	3222	3430	3525	2258	3324	3469	3375	2484	2139	2351	2256	3604	2386	3569	2334
oxon	.500	.500	.500	.000	.000	.500	.500	.000	.000	.500	.500	.000	.500	.000	.500	.500
W																
Z	-.581	-	-	-.530	-	-	-.893	-	-.088	-	-.941	-	-.019	-.703	-.246	-
		2.47	1.12		1.53	1.83		1.49		2.29		1.53				1.04
		4	7		0	4		1		9		5				9
Asy	.561	.013	.260	.596	.126	.067	.372	.136	.930	.022	.347	.125	.985	.482	.805	.294
mp.																
Sig.																
(2-																
taile																
d)																
a. Grouping Variable: Group																

Source: Primary data

Test Statistics <sup>a</sup>																
	I4	L1	L2	L3	L4	E1.	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	SY1	SY2	SY3	SY4	SY5 _
Man n- Whit ney U	1232 .000	1357 .500	1279 .000	1334 .500	1394 .000	1390 .000	1265 .000	1234 .000	1262 .000	1458 .500	1285 .000	1312 .000	1349 .000	1236 .000	1412 .500	1418 .500
Wilc oxon W	3377 .000	3502 .500	3424 .000	3479 .500	2429 .000	2425 .000	2300 .000	2269 .000	2297 .000	2493 .500	2320 .000	2347 .000	2384 .000	2271 .000	2447 .500	3563 .500
Z	- 1.46 2	-.664  1.19 6	-  1.19 6	-.854  1.19 6	-.443  1.19 6	-.463  1.19 6	- 1.25 6	- 1.48 4	- 1.28 1	-.026  1.13 3	- 1.13 3	-.965  1.46 1	-.725  1.46 1	- 1.46 1	-.321  1.46 1	-.284  1.46 1
Asy mp. Sig. (2- taile d)	.144	.507	.232	.393	.658	.644	.209	.138	.200	.980	.257	.335	.468	.144	.748	.776

a. Grouping Variable: Group

Source: Primary data

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**APPENDIX 3:**  
**TURNITIN REPORT**

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UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Leadership of State-Owned Enterprises in a Volatile  
Environment: A Case Study of Eskom

By  
Shamola Pramjeeth  
963877824

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate School of Business and Leadership  
College of Law and Management Studies

Supervisor: Dr E Mutambano  
Co-Supervisor: Prof R Pillay

2019

## Leadership of State-Owned Enterprises in a Volatile Environment: A Case Study of Eskom

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**APPENDIX 4:**  
**INFORMED CONSENT LETTER – RESEARCHER**

---



**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**  
**GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP**  
**Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)/ Doctor of Business Administration**

**Researcher: Shamola Pramjeeth**  
**Email: [spramjeeth@gmail.com](mailto:spramjeeth@gmail.com)**  
**Mobile: +27 828982140**

**Supervisor: Prof Kribben Pillay**  
**Email: [pillaykri@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:pillaykri@ukzn.ac.za)**  
**Telephone: +27 31 260 8300/1408**

**Research Office: [RIGEthicsHelp@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:RIGEthicsHelp@ukzn.ac.za)**  
**Telephone: +27 31 260 7031**

Dear Respondent

I, Shamola Pramjeeth, am a **Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)**, at the Graduate School of Business and Leadership, of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Invite you to participate in a research project entitled: **“Leadership of State-Owned Enterprises in a Volatile Environment: A Case Study of ESKOM”**. The prime objective of the research is to produce a leadership framework that supports the sustainability of Eskom in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) environment. Through your participation, I hope

- To assess the perceived impact of leaderships behaviour in achieving Eskom’s goals.
- To determine if the leadership qualities perceived to be important by the leaders at Eskom align with the leadership qualities required for a VUCA environment.
- To determine if the leaders at Eskom possess the required leadership traits to succeed in a VUCA environment.
- To ascertain to what extent had the leaders at Eksom changed their leadership approach during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- To develop a feasible leadership framework that supports the sustainability of Eskom in a volatile environment.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time with no negative consequence. There will be no monetary gain from participating in this research questionnaire. Confidentiality and anonymity of records identifying you as a participant will be maintained by the Graduate School of Business and Leadership, UKZN.

If you have any questions or concerns about participating in the survey questionnaire or about participating in this study, you may contact my supervisor or me at the numbers listed above. The questionnaire should take about 20 – 30 minutes at the most to complete. I hope you will find the above study topic and its intended objectives worthy or valuable to spend time on and make time to participate.

Sincerely Yours

Researcher’s signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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**APPENDIX 5:**  
**INFORMED CONSENT – PARTICIPANT**

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**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP**

**DBA/PhD Research Project  
Leadership of State-Owned Enterprises in a Volatile Environment:  
A Case Study of Eskom Holdings SOC Ltd**

**Researcher: Shamola Pramjeeth  
Email: [spramjeeth@gmail.com](mailto:spramjeeth@gmail.com)  
Mobile: +27 828982140**

**Supervisor: Prof Kribben Pillay  
Email: [pillaykri@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:pillaykri@ukzn.ac.za)  
Telephone: +27 31 260 8300/1408**

**Research Office: [RIGEthicsHelp@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:RIGEthicsHelp@ukzn.ac.za)  
Telephone: +27 31 260 7031**

## **CONSENT**

I hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participate in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I understand that my responses to the instrument will be used solely for the purposes of the study.

---

ONLINE ACCEPTANCE OF PARTICIPANT

---

DATE

---

**APPENDIX 6:**  
**AN INTRODUCTORY LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS**

---



Graduate School of Business and Leadership

Researcher: Shamola pramjeeth

Email: [spramjeeth@gmail.com](mailto:spramjeeth@gmail.com)

Mobile: +27 828982140

**Dear Respondent**

I am carrying out an academic research entitled **Leadership of State-Owned Enterprises in a Volatile Environment: A Case Study of Eskom Holdings SOC Ltd**

in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Doctor of Philosophy Degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) in Durban, South Africa. The study also seeks to examine the leadership behaviour and qualities to be considered key to achieving Eskom's mandate in a volatile, complex, uncertain and ambiguous environment.

Could you kindly provide information by completing this questionnaire to the best of your knowledge? Your involvement is completely voluntary, and you have a right to ask for more information, raise any issues or concerns. No identifiable individual responses collected in this questionnaire will be disclosed in this study. Your responses will be treated as confidential and will not be used for purposes other than those intended for this research. This questionnaire should take approximately fifteen (15) minutes to complete.

For any further information, do not hesitate to contact the researcher on the above contact details and/or my supervisor Prof Kriben Pillay on the following email address: [Pillaykri@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Pillaykri@ukzn.ac.za)

Thank you in anticipation

**Shamola Pramjeeth**

**Student Number 961077824**



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**APPENDIX 7:**

**SENIOR EXECUTIVE QUESTIONNAIRE**

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## SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Please answer the questions below by placing a tick (✓) in the box that is appropriate.

A1. What is your gender?

Male	Female

A2. What is your age group?

18-29 years	30 -39 years	40-49 years	50-59 years	60+ years

A3. What is your highest qualification?

Less than Matric	Matric	Certificate /Diploma	Bachelor's Degree	Honours	Masters	PhD

A4. What is your designation at Eskom? (Select **ONE** option only)

Executive Member / Director Level	Senior Level Manager	Mid to Lower Level Manager

**SECTION B: Perceived key leadership qualities for leaders at Eskom.**

**Rate how important (from 1 = not at all important to 5 = extremely important) the following leadership qualities are for you to have as a leader at Eskom in a volatile environment**

<b>Leadership Qualities</b>	<b>Not at all important 1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Extremely important 5</b>
1 Being able to set a clear vision and direction					
2 Being able to embrace diversity and change					
3 Being resourceful and information seeking					
4 Being direct while at the same time composed					
5 Being able to build and mend relationships					
6 Honesty, integrity and trustworthiness					
7 Being able to act in a decisive and timely manner					
8 Being flexible, adaptable and versatile					
9 Being able to communicate effectively and in a transparent manner					
10 Reflection and Self-awareness (of personal strengths and weaknesses)					
11 Working collaboratively and interactively with others to solve problems and plan ahead					
12 Being respectful, compassionate and sensitive					
13 Being open to and accepting differing view-points					
14 Being able to empower, equip and enable others					
15 Being innovative, taking risks and having novel ideas					
16 Being positive, upbeat, and optimistic					
17 Being responsible, accountable and goal orientated					
18 Being able to think clearly under pressure and communicate effectively					
19 Being able to think conceptually, holistically and strategically					
20 Being agile (responsive), alert and proactive to changes					

## SECTION C: Leadership behaviour traits

Indicate how well you feel you are able to do the following tasks in Your role at Eskom

	Tasks	Not at all well	Not really that well	Quite well	Well	Extremely well
ST1	1 See the big picture and think holistically about how different aspects affect one another					
ST2	2 Anticipate the future based on what is known and considers the possibilities and probabilities of each long term outcome.					
ST3	3 Link the past to the present, as well as to the future, as a single continuum of dynamic interactions					
ST4	4 Step back and think-through plans and decisions, connecting future outcomes to today's planned actions, and develop a credible path to achieve a desired state					
C1	5 Take into account a number of elements when thinking through problems, to help create well-informed strategies and decisions					
C2	6 Navigate what is known, while accounting for what might not be known					
C3	7 Understand the networked nature of complexity in Eskom and how its various elements are interdependent					
A1	8 Adeptly sense environments and be aware of changes which may influence my actions and strategies					
A2	9 React effectively and efficiently to stay ahead of environmental changes					
A3	10 Reflect on my actions and decision and change things so that they work better					
A4	11 Consider the impact a change will have on people, processes, systems and goals and implement plans to support the change					
A5	12 Make sound decisions quickly under pressure or when facing tight deadlines					
A6	13 Easily and speedily identify and provide innovative efficient solutions to problems and inefficiencies in processes and systems					
I1	14 Think creatively and out of the box to catalyse new thoughts which result in novel ideas and concepts					
I2	15 Promote learning and the development of break-through ideas and concepts in my Team					
I3	16 Routinely develop unique new solutions using input from various individuals					
I4	17 Encourage disruptive innovations that will establish completely new standards for improved efficiency and service delivery					
L1	18 Encourage my team to unlearn behaviours and strategies that hinder growth and efficiency across and within our systems and networks					

L2	19 Encourage experiential learning, where knowledge is applied in context, i.e. hands-on					
L3	20 Encourage my team to set their own learning and development requirements					
L4	21 Encourage continuous learning through deep engagement and involvement in a collaborative setting					
E1	22 Create an environment that enables the unrestrained emergence of new ideas, concepts and perspectives.					
E2	23 Set the tone, so that individuals feel encouraged and feel a sense of openness and trust so that meaningful dialogue and exchange can take place					
E3	24 Show a genuine interest in the generation of productive ideas and solutions and acknowledge the idea regardless of their source					
E4	25 Set the stage, create the right environment, ask the right questions, and then I 'let go'					
E5	26 Enable my team to rethink about old problems and strategies in new ways					
E6	27 Apply different lenses and backgrounds to solving a problem					
SY1	28 Encourage and foster internal and external interactions across networks/ departments					
SY2	29 Think in terms of open and collaborative systems					
SY3	30 Think and adapt in terms of interconnected and interdependent systems and departments					
SY4	31 Consider a wide range of possibilities and their inherent probabilities and their potential implications					
SY5	32 Allow others to brainstorm and propose solutions to problems in complex situations					

#### **SECTION D: Leadership qualities during a crisis**

5. Did YOUR leadership style/approach change during the COVID-19 virus pandemic? If Yes, please indicate how. Provide as much detail as possible.
6. What has been the key take-away points from the COVID-19 virus pandemic for YOU as a leader?

**Thank you for your time**

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**APPENDIX 8:**  
**EMPLOYEE QUESTIONNAIRE**

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## SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Please answer the questions below by placing a tick (✓) in the box that is appropriate.

A1. State your Job Title.

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## SECTION B: Key leadership qualities of leaders at Eskom

Indicate agreement whether your manager/supervisor/team leader possesses the following leadership qualities:

Leadership Qualities	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1 The ability to set a clear vision and direction					
2 The ability to embrace diversity and change					
3 Resourcefulness and actively seeks information					
4 Being direct while at the same time composed					
5 The ability to build and mend relationships					
6 Honesty, trustworthiness and integrity					
7 The ability to act in a decisive and timely manner					
8 The ability to be flexible, adaptable and versatile					
9 Being able to communicate effectively and in a transparent manner					
10 Reflection and Self-awareness (of personal strengths and weaknesses)					
11 Working collaboratively and interactively with others to solve problems and plan ahead					
12 Being respectful, compassionate and sensitive					
13 Being open to and accepting differing viewpoints					
14 The ability to empower, equip and enable others					
15 Being innovative, taking risks and having novel ideas					
16 The ability to be positive, upbeat, and optimistic					
17 Being responsible, accountable and goal orientated					
18 The ability to think clearly under pressure and communicate effectively					
19 Being able to think conceptually, holistically and strategically					
20 Being agile (responsive), alert and proactive to changes					

**SECTION C: Leadership behaviour adopted by the various levels of leadership within Eskom**

**Indicate your agreement with the following statements regarding your immediate manager/supervisor/team leader:**

	<b>My immediate manager/supervisor/team leader...</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
ST1	1 Is able to see the big picture and think holistically about how different aspects affect one another					
ST2	2 Is able to anticipate the future based on what is known and considers the possibilities and probabilities of each long-term outcome					
ST3	3 Is able to link the past to the present, as well as to the future, as a single continuum of dynamic interactions					
ST4	4 Is able to step back and think-through plans and decisions, connecting future outcomes to today's planned actions					
ST5	5 Takes into account a number of elements when thinking through problems, issues or situations, to help create well-informed strategies, plans and decisions					
ST6	6 Is able to navigate what is known, while accounting for what might not be known					
C1	7 Knows the networked nature of complexity in Eskom and how its various elements are interdependent					
C2	8 Is able to adeptly sense environments and be aware of changes which may influence his actions and strategies					
C3	9 Is able to react effectively and efficiently to stay ahead of environmental changes					
A1	10 Is able to reflect on his actions and decision and change things so that they work better					
A2	11 Considers the impact a change will have on people, processes, systems and goals and implements plans to support the change					
A3	12 Makes sound decisions quickly under pressure or when facing tight deadlines					
A4	13 Is able to easily and speedily identify and provide innovative efficient solutions to problems and inefficiencies in processes and systems					
A5	14 Is able to think creatively to catalyse new thoughts which result in novel ideas and concepts					
A6	15 Promotes learning and the development of break-through ideas and concepts					
A7	16 Routinely develops unique new solutions using input from various individuals					
A8	17 Encourages disruptive innovations that will establish completely new standards for improved efficiency and service delivery					
A9	18 Encourages individuals to unlearn behaviours and strategies that hinder growth and efficiency across and within our systems and networks					



I1	19 Encourages experiential learning, where knowledge is applied in context, i.e. hands-on					
I2	20 Encourages individuals to set their own learning and development requirements					
I3	21 Encourages continuous learning through deep engagement and involvement in a collaborative setting					
I4	22 Creates an environment that enables the unrestrained emergence of new ideas, concepts and perspectives.					
L1	23 Sets the tone, so that I feel encouraged and feel a sense of openness and trust so that meaningful dialogue and exchange can take place					
L2	24 Shows a genuine interest in the generation of productive ideas and solutions and acknowledges the idea regardless of their source					
L3	25 Sets the stage, creates the right environment, asks the right questions, and then 'lets go'					
L4	26 Enables me to rethink old problems and strategies in new ways					
E1	27 Apply different lenses and backgrounds to solving a problem					
E2	28 Encourages and fosters internal and external interactions across networks/ departments to create dynamic learning and innovative social environments					
E3	29 Thinks in terms of open and collaborative systems					
E4	30 Is able to think and adapt in terms of interconnected and interdependent systems and departments					
E5	31 Considers a wide range of possibilities and their inherent probabilities and their potential implications					
E6	32 Allow others to brainstorm and propose solutions to problems in complex situations					

## SECTION D

1. Recommend areas You feel your manager can improve on.

**Thank you for your time**

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**APPENDIX 9:**  
**EXECUTIVE MEMEBER QUESTIONNAIRE**

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## SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Please answer the questions below by placing a tick (✓) in the box that is appropriate.

A1. What is your gender?

Male	Female

A2. What is your age group?

18-29 years	30-39 years	40-49 years	50-59 years	60+ years

A3. What is your highest qualification?

Less than Matric	Matric	Certificate /Diploma	Bachelor's Degree	Honours	Masters	PhD

A4. How many years have you been in this role?

Less 5 years	5 - <10 years	10 - <15 years	15 - < 20 years	20+ years

## SECTION B: LEADERSHIP QUESTIONS

**Please provide as much detail as possible in your responses.**

B. 1 What leadership qualities do you believe are important for YOU as a leader of Eskom to have?

B.2. How would you describe YOUR leadership style/behaviour?

B. 3. Do you feel YOUR current leadership approach has helped to address Eskom's Mandate thus far? Explain in which AREAS and HOW.

B.4 What do YOU believe are the key challenges impacting your leadership role?

B5. Did YOUR leadership behaviour change during the Covid-19 virus pandemic? If yes, please explain how?

B.6. Describe the some of the steps YOU had taken to "steer the ship" forward during this uncertain time?

B.7. What were some of the POSITIVE and NEGATIVE leadership behaviour traits/qualities you had observed among YOUR Team members during this virus pandemic?

B.8. What would you say were the greatest take-away(s) for YOU as a leader from this virus pandemic?

B.9. What key leadership traits do YOU believe are important for leadership at Eskom to possess, not only to survive through the crisis but to be able to revive, restore and or redesign the organisation for a new future?

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**APPENDIX 10:**  
**ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER - RESEARCH OFFICE**

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UNIVERSITY OF  
KWAZULU-NATAL  
INYUVESI  
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

23 March 2020

Mrs Shamola Pramjeeth (961077824)  
Grad School Of Bus & Leadership  
Westville Campus

Dear Mrs Pramjeeth,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00001143/2020

Project title: Leadership of State-Owned Enterprises in a Volatile Environment: A Case Study of ESKOM  
Degree: PhD

### Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 11 March 2020 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

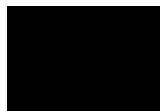
Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 23 March 2021.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

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Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee  
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building  
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000  
Tel: +27 31 260 8360 / 4557 / 3587  
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

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**APPENDIX 11:**  
**ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER –**  
**Department of Public Enterprises and Eskom**

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**MINISTRY  
PUBLIC ENTERPRISES  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

Private Bag X15, Hatfield, 0028 80 Hamilton Street Acadia  
Tel: 012 431 1118/1150 Fax: 012 431 1039 Private Bag X9079, Cape Town, 8000 Fax: 021 465 2381

**Ms. Ayanda Dlodlo**  
Minister of Public Service and Administration  
Private Bag X916  
Pretoria  
0001

Dear Colleague

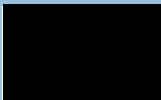
**REQUEST FOR AUDIENCE WITH MS SHAMOLA PRAMJEETH FOR PHD RESEARCH**

Thank you for your letter dated 05 March 2019.

I have nominated Mr James Dlamini, Director Governance Assurance to assist Ms Pramjeeth.

Ms Pramjeeth can contact Mr James Dlamini at tel: 0124311074 or email:  
[James.Dlamini@dpe.gov.za](mailto:James.Dlamini@dpe.gov.za).

Regards,



**PRAVIN GORDHAN, MP**  
**MINISTER OF PUBLIC ENTERPRISES**  
**DATE: 05-04-2019**

Cc: Ms Shamola Pramjeeth ([shamola.pramjeeth@mancosa.co.za](mailto:shamola.pramjeeth@mancosa.co.za))





The Registrar  
University of KwaZulu Natal

Date: 12 June 2020

Enquiries: Allison Seckle

To whom it may concern

**ETHICAL CLEARANCE: PERMISSION AND SECURITY CLEARANCE TO CONDUCT THE  
STUDY FOR DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN LEADERSHIP**

Research topic: Leadership of State-Owned Enterprises in a Volatile Environment: A Case  
Study of Eskom Holdings SOC Ltd

Mrs Shamola Pramjeeth has followed due internal processes in terms of gaining permission for this research. This letter serves as permission and security clearance for the PHD level research and write-up by Mrs Shamola Pramjeeth. The following conditions will apply to the permission rendered:

**1. Intellectual Property Rights**

All rights, title and interest in and to the Intellectual property of the experimental based research, research results and questionnaires developed by Mrs Shamola Pramjeeth shall remain vested with Eskom.

**2. Publication Protocol**

Eskom recognises that under the academic policies of University of KwaZulu Natal, the results of research work must be publishable and agrees that the Researchers engaged in the research shall be permitted to present a symposia, at national or regional professional meetings and to publish in journals, theses or dissertations, or other methods of reporting of their own choice, results of the Research.

The University of KwaZulu Natal may publish or allow the publication of the proprietary data of Eskom, on whatever medium, concerning the research provided that this does not affect the

Human Resources  
General Manager  
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Tel + +27152301443 Fax +27829907768  
Eskom Holdings SOC Ltd Reg No 2002/015627/30

**ETHICS CLEARANCE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT STUDY AND SECURITY CLEARANCE  
FOR DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION**

protection of Intellectual Property Rights. Eskom shall be given 30 (thirty) days prior written notice of any planned publication of the research to take steps necessary to protect its rights.

If, before the end of this period, Eskom so request, a copy of the planned publication shall be provided to Eskom within 30 (thirty) days after receipt of such request. Eskom may require the removal of any or all of its Confidential Information or Intellectual Property from a planned publication in order to protect its proprietary rights and interests and the Researchers will be required to comply with any such requirement prior to publication.

Eskom may object to the planned publication within 30 (thirty) days after receipt thereof. The planned publication shall be suspended until the end of this consultation period, not exceeding twelve (12) months. In the absence of any objection within the above-mentioned period, it is deemed that the Eskom agrees to the publication.


**3. Copyright**

Copyright in proprietary data, including the content of the questionnaire, remains vested with Eskom. The questionnaire should be marked with the copyright notice which is as follows: " © Eskom Holdings SOC Ltd 2018."

Copyright in Academic Works (the thesis, as submitted to the University of KwaZulu Natal library) shall solely vest in University of KwaZulu Natal. The University of KwaZulu Natal shall acknowledge Eskom as the copyright owner of the Intellectual property of the experimental based research, research results, and questionnaires, and if applicable, in other publications.

It must be noted that this general clearance is for a limited period only, which will be for the period (June 2020) to (June 2022).

Yours sincerely

  
**GROUP EXECUTIVE:HUMAN RESOURCES**

Date: 12/06/2020

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