



ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

Adaptive Ethical Leadership in Culturally Complex
Organisations:

Insights from the Researcher's Personal Contingent Leadership Paradigm

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ABSTRACT

In an era of increasing ethical complexities, globalisation, and cultural diversity, ethical leadership has emerged as a defining factor in organisational success, shaping trust, accountability, and sustainable performance. This thesis critically examines the Personal Contingent Leadership Paradigm (PCLP)—a pioneering framework developed by the researcher—to bridge the gaps in conventional leadership models by integrating ethical integrity with cultural adaptability and situational responsiveness. Rooted in the researcher’s extensive leadership experiences across diverse industries, sectors, and multicultural environments, the PCLP not only serves as a reflection of the researcher’s leadership journey but also has the potential to act as a practical guide for senior leaders navigating ethical challenges in complex organisational landscapes.

Utilising a rigorous mixed-methods research design, this study systematically analyses the PCLP’s operational and adaptive capabilities through both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The quantitative analysis evaluates correlations between ethical leadership, cultural intelligence, and organisational outcomes, while the qualitative component—derived from leadership reflections, case studies, and real-world experiences—provides nuanced insights into ethical decision-making in culturally diverse environments. Findings reveal that the PCLP enhances ethical leadership effectiveness by equipping leaders with pragmatic tools for ethical navigation, fostering trust-based leadership cultures, and mitigating ethical dilemmas with contextual precision.

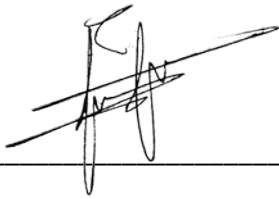
This research advances the discourse on ethical leadership theory and practice, demonstrating that ethical leadership cannot be static but must evolve in response to multicultural dynamics, stakeholder expectations, and organisational complexities. By integrating foundational ethical principles with cultural intelligence and strategic adaptability, the PCLP offers a practical yet theoretically robust paradigm that enables senior leaders to transcend conventional leadership models, embrace cultural plurality, and operationalise ethical integrity as a strategic and sustainable leadership advantage. While deeply personal in its origins, the PCLP holds significant potential for wider applicability, equipping

executive leaders with a flexible and context-sensitive approach to fostering ethical leadership in today's volatile business landscape.

Keywords: Ethical leadership, Personal Contingent Leadership Paradigm (PCLP), cultural intelligence, ethical decision-making, leadership integrity, adaptive leadership, trust-based leadership, global leadership, senior leadership guidance.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I certify that the ideas, experimental work, results, analyses, software and conclusions reported in this thesis are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.



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ETHICAL CONDUCT STATEMENT

The research associated with this critique was conducted in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).


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*No matter how long the story unfolds,
In every chapter, your love beholds,
Because of you, dear mother, I strive,
To become a man, to truly arrive.*

*Yet as I journey and as I stand tall,
I see it's your strength that nurtures it all,
For I am a man, in all that I do,
Only because, my mother, you are you.*

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GLOSSARY

CEO Chief Executive Officer

COO Chief Operating Officer

CQ Cultural Intelligence

EI: stands for Emotional Intelligence, which involves recognising, understanding, and managing emotions, both in oneself and others.

ESG stands for Environmental, Social, and Governance. It refers to a set of criteria used to evaluate a company's performance and operations based on its environmental impact, social responsibility, and corporate governance practices.

FMCG stands for Fast-Moving Consumer Goods. These are products that are sold quickly at relatively low cost and are consumed rapidly by consumers

KPIs Key Performance Indicators

MBO Management by Objectives is a strategic management approach that aims to improve organisational performance by setting clearly defined objectives at all levels of the organisation.

MD Managing Director

MS Microsoft

PCLP: Personal Contingent Leadership Paradigm.

UAE stands for United Arab Emirates

VP Vice President

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INTRODUCTION

In the realm of contemporary leadership theory and practice, the pursuit of ethical and integrity standards is increasingly recognised as fundamental to effective leadership. Brown and Treviño (2006) argue that ethical leadership not only promotes trust and accountability within organisations but also fosters a culture of fairness and integrity, which is critical for organisational sustainability (p. 597). They suggest that ethical leadership serves as a mechanism to build trust, engage employees, and enhance organisational outcomes in an increasingly complex business environment. Similarly, Northouse (2021) highlights that ethical leadership provides a foundation for navigating complex moral dilemmas, enabling leaders to balance organisational goals with societal expectations in an ever-changing global context (p. 360). Together, these perspectives underscore the growing importance of ethical leadership as a cornerstone for addressing challenges posed by globalisation, cultural diversity, and heightened societal scrutiny.

At the forefront of this exploration stands the Researcher, poised to examine the efficacy of their Personal Contingent Leadership Paradigm (PCLP) in enhancing ethical standards and integrity within leadership practice. This study emerges from a deep personal connection to ethical leadership, shaped by diverse leadership experiences across multicultural contexts. Brown and Treviño (2006) note that ethical leadership requires more than personal morality, advocating for systems and practices that institutionalise ethical behaviour within organisations (p. 599). Inspired by these insights and their own leadership journey, the Researcher developed the PCLP to address gaps in adaptability, ethical consistency, and cultural sensitivity that are often observed in existing leadership models.

As organisations navigate the evolving demands of global business, the need for robust ethical frameworks becomes ever more pressing. Northouse (2021) emphasises that leaders today face unprecedented complexity, requiring ethical paradigms that are both flexible and deeply grounded in core principles (p. 365). This research investigates how the PCLP can fulfil this role, providing leaders with operational guidance for immediate decision-making and adaptive strategies to address long-term ethical challenges. A core aspect of this study is the evolution of the PCLP over the course of the DBL process. Initially conceptualised as a flexible framework integrating ethical leadership and cultural intelligence (Diagram 5, p 100), the PCLP underwent iterative refinement based on leadership experiences, academic inquiry, and critical reflection. The final evolved version of the PCLP (Diagram 11, p 257) represents an enhanced, more structured approach incorporating strategic guidance for ethical decision-making. Additionally, Diagram 12, p 258 visually captures the before-

and-after transformation of the PCLP, illustrating how insights from the DBL journey contributed to its theoretical and practical development. These diagrams serve as key references throughout the thesis to demonstrate the progressive adaptation of the PCLP framework.

By integrating theoretical insights with practical applications, this thesis seeks to demonstrate how the PCLP can be a transformative tool, not only enhancing ethical standards but also reinforcing integrity across diverse leadership contexts.

STRUCTURE OF THIS WRITTEN CRITIQUE

This thesis is structured into seven interconnected chapters that trace the development, application, and impact of my Personal Contingent Leadership Paradigm (PCLP). Each chapter contributes to an evolving narrative that positions the PCLP not only as a reflection of my leadership journey over the past decade but as a dynamic framework that has actively enhanced my ethical decision-making and leadership effectiveness in culturally complex and high-stakes environments.

The opening chapter presents a reflective overview of my leadership experiences across various sectors and geographies, particularly in ethically challenging multicultural contexts. It introduces the critical incidents, ethical tensions, and adaptive responses that shaped the formation of my PCLP. The chapter contextualises these experiences to establish the motivations behind this research, ultimately framing the central research questions. By concluding with a summary of this leadership journey—supported by a proposed visual diagram—it offers readers a clear understanding of the experiential foundations that underpin the study.

The second chapter lays the theoretical groundwork by critically engaging with ethical leadership and contingency theories. Drawing upon the work of Brown and Treviño (2006, p. 595), Northouse (2021, pp. 345–350), and other leading scholars, this chapter interrogates the limitations of conventional leadership models in addressing cultural adaptability and moral complexity. Through this synthesis, I clarify why an integrated and context-responsive framework was necessary for my own development as a leader. The analysis not only reinforces the intellectual foundations of my PCLP but also illustrates how theory was instrumental in shaping a model that now serves to guide my ethical leadership in practice.

Chapter three presents the conceptual and practical development of the PCLP, exploring how it has evolved in response to real-world leadership challenges. Central to this chapter is the E.T.H.I.C.A.L. L.E.A.D.E.R. model, a key component of the paradigm that translates abstract principles into actionable strategies. Through iterative refinement and reflective practice, this framework emerged as a flexible yet structured tool that equips me to respond more effectively to ethically ambiguous

situations. Diagram 5, p 100 illustrates the initial conceptualisation of the PCLP before the DBL process, highlighting its foundational components—ethical leadership, cultural intelligence, and adaptability. However, as my leadership experiences and research findings evolved, limitations in this early model became evident, particularly regarding its applicability in high-stakes ethical dilemmas. These insights led to a structured refinement process, culminating in the Final Evolved PCLP (Diagram 11, p 257). This version integrates a clearer ethical decision-making pathway, stakeholder engagement strategies, and a stronger alignment with contemporary leadership challenges. The transformation from Diagram 5 to Diagram 11 underscores the dynamic nature of the PCLP and its evolution from a personal leadership framework to a structured, research-backed model with practical applications. The chapter emphasises the transformative potential of the PCLP as a lived and evolving leadership practice, grounded in theory but continuously shaped by experience.

Methodologically, the fourth chapter outlines the research design used to assess the relevance and impact of my PCLP. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study combines both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a rigorous evaluation. Attention is given to ethical considerations, reliability, and validity, following the principles of Creswell and Creswell (2018, pp. 171–174), thereby ensuring academic robustness while maintaining practical relevance.

The fifth chapter presents quantitative findings derived from survey responses and performance metrics. These data illuminate how the PCLP has positively influenced my own leadership performance—particularly in areas of ethical reasoning, integrity, and adaptability. While not claiming generalisability to wider populations, the statistical evidence demonstrates meaningful personal improvements and provides a preliminary foundation for future research.

Qualitative insights in chapter six further reveal the applicability of my PCLP through the analysis of interviews, reflective narratives, and thematic exploration. These findings show how the paradigm has assisted me in interpreting and responding to diverse ethical scenarios, offering nuanced understanding of its practical strengths and limitations. Although this study does not empirically test its application on others, the emerging themes suggest that future research could examine its broader relevance and adaptability in varied organisational settings.

The final chapter synthesises these findings and offers a critical reflection on how the research journey has shaped and enhanced my leadership practice. Rather than positioning the PCLP as a universally applicable model, this chapter discusses its value in equipping me to face ethical and strategic complexities with greater confidence and clarity. It also considers its potential for further testing and refinement through future research. Ultimately, this thesis establishes the PCLP as a

meaningful personal framework that bridges theory and practice—empowering me to lead ethically in uncertain and multicultural environments.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As outlined in the introduction, this thesis is centred on the proposition that ethical leadership must be dynamic, culturally adaptive, and grounded in a leader’s moral and ethical foundation. The researcher’s leadership journey and the development of the PCLP stem from a commitment to integrity, cultural intelligence, and ethical decision-making, which inform the broader inquiry into how leaders can navigate complex, multicultural environments while maintaining ethical consistency.

This exploration is guided by the overarching research question:

"How does the application and development of the Researcher's PCLP enhance and provide operational and adaptive guidance capabilities to improve ethical standards and maintain ethical integrity in the researcher's leadership practice?"

Sitting beneath this overarching inquiry are specific sub-questions, each designed to examine distinct aspects of the PCLP’s functionality, applicability, and impact. These questions are systematically addressed across different chapters of this thesis, providing a comprehensive analysis of the PCLP’s role in ethical leadership. Table 1 outlines where these research questions are explored within this document.

Chapter Number and Name	Research Questions and Premises being Addressed in Chapter(s)	Page Number(s) the Question is Addressed or Answered
Chapters 1, 3, 5, and 7: Understanding My Ethical Leadership Journey; PCLP Development; Quantitative Analysis; Discussion & Conclusions	How does the application and development of the Researcher's PCLP enhance and provide operational and adaptive guidance capabilities to improve ethical standards and maintain ethical integrity in the researcher's leadership practice?	11-15, 88-95, 144-159, 214-234
Chapter 3: PCLP Development Through the Lens of Ethical Practice	How can the PCLP be used to identify potential ethical dilemmas in leadership situations?	94-95
Chapter 3: PCLP Development Through the Lens of Ethical Practice	What specific tools or frameworks does the PCLP offer for ethical decision-making in the workplace?	88-92

Chapters 1 and 3: Understanding My Ethical Leadership Journey; PCLP Development	How does the PCLP guide leaders in navigating conflicts between organisational goals and ethical principles?	30-36, 88-92
Chapters 2 and 6: Building a Foundation in Ethical Leadership Theory; Qualitative Analysis	How do various cultural dimensions (e.g., power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, uncertainty avoidance) influence leadership styles and expectations within the researcher's chosen context?	67-70, 182-186
Chapter 1: Understanding My Ethical Leadership Journey	To what extent does the researcher's cultural background potentially bias their understanding of effective leadership in a multicultural environment?	40-45
Chapters 3 and 7: PCLP Development; Discussion & Conclusions;	How does the PCLP encourage ongoing reflection and learning about ethical leadership?	88-92, 214-219
Chapter 7: Discussion & Conclusions	How can the PCLP be adapted to account for cultural differences in follower expectations and communication styles?	211-214
Chapters 5 and 7: Quantitative Analysis; Discussion & Conclusions	How can the PCLP help leaders build trust and foster an ethical organisational culture?	144-159, 230-234
Chapters 5 and 6: Quantitative Analysis; Qualitative Analysis	What evidence suggests that the PCLP leads to improved ethical decision-making in practice?	144-159, 182-186
Chapters 2 and 6: Building a Foundation in Ethical Leadership Theory; Qualitative Analysis	How can the PCLP promote cultural understanding and respect within diverse teams?	70-76, 182-186
Chapters 3 and 6: PCLP Development; Qualitative Analysis	What potential ethical dilemmas might arise when applying the PCLP in a cross-cultural context, and how can these be addressed?	88-92, 182-186

Table 1 Research Questions Addressed or Answered by Chapter

This table provides a clear roadmap for where each research question is examined within the thesis, ensuring a structured exploration of the PCLP's role in ethical leadership development, application, and impact. By addressing these operational, adaptive, and ethical integrity dimensions, the study contributes to both leadership theory and practical frameworks that can support senior leaders in making ethically sound decisions within complex organisational settings.

CHAPTER ONE. UNDERSTANDING MY ETHICAL LEADERSHIP JOURNEY

1.1 The Seeds of Ethical Leadership

The researcher's understanding of leadership began at the age of four during a visit to a school in the UAE with his father, a school principal. Observing the distinctions his father made between leadership and followership, the researcher gained an early awareness of leadership roles and responsibilities. His father's response to a curious question— "My responsibilities and role are distinct from theirs"—planted the seeds of understanding about leadership as a unique role requiring accountability and vision. This formative moment marked the beginning of a lifelong journey into leadership, rooted in values of justice, integrity, and responsibility.

This early exposure to leadership in action instilled in me the understanding that leadership is not merely about authority but about responsibility. My father's words stayed with me, shaping my view that ethical leadership is about guiding others with fairness and accountability. Over time, I have come to realise that my leadership must be adaptable yet unwavering in its ethical foundations.

Growing up in a household where both parents were leaders of large educational institutions, the researcher was deeply influenced by their approach to ethical decision-making and principled leadership. His father managed a school with over 90 teachers and more than 2,000 students, while his late mother led another institution of similar size. Their leadership styles reflected values of honesty, fairness, and inclusivity, which shaped the researcher's early understanding of ethical leadership. These experiences align with Ciulla's (1998, p. 27) assertion that leadership ethics often stem from foundational values imparted during formative years.

These foundational experiences reinforced the idea that leadership must be values-driven, regardless of the organisational context. Witnessing my parents navigate challenges with fairness and integrity ingrained in me the principle that ethical leadership is an ongoing process of reflection, adaptation, and principled decision-making.

One defining moment in the researcher's ethical development occurred at the age of thirteen, when he faced a moral dilemma involving a friend. Before making his decision, the researcher sought his mother's guidance. Her words, "A man is as good as his word," highlighted the importance of trust and integrity, aligning with Kouzes and Posner's (2017, p. 50) assertion that credibility is the cornerstone of ethical leadership. This moment cemented my understanding that leadership is not just about making decisions, but about upholding values even when faced with difficult choices. This principle became one of the cornerstones of my leadership paradigm, shaping the researcher Personal Contingent Leadership Paradigm's (PCLP) emphasis on integrity and trust.

As the researcher grew older, his exposure to diverse cultural settings further shaped his understanding of leadership. From navigating hierarchical systems in the Middle East to fostering inclusivity in Australia's egalitarian workplaces, the researcher developed a nuanced appreciation for cultural diversity and its implications for leadership. These experiences taught me that leadership is not static; it must be flexible yet principled. Cultural differences can create ethical complexities, and I recognised the necessity for a leadership model that allows for adaptation while remaining rooted in ethical principles. This realisation directly contributed to the development of the PCLP. This multicultural exposure aligns with Hofstede's (2001, p. 79) emphasis on how cultural dimensions like power distance and individualism influence leadership practices. Such experiences underscored the limitations of traditional leadership models, which often fail to account for the complexities of cultural and ethical variability.

In his current role as an executive leader within a consulting firm, the researcher engages with clients across industries such as supply chain, engineering, and construction. These professional experiences have presented challenges ranging from addressing ethical dilemmas in supplier sustainability to resolving leadership accountability issues across Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. Each client operates within a unique cultural and ethical framework, requiring the researcher to adapt his leadership approach while maintaining a commitment to core ethical principles. Through these

experiences, I realised that existing leadership models often failed to provide a structured yet adaptable approach to ethical dilemmas. The complexity of global business environments highlighted the need for a model that integrates cultural sensitivity with ethical robustness—leading to the birth of the PCLP. For example, navigating decision-making in high power-distance cultures has required balancing respect for hierarchy with the need to foster open communication, a skill the researcher refined through years of practice.

The PCLP emerged from these experiences as a flexible framework designed to address the gaps in existing ethical leadership models. It emphasises adaptability, cultural sensitivity, and ethical robustness, equipping leaders to navigate the complexities of modern organisational landscapes effectively. As I refined my leadership approach over the years, I observed that traditional frameworks were either too rigid or too abstract. I needed a model that was both actionable and adaptable, guiding ethical decision-making across different cultural and organisational contexts. The PCLP became that model, evolving through lived experiences and reflections. Grounded in the researcher's Islamic cultural heritage, which prioritises justice and morality, the PCLP integrates universal ethical principles with practical strategies for real-world application.

In essence, the researcher's leadership journey reflects a commitment to fostering trust, integrity, and inclusivity. By drawing on personal experiences, familial influences, and professional challenges, the researcher seeks to strengthen their own leadership practice within diverse and ethically complex environments, while acknowledging the paradigm's potential future value for others through continued development and empirical evaluation. The detailed theoretical underpinnings of this journey are explored in Chapter 2, which delves into the frameworks and cultural dimensions that inform the PCLP.

1.2 Research Motivations, Significance and Objectives

As a leader operating in diverse and ethically complex organisational environments, I have experienced firsthand the challenges of balancing ethical decision-making with organisational

demands. These challenges are particularly pronounced in contexts characterised by competing stakeholder pressures and high cultural diversity, as highlighted by Treviño et al. (2003, p. 6). My leadership roles have required navigating cross-cultural teams, responding to stakeholder expectations, and maintaining ethical standards in industries that are constantly evolving.

For example, working in supply chain management often necessitated ethical decisions regarding supplier contracts and sustainability. These dilemmas reinforced my belief that ethical leadership must be dynamic. The tension between ethical imperatives and business pressures taught me that adaptability is not a compromise, but a necessity. This recognition led me to structure the PCLP in a way that allows for ethical consistency while remaining flexible to contextual demands. These situations exposed tensions between financial imperatives and ethical considerations, echoing Northouse's (2021, p. 360) assertion that ethical dilemmas often emerge when short-term organisational goals conflict with long-term ethical principles. Similarly, leading multicultural teams underscored the importance of cultural sensitivity and trust, which align with Hofstede's (2001, p. 45) findings on how cultural dimensions shape leadership practices and ethical expectations. Such experiences revealed gaps in existing leadership frameworks, which often fail to address the dynamic interplay between ethics, adaptability, and cultural expectations (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 318).

This dynamic operating environment not only shaped my leadership journey but also inspired the creation of the PCLP. Recognising the limitations of traditional leadership models in addressing these challenges, I sought to develop a flexible yet principled framework that integrates ethical integrity with cultural adaptability. As Brown and Treviño (2006, p. 599) argue, effective ethical leadership requires not only a leader's moral compass but also structured frameworks that embed ethical principles into decision-making processes. The PCLP aims to bridge this gap, providing leaders with practical tools to navigate ethically ambiguous environments while fostering trust and accountability.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to address real-world complexities and enhance organisational outcomes. By exploring the application and refinement of the PCLP, this study seeks to contribute to ethical leadership theory and practice. Specifically, it aims to:

- Examine how the PCLP addresses ethical challenges in culturally diverse environments.
- Assess the adaptability of the PCLP to various leadership contexts and industries.
- Offer practical strategies for integrating ethical considerations into organisational decision-making.

These objectives reflect Bass and Riggio's (2006, p. 30) emphasis on the importance of adaptability and ethical alignment in modern leadership. By addressing these research questions, the study aims to equip leaders with the tools and insights needed to excel in increasingly complex and dynamic organisational landscapes.

1.2.1 Research Motivations

The researcher's motivation to explore ethical leadership stems from recognising its transformative impact on organisational culture and outcomes. Ethical leadership has demonstrated its ability to foster trust, enhance collaboration, and improve overall performance. For instance, Smith (2020, p. 84) highlights how implementing ethical training programs for senior leaders increased employee trust and reduced workplace conflicts by 20% over two years. Similarly, Brown and Treviño (2006, p. 598) found that ethical leadership fosters accountability and reduces ambiguity, leading to fewer internal disputes and higher employee satisfaction. These findings resonate with the researcher's professional experiences, where prioritising transparency and integrity has strengthened team cohesion and improved organisational outcomes.

However, the researcher's journey toward ethical leadership has also been shaped by challenges, particularly in navigating ethical dilemmas within culturally diverse environments. For example, balancing financial imperatives with ethical sourcing in supply chain management has underscored

the complexities of decision-making in high-pressure, multicultural settings. These experiences have highlighted the limitations of existing leadership models, which often fail to account for the dynamic interplay between ethics, adaptability, and cultural expectations (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 318).

Recognising these limitations and driven by a desire for personal growth, the researcher has developed and continues to refine the PCLP. At its core, the PCLP reflects the researcher's current state of leadership, integrating their values, experiences, and insights into a structured framework. This paradigm serves as a tool for the researcher to navigate the complexities of ethical leadership in their professional practice. While its primary purpose is to enhance the researcher's leadership capabilities, the ultimate aspiration is for the PCLP to evolve into a foundational model that other leaders may adopt, providing a practical guide for navigating ethically ambiguous environments.

The PCLP has also informed the researcher's emphasis on recognising and celebrating ethical achievements within organisations. For example, Mayer et al. (2019, p. 144) describe an IT company that improved employee retention by 30% after transitioning to ethical sourcing practices in response to employee advocacy. Similarly, the researcher has observed how acknowledging ethical milestones, such as adopting fair labour practices, fosters a culture of accountability and trust. These experiences reinforce the value of embedding ethical recognition into organisational practices, a principle central to the PCLP's evolving framework.

In addition to addressing immediate challenges, the researcher is motivated by the potential of the PCLP to shape future generations of ethical leaders. Johnson (2017, p. 78) highlights how mentorship and exposure to ethical dilemmas prepare emerging leaders to navigate complex challenges confidently. Within the researcher's own practice, mentoring junior team members using the PCLP has consistently improved decision-making and team dynamics, while fostering a shared commitment to ethical principles.

Ultimately, the researcher views the PCLP as a dynamic leadership paradigm that evolves through ongoing cycles of critical reflection, intentional leadership practice, and, importantly, through the

process of conducting research. It is through engaging with empirical inquiry—gathering data, analysing ethical dilemmas, and reflecting on leadership interventions—that the PCLP continues to develop in sophistication and relevance (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, pp. 185–187). While the PCLP presently functions as a framework tailored to enhance the researcher’s ethical leadership in culturally complex environments, its conceptual clarity and practical adaptability may form the basis for future research exploring its relevance beyond the researcher’s practice, rather than assuming its current adoption by others (Zhu et al., 2017, p. 187). By addressing limitations in existing leadership models and promoting a culture of integrity and responsiveness, the PCLP aspires to contribute to sustainable and ethically grounded leadership practices across diverse organisational contexts.

1.2.2 Research Significance

The researcher’s leadership journey, spanning diverse cultures and regions—including Asia Pacific, the Middle East, Africa, and Europe—has illuminated critical gaps in the universality of ethical leadership frameworks. Although ethical leadership is often presented as a universal ideal, cultural variations frequently challenge its application across diverse organisational contexts. For instance, Leung et al. (2002, p. 289) emphasise that ethical principles, such as fairness and accountability, are interpreted differently depending on cultural norms and societal expectations. These insights align with the researcher’s firsthand experiences of navigating discrepancies in ethical priorities, such as individualism versus collectivism or rule-based versus relationship-based ethics, underscoring the need for a leadership paradigm that is both adaptable to cultural diversity and grounded in universal ethical principles.

The PCLP represents the researcher’s response to these challenges, serving as both an evolving framework and a reflection of their leadership journey. Unlike traditional leadership models that often adopt a one-size-fits-all approach (Weaver et al., 1999, p. 539), the PCLP integrates cultural dimensions with ethical leadership principles to offer leaders a practical and adaptable toolkit. For instance, Hofstede’s (2001, p. 43) cultural dimensions theory illustrates how leaders in high-power-

distance cultures may need to adopt hierarchical communication and decision-making strategies, whereas low-power-distance cultures might necessitate a more egalitarian approach. The PCLP operationalises these insights, providing structured guidance for navigating ethical dilemmas within culturally diverse environments while maintaining core ethical standards.

Beyond its cultural adaptability, the PCLP contributes to the broader discourse on the measurable impact of ethical leadership on organisational performance. Treviño et al. (1999, p. 137) highlight the link between ethical leadership and improved outcomes, including enhanced employee satisfaction, reduced turnover, and stronger organisational trust. Similarly, Wang et al. (2015, p. 775) demonstrate that organisations led by ethical leaders often achieve higher profitability and efficiency due to improved decision-making and strengthened stakeholder relationships. However, many existing frameworks lack actionable strategies to embed ethical principles into everyday practices. The PCLP addresses this gap by equipping leaders with tools to integrate ethical decision-making into daily operations, fostering cultures of accountability, transparency, and trust.

The researcher's focus on operationalising ethical leadership through the PCLP extends to its evaluation within real-world contexts. This research employs both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to assess the PCLP's applicability in enhancing organisational outcomes. Zhu et al. (2017, p. 187) stress that empirical testing is critical for bridging theoretical frameworks and practical application. By examining the PCLP's influence on key performance indicators—such as employee engagement, ethical decision-making, and financial performance—this study aims to validate the framework's relevance and efficacy, while refining it further through insights gained during the research process.

Ultimately, the significance of this research lies in its contribution to bridging theoretical and practical gaps in ethical leadership. The study positions the PCLP as a flexible and actionable framework that reflects the researcher's journey while addressing cultural adaptability and fostering operational excellence. By advancing the PCLP, the researcher aspires to empower leaders to

navigate cultural complexity, improve organisational performance, and build a legacy of ethical integrity. Although initially designed to enhance the researcher's own leadership practice, while the PCLP primarily enhances the researcher's leadership, it may offer a foundation for developing models that support ethical excellence in diverse environments, pending further empirical validation.

1.2.3 Research Objectives

This research is driven by the researcher's commitment to enhancing the PCLP as both a personal leadership framework and a potential guide for other leaders navigating the complexities of modern organisational environments. The primary goal is to deepen the understanding of ethical leadership, addressing gaps in existing theories and exploring opportunities for the PCLP's development and application. Specifically, this study examines the PCLP's relevance and adaptability across culturally diverse and ethically complex organisational contexts, aiming to position it as a practical framework that provides both operational and adaptive guidance for elevating ethical standards and upholding integrity in leadership practices.

A key objective of this research is to evaluate how the PCLP addresses limitations in traditional ethical leadership theories, particularly their lack of cultural adaptability and practical implementation strategies. Leung et al. (2002, p. 289) emphasise the challenges of applying universal ethical principles in multicultural settings, where norms and values often diverge. By testing the PCLP, the research seeks to assess its ability to bridge these gaps, providing leaders with culturally sensitive strategies to navigate ethical dilemmas while maintaining universal ethical standards. Additionally, the research explores how the PCLP supports leaders in embedding ethical decision-making within organisational processes. Brown and Treviño (2006, p. 599) argue that effective ethical leadership frameworks must integrate personal values with systemic practices, and this research evaluates how the PCLP operationalises this integration.

Beyond theoretical contributions, this study aims to refine the PCLP for practical application in real-world scenarios. Zhu et al. (2017, p. 187) highlight the importance of leadership models that directly

influence organisational outcomes, such as employee engagement, ethical behaviour, and operational efficiency. By applying and testing the PCLP in diverse business contexts, the research seeks to generate empirical evidence of its effectiveness in fostering a culture of accountability and trust. These outcomes are critical for enhancing organisational performance and reputation, particularly in culturally complex and ethically demanding environments.

The research also aspires to ensure the sustainability of ethical leadership by shaping future generations of leaders. Johnson (2017, p. 25) emphasises that ethical leadership must transcend current organisational challenges to influence and guide emerging leaders. This study integrates mentorship and training into the PCLP framework, equipping future leaders with refined ethical standards and adaptive principles. By doing so, the research aims to establish a legacy of principled leadership that can respond to the evolving demands of global business.

Research Objectives

1. Deepen the theoretical understanding of ethical leadership by addressing gaps related to cultural adaptability and practical application.
2. Assess the PCLP's effectiveness in real-world business contexts, including its impact on employee behaviour, decision-making processes, and organisational outcomes.
3. Refine the PCLP as a flexible and actionable framework, capable of guiding leaders through culturally diverse and ethically complex environments.
4. Mentor and develop future leaders to embody ethical leadership principles, ensuring the sustainability of these practices over the long term.

By achieving these objectives, the research aims to contribute to the broader discourse on ethical leadership, advancing both theory and practice. The PCLP serves as a reflection of the researcher's leadership journey, providing a foundation for navigating ethical complexity with integrity, adaptability, and cultural sensitivity. While the PCLP primarily enhances the researcher's practice, its ultimate

aspiration is to inform the researcher's own practice and, in time, offer a model that future research could adapt and test for broader applicability in fostering sustainable and principled leadership.

1.3 Ethical Challenges and Growth

1.3.1 Organisational Dynamics & Challenges

In the vibrant and cosmopolitan environment of Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE), consulting firms play a pivotal role in facilitating global business ventures. This analysis focuses on the unique organisational challenges faced by a Dubai-based consulting firm, where the researcher leads a diverse team of over fifty professionals. In this capacity, the researcher provides strategic consulting solutions across the procurement and value chain, tailoring approaches to meet the complex needs of international clients. These professional experiences have highlighted the critical role of cultural adaptability and ethical decision-making in fostering collaboration, operational efficiency, and sustainable business practices.

Operating within such a culturally diverse context introduces unique ethical challenges that necessitate cultural sensitivity, effective communication, and adaptability. Hofstede (1980, p. 45) emphasises that cultural dimensions, such as power distance and individualism versus collectivism, significantly influence workplace dynamics and behaviours. For instance, high-power-distance cultures may prioritise hierarchical authority, while low-power-distance cultures may emphasise egalitarian decision-making. Leaders who fail to navigate these differences risk misunderstandings, conflicts, and diminished productivity, underscoring the importance of cultural competence in leadership.

Ethical dilemmas frequently arise from discrepancies in ethical standards across cultures, presenting challenges in reconciling divergent perspectives while adhering to legal requirements. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997, p. 23) argue that resolving conflicting cultural values demands a flexible and adaptive leadership approach. For example, practices deemed acceptable in one culture may

conflict with the ethical expectations of another, requiring leaders to mediate and establish equitable solutions that uphold both cultural sensitivities and organisational integrity.

Effective communication is equally vital in navigating multicultural environments. However, linguistic and cultural differences can often impede understanding. Hall (1976, p. 89) distinguishes between high-context and low-context communication styles, which vary across cultures and influence how messages are conveyed and interpreted. Similarly, Gudykunst and Kim (2003, p. 120) highlight the importance of culturally sensitive communication strategies to bridge differences, ensuring mutual understanding and fostering trust among stakeholders.

Additionally, reconciling local legal frameworks with client cultural norms poses further challenges. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961, p. 47) suggest that legal systems often reflect the dominant cultural values of a society, which may conflict with the expectations of international clients. Balancing adherence to local laws with respect for cultural diversity requires ethical leaders to navigate these complexities while maintaining compliance and trust.

Through these experiences, the researcher recognised the critical importance of upholding ethical standards and integrity in fostering operational efficiency, customer satisfaction, and sustainable business practices. These insights inspired the development of the PCLP, a leadership framework grounded in ethical principles, cultural adaptability, and situational responsiveness.

The PCLP is informed by foundational leadership theories that emphasise trust, accountability, and adaptability. For instance, Brown and Treviño (2006, p. 597) underscore the role of ethical leadership in fostering trust and accountability, while Hofstede (2001, p. 43) highlights the influence of cultural norms on leadership practices. Additionally, Fiedler's (1967, p. 15) contingency leadership theory advocates for adapting leadership styles to situational demands, an approach that aligns closely with the PCLP's emphasis on flexibility.

By synthesising these theoretical insights, the PCLP provides leaders with tools to navigate ethical dilemmas while addressing the demands of diverse organisational contexts. Its focus on flexibility, cultural adaptability, and ethical decision-making positions it as a transformative framework for enhancing ethical standards and reinforcing integrity in leadership practice environments (Northouse, 2021, p. 360; Yukl, 2013, p. 299). The PCLP aims to address gaps in existing leadership models by serving as a practical and actionable guide for leaders operating in ethically and culturally complex environments, reflecting the researcher's journey and commitment to advancing ethical leadership.

1.3.1.1 Organisational Context

Situated in Dubai, UAE—a global hub renowned for its cultural diversity and economic vibrancy—the researcher's consulting firm operates at the intersection of international collaboration and leadership. Dubai's unique position as a nexus between East and West attracts a highly multicultural workforce, mirroring the city's cosmopolitan identity. This internal diversity creates a dynamic workplace environment where professionals from varied cultural backgrounds bring their unique perspectives and expertise to address complex organisational challenges.

Externally, the firm collaborates with a diverse clientele across industries such as construction, engineering, and fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG). Clients hail from Europe, Asia, and Africa, each with distinct cultural values, norms, and ethical expectations. This interconnected and multicultural ecosystem necessitates a leadership approach that is both adaptable and grounded in ethical principles. Leaders must navigate cultural nuances while fostering trust, collaboration, and alignment with ethical standards.

In this context, the researcher's role is both strategic and advisory, guiding clients and colleagues in addressing ethical dilemmas and implementing culturally sensitive leadership practices. These responsibilities have underscored the limitations of traditional leadership models, which often fail to account for the intricate relationship between ethical decision-making and cultural adaptability. For

example, Hofstede's (2001, p. 43) cultural dimensions theory illustrates how leaders operating in high-power-distance cultures may need to adopt different communication styles and decision-making approaches compared to those in low-power-distance contexts. These insights have informed the development and refinement of the PCLP, equipping the researcher with a framework to address real-world leadership challenges.

The PCLP is firmly grounded in this organisational context, shaped by the researcher's firsthand experiences navigating the complexities of multicultural and ethically diverse environments. By bridging theoretical and practical gaps, the PCLP offers leaders actionable tools to address cultural diversity, ethical dilemmas, and organisational goals simultaneously. For instance, the framework integrates ethical leadership principles (Brown & Treviño, 2006, p. 597) with cultural adaptability and contingency leadership strategies (Fiedler, 1967, p. 15), enabling leaders to tailor their approach to the unique demands of each situation.

Through this rich organisational setting, the researcher aims to contribute a framework that not only advances ethical leadership theory but also serves as a practical guide for leaders operating in global business landscapes. This commitment to aligning theory with practice reflects the firm's broader mission of fostering sustainable and ethically grounded leadership practices that support organisational objectives while promoting cultural understanding and integrity.

1.3.1.2 Key Challenges and Dynamics

- **Cultural Sensitivity**

Managing cultural diversity within the firm's workforce and client base is a core challenge that necessitates heightened cultural sensitivity and awareness. Cultural differences in communication styles, work practices, and social norms significantly shape workplace interactions. Hofstede (1980, p. 45) underscores that dimensions such as individualism versus collectivism and power distance influence expectations around hierarchy, teamwork, and decision-making. For example, collectivist

cultures often prioritise group harmony and indirect communication, whereas individualist cultures encourage open expression and assertiveness. Without effective navigation of these cultural differences, leaders risk fostering misunderstandings and conflicts, which can undermine collaboration and productivity.

The PCLP directly addresses these complexities by integrating cultural adaptability as a foundational element of ethical leadership. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997, p. 23) argue that managing cultural diversity requires leaders to embrace and leverage diverse perspectives to foster inclusive environments. By employing the PCLP, leaders are equipped to adapt their leadership styles and strategies to align with varying cultural contexts, mitigating potential conflicts and enhancing collaboration within multicultural teams.

- **Ethical Dilemmas**

Ethical dilemmas frequently arise from variations in ethical standards across cultures, posing significant challenges for decision-making. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997, p. 23) highlight that some cultures prioritise individual autonomy, while others emphasise collective well-being. For instance, in individualistic cultures, decisions often focus on protecting personal accountability and rights, whereas collectivist cultures may prioritise group harmony and shared benefits. Balancing these divergent ethical perspectives requires leaders to navigate complex tensions while upholding ethical integrity.

The PCLP's flexible framework enables leaders to reconcile these differences by integrating universal ethical principles with culturally sensitive practices. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961, p. 47) note that ethical frameworks often reflect the dominant cultural values of a society, creating friction when international clients operate within differing paradigms. Through the PCLP, leaders are guided to develop culturally sensitive approaches that maintain trust and credibility while adhering to legal and organisational standards.

- **Communication Barriers**

Effective communication is vital for building trust and fostering productive relationships in multicultural environments. Hall (1976, p. 89) emphasises that cultural differences in communication styles—such as high-context versus low-context communication—significantly affect how messages are conveyed and interpreted. In high-context cultures, communication relies heavily on implicit cues and shared understanding, while low-context cultures favour explicit, direct communication. Misalignments between these styles often result in misunderstandings that hinder collaboration and erode trust.

The PCLP equips leaders with strategies to overcome these barriers by promoting culturally sensitive communication. Gudykunst and Kim (2003, p. 125) advocate for active listening, adaptability, and awareness of non-verbal cues as essential components of effective intercultural communication. For example, leaders can tailor their approach to bridge linguistic and cultural gaps, fostering mutual understanding and minimising misinterpretations. By embedding these principles into the PCLP, leaders can enhance clarity and collaboration in diverse organisational settings.

- **Legal and Cultural Compliance**

Navigating the intersection of legal regulations and cultural norms presents another challenge in multicultural environments. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961, p. 47) argue that legal frameworks often reflect dominant cultural values, which may conflict with the expectations of international clients. For instance, practices that are legally permissible in one jurisdiction may be deemed unethical within the cultural context of another. These conflicts can lead to strained relationships and reputational risks if not managed effectively.

The PCLP offers a pathway to balance legal compliance with cultural sensitivity, providing leaders with tools to navigate these tensions ethically. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997, p. 23) emphasise that understanding cultural dimensions is key to reconciling legal practices with client

expectations. For example, leaders may need to align hierarchical decision-making structures with participative approaches valued by certain clients. By adopting the PCLP, organisations can uphold ethical standards while respecting cultural values, reinforcing their credibility and reputation in global business environments.

- **The PCLP as a Strategic Tool**

The challenges outlined above highlight the complexities of operating in diverse, ethically complex environments. Through its emphasis on cultural adaptability, ethical integrity, and situational responsiveness, the PCLP equips leaders as it equips the researcher to address these challenges effectively. By embedding the PCLP into organisational practices, leaders can foster trust, accountability, and collaboration, ultimately driving sustainable business success.

1.3.1.3 Strategies for Ethical Navigation

To address the challenges of operating in a multicultural and ethically complex environment, the firm employs a multifaceted approach that prioritises cultural competence, ethical leadership, and effective communication (Deardorff, 2006, p. 245). Embracing diversity and fostering an inclusive organisational culture are foundational to navigating ethical dilemmas with professionalism and integrity. Research supports this approach, with Cox and Blake (1991, p. 50) emphasising that organisations prioritising inclusivity and diversity often experience enhanced problem-solving and decision-making capabilities—critical elements for resolving ethical conflicts. Additionally, the firm's emphasis on open dialogue and transparency aligns with Dubrin's (2010, p. 123) argument that effective communication fosters mutual understanding among stakeholders and facilitates the resolution of ethical disputes.

This approach has significantly influenced the development and ongoing refinement of the PCLP, which serves as the researcher's personal framework for ethical leadership. Cultural competence, a central tenet of the firm's strategy, has underscored the necessity of understanding cultural

dimensions and their influence on ethical decision-making. Hofstede's (2001, p. 43) cultural dimensions theory illustrates the importance of adapting leadership styles to align with cultural expectations, such as varying approaches to hierarchy, communication, and decision-making. These insights have informed the researcher's ability to lead diverse teams effectively, addressing ethical challenges that arise from cultural differences.

The firm's commitment to ethical leadership has also reinforced the importance of maintaining high ethical standards in all professional dealings, further shaping the researcher's leadership style. This aligns with Brown and Treviño's (2006, p. 597) model of ethical leadership, which emphasises trust, integrity, and role modelling as critical components of ethical leadership practices. By integrating these principles, the researcher's PCLP embodies an integrity-driven leadership style that is adaptable to diverse and ethically complex environments.

Effective communication, another cornerstone of the firm's strategy, has deeply influenced the PCLP by highlighting the role of transparency and open dialogue in ethical decision-making. Transparent communication is essential for resolving ethical conflicts, fostering alignment among team members and stakeholders, and ensuring that decisions reflect shared values and goals. Gudykunst and Kim (2003, p. 125) suggest that culturally sensitive communication strategies—such as active listening and adapting to non-verbal cues—enhance mutual understanding in diverse teams. Incorporating these strategies into the PCLP ensures that it remains both responsive and adaptable in navigating the complexities of multicultural organisational contexts.

The researcher's professional experiences have consistently demonstrated the critical role of ethical standards and integrity in enhancing operational efficiency, improving customer satisfaction, and building a foundation for sustainable business practices (Zhu et al., 2017, p. 189). The PCLP, with its emphasis on flexibility, cultural adaptability, and ethical decision-making, stands as a transformative framework for improving ethical standards and maintaining integrity in leadership practice (Weaver et al., 1999, p. 540).

As the researcher continues to develop and refine the PCLP, they incorporate insights gained from both personal experiences and the firm's strategic approaches. This iterative process bridges the gap between theoretical leadership models and practical application, positioning the PCLP as an actionable and evolving framework for navigating ethical leadership in diverse and dynamic organisational environments.

1.3.2 Societal Expectations and Cultural Influences

Dubai, as a global hub of international business, represents a rich cultural mosaic where societal expectations and cultural dynamics profoundly shape ethical leadership practices. This diverse and complex environment requires consulting firms to navigate intricate intersections of societal norms, cultural diversity, and leadership principles to foster trust, uphold integrity, and maintain effective operations. Recognising these challenges, the researcher developed the PCLP as a flexible and culturally adaptive framework to address the multifaceted demands of ethical leadership in such dynamic contexts.

While the PCLP offers significant transformative potential in promoting ethical leadership across multicultural settings, its application is not without challenges. A notable limitation is the risk of oversimplifying cultural norms when relying on broad theoretical frameworks like Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Hofstede (2001, p. 50) explicitly cautions that cultural dimensions serve as generalisations that may fail to capture the nuanced realities of individual cultures or subcultures. For example, categorising societies as "individualist" or "collectivist" may overlook regional variations or individual differences within these broad classifications. Leaders who depend heavily on these frameworks risk adopting culturally insensitive strategies that do not resonate with their teams or align with organisational needs.

Another key challenge is the reconciliation of universal ethical principles with local customs. Ethical frameworks such as the PCLP advocate for consistency and integrity, yet these ideals may conflict with local practices and societal norms. Fiedler (1967, p. 15) underscores that effective leadership

often requires alignment with contextual factors, which may necessitate strategic compromises on universal ethical standards. For instance, in high power-distance cultures, hierarchical decision-making is viewed as ethical and appropriate, while attempts to introduce egalitarian approaches may disrupt established social harmony or be perceived as a challenge to cultural traditions.

Similarly, the PCLP's emphasis on transparency and open dialogue may sometimes clash with cultural norms that prioritise indirect communication or discretion. Deardorff (2006, p. 249) argues that in certain cultures, openly addressing ethical conflicts may be interpreted as confrontational, undermining trust and cooperative relationships. Leaders in such environments must carefully balance the PCLP's principles of transparency with the cultural sensitivities of their teams to foster understanding without creating discomfort or resistance.

Furthermore, applying external ethical frameworks such as the PCLP to organisations without fully considering their cultural and operational specificities presents significant challenges. Weaver et al. (1999, p. 542) highlight that top-down ethical programs often fail when perceived as externally imposed or misaligned with local values. To ensure the PCLP's successful implementation, it must be customised to reflect the unique dynamics of each organisation while maintaining its foundational principles of ethical leadership and adaptability.

These counterarguments reveal the inherent complexities of fostering ethical leadership within multicultural contexts such as Dubai. They underscore the need for the PCLP to remain an evolving framework, continually refined through empirical insights and contextual applications. By addressing these challenges, the PCLP can uphold its relevance and effectiveness, equipping leaders with the tools to navigate societal and cultural influences while fostering ethical integrity and trust.

1.3.2.1 Societal Expectations and Ethical Leadership

Societal expectations profoundly influence ethical leadership practices within organisations, setting the tone for acceptable conduct and decision-making. In the researcher's consulting firm, these

expectations, particularly in the competitive and cosmopolitan market of Dubai, serve as benchmarks for integrity, transparency, and accountability. Treviño and Brown (2005, p. 130) emphasise that societal norms shape leaders' decisions and behaviours by aligning them with community standards. These norms function as a guiding framework, encouraging leaders to adopt practices that foster trust and credibility.

Within this context, leaders are expected to prioritise transparency in decision-making, maintain accountability in client interactions, and uphold exemplary corporate governance standards. These actions not only align with the societal ethos of Dubai but also reinforce the firm's reputation and credibility in the market. Leaders who integrate societal expectations into their practices enhance stakeholder trust and build stronger client relationships, ultimately contributing to long-term organisational success.

1.3.2.2 Cultural Factors and Leadership Dynamics

Cultural factors are pivotal in shaping leadership dynamics within the researcher's consulting firm, given its diverse workforce and clientele. Dubai's multicultural environment, a melting pot of individuals from Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, necessitates culturally sensitive leadership approaches that embrace this diversity. Hofstede's (2001, p. 50) cultural dimensions theory offers a valuable lens for understanding these dynamics. For instance, high power distance prevalent in many Middle Eastern cultures fosters leadership styles marked by clear hierarchies and authoritative decision-making. Leaders operating in such settings often maintain explicit authority and deference, which aligns with cultural norms and expectations.

Conversely, the individualistic tendencies common in Western cultures promote leadership approaches centred on autonomy and empowerment. Such practices align with values of personal accountability and self-direction, encouraging leaders to prioritise decentralised decision-making and individual contributions. These contrasting cultural expectations highlight the need for leaders to adapt their styles to suit the diverse cultural frameworks within the firm.

Cultural factors extend beyond leadership styles to significantly influence ethical frameworks and decision-making processes. Eisenbeiss et al. (2008, p. 171) assert that cultural values, including collectivism, egalitarianism, and respect for authority, shape leaders' ethical perceptions and responses. For instance, leaders from collectivist cultures may prioritise the welfare of the group over individual interests when resolving ethical dilemmas, reflecting a communal value system. In contrast, leaders from individualistic cultures may focus on personal integrity and accountability, resulting in ethical decisions that uphold individual rights and responsibilities.

These dynamics present both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, cultural diversity enriches organisational decision-making by incorporating a wide array of perspectives. On the other hand, it demands leadership approaches that bridge cultural differences effectively. Leaders must navigate these complexities with sensitivity, ensuring that their practices resonate with the cultural contexts of both their teams and clients. By doing so, they can foster an environment of inclusivity and mutual respect, ultimately strengthening organisational cohesion and effectiveness.

1.3.2.3 Challenges in Ethical Leadership

Navigating ethical leadership in a multicultural environment presents significant challenges for the researcher's consulting firm, particularly in reconciling divergent cultural norms and ethical standards among team members and clients. De Cremer et al. (2011, p. 454) assert that ethical principles often clash with cultural practices or business customs in multicultural settings, leading to dilemmas that require nuanced and context-sensitive leadership. For example, practices such as offering gifts as gestures of goodwill, while culturally appropriate in some regions, may conflict with universal ethical principles or corporate policies in others. Leaders must demonstrate cultural sensitivity while upholding ethical integrity, ensuring that respect for cultural diversity does not compromise adherence to universal ethical standards. Striking this balance is critical for maintaining trust and credibility among diverse stakeholders.

The consulting industry in Dubai operates in a fast-paced, high-pressure environment, which further complicates ethical leadership. Leaders often face the challenge of balancing short-term gains with long-term ethical considerations. Treviño et al. (2014, p. 633) note that in high-stakes industries, time constraints and performance demands can increase the likelihood of ethical lapses if leaders are not vigilant. This issue is compounded when ethical considerations are perceived as secondary to achieving immediate business outcomes. Leaders must proactively foster an organisational culture where ethical standards are prioritised, integrating these principles into decision-making processes to ensure consistent application across all activities, regardless of external pressures.

Successfully addressing these challenges demands a leadership approach that is both adaptable and principled. The researcher's PCLP serves as a practical framework designed to provide leaders with tools for navigating ethical dilemmas in culturally diverse environments. By integrating cultural adaptability with ethical consistency, the PCLP empowers leaders to reconcile cultural differences while upholding high ethical standards. This approach fosters a culture of trust, accountability, and ethical excellence, ultimately enhancing organisational integrity and strengthening relationships with a broad spectrum of stakeholders.

1.3.2.4 Strategies for Promoting Ethical Leadership

To address the challenges of ethical leadership in a multicultural context, the researcher's consulting firm employs several strategies designed to foster integrity, accountability, and cultural adaptability. These strategies are informed by theoretical frameworks and practical experiences, ensuring their relevance and effectiveness in diverse organisational settings.

1. Cross-Cultural Training

Comprehensive cross-cultural training programs enhance cultural competence and sensitivity among leaders and employees. Hofstede (2001, p. 50) highlights that cultural dimensions, such as individualism versus collectivism and power distance, profoundly influence workplace dynamics. By

equipping employees with tools to navigate these differences, such training minimizes misunderstandings and fosters collaboration across diverse teams. For example, a training initiative that explores communication styles in high- and low-context cultures enables team members to adapt their messaging and build stronger interpersonal connections.

2. Ethical Decision-Making Frameworks

The implementation of clear ethical decision-making frameworks ensures that leaders can evaluate dilemmas objectively and make principled decisions aligned with the organisation's values and societal norms. Treviño et al. (2014, p. 640) argue that structured frameworks provide consistency in addressing ethical challenges, helping leaders to balance organisational objectives with ethical standards. For instance, the firm uses a step-by-step approach for resolving ethical conflicts, including stakeholder analysis, ethical risk assessment, and alignment with core organisational values, reducing ambiguity and fostering accountability.

3. Transparent Communication

Open and transparent communication channels are critical for building trust and ensuring accountability within the organisation. Deardorff (2006, p. 249) emphasises that culturally sensitive communication strategies help ensure messages are understood and accepted in diverse settings. Leaders in the firm prioritise creating a safe environment for employees to voice ethical concerns without fear of reprisal. For instance, regular town hall meetings and anonymous feedback systems allow employees to share their perspectives, enabling the proactive resolution of potential conflicts.

4. Role Modelling

Ethical leadership is most effective when leaders model the behaviour they expect from others. Brown and Treviño (2006, p. 597) argue that ethical leaders who demonstrate integrity, fairness, and ethical conduct set a powerful example that resonates throughout the organisation. Leaders in the researcher's firm consciously embody these qualities, reinforcing a culture of trust and ethical

accountability. For example, senior executives openly share how they navigate ethical dilemmas, providing employees with real-life examples of principled decision-making.

The above four strategies have been instrumental in shaping and refining the researcher's PCLP. Each approach contributes to the PCLP's emphasis on cultural adaptability, ethical consistency, and practical application. Cross-cultural training underscores the importance of understanding diverse perspectives, while decision-making frameworks and transparent communication ensure that ethical standards are operationalised effectively. Leadership by example reinforces the importance of integrity as a core value within the PCLP.

By integrating these strategies into the PCLP, the researcher's framework becomes a transformative tool for navigating ethical complexities in multicultural environments. This approach not only enhances organisational trust and collaboration but also positions the firm as a leader in ethical business practices.

1.3.3 Contextual Considerations

Cultural dimensions, such as power distance, individualism versus collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance, significantly shape leadership styles and expectations in ethical leadership contexts. Hofstede (2001, p. 50) emphasises that understanding these dimensions is crucial for effective leadership, particularly in multicultural and diverse environments.

- **Power Distance**

Power distance reflects the extent to which less powerful members of a society accept and expect unequal power distribution. In high power-distance cultures, such as many Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian countries, subordinates often expect authoritative decisions from leaders and defer to their authority. For instance, in the UAE, team members may prefer leaders who provide clear directives and assume responsibility for outcomes, reflecting deeply ingrained hierarchical norms (Hofstede, 2001, p. 75). Conversely, in lower power-distance cultures like Australia and the

Netherlands, employees favour participative leadership styles, where collaboration, inclusivity, and minimised hierarchical barriers are prioritised (House et al., 2004, p. 88). A manager in these contexts might facilitate team discussions to encourage joint decision-making and empower individuals to contribute actively.

- **Individualism vs. Collectivism**

The dynamic between individualism and collectivism further influences leadership practices and expectations. In individualistic cultures, such as the USA, personal autonomy and self-expression are highly valued. Leaders in these settings emphasise empowerment, innovation, and individual ownership of roles (Triandis, 1995, p. 170). For example, a Silicon Valley project manager might encourage open challenges to ideas and promote bold, independent solutions. In contrast, collectivist cultures, such as Japan or China, prioritise group harmony and consensus. Leaders must focus on fostering cohesion and ensuring collective buy-in. For instance, a leader in Japan may dedicate time to facilitate group discussions to reach consensus, as open disagreement could disrupt harmony and hinder productivity (House et al., 2004, p. 93).

- **Uncertainty Avoidance**

Uncertainty avoidance reflects a society's tolerance for ambiguity and risk. High uncertainty-avoidance cultures, such as Germany and Switzerland, prefer structured, rule-based leadership approaches that enhance predictability (Hofstede, 2001, p. 180). Leaders in such contexts are expected to provide detailed plans, clear timelines, and comprehensive risk assessments. For instance, project leaders in German engineering firms meticulously outline every project stage to mitigate uncertainties. Conversely, low uncertainty-avoidance cultures, such as the UAE and Singapore, value flexibility and adaptability. Leaders in these contexts often embrace dynamic strategies and calculated risk-taking. For example, a UAE-based startup may empower leaders to experiment with new business models or pivot strategies mid-project to seize emerging opportunities (House et al., 2004, p. 110).

- **Universal Values and Islamic Influence**

Amid these cultural variations, the researcher's leadership approach remains rooted in universal values and morals derived from their Islamic cultural background. Islamic principles place ethics, respect, and moral integrity at the core of leadership. The Prophet Muhammad's leadership model exemplifies fairness, trustworthiness, and service to others, providing a guiding framework for the researcher's ethical practices (Ali, 2011, p. 53). These values influence the researcher's decision-making, prioritising ethical conduct over material or financial gain. For instance, when faced with a lucrative contract that conflicts with ethical standards, the researcher has consistently chosen to uphold integrity, declining opportunities that compromise the firm's moral principles (Beekun & Badawi, 2005, p. 18).

- **Integration of Cultural Sensitivity and Ethics**

The researcher's ability to navigate cultural complexities while maintaining a steadfast commitment to ethical leadership reflects a nuanced approach that integrates cultural sensitivity, emotional intelligence, and universal ethical principles. By recognising and respecting cultural diversity while adhering to moral integrity, the researcher fosters trust, collaboration, and cohesion among diverse teams and stakeholders.

1.3.4 Researcher's Cultural Background and Biases

The researcher's Islamic cultural background significantly informs their leadership philosophy, particularly in multicultural and ethically complex environments. Deeply rooted in ethics, morality, and respect, Islamic values provide a moral compass that guides the researcher's decisions and interactions (Malik & Parvez, 2007, p. 45). These principles—integrity, honesty, compassion, and fairness—align with modern leadership theories, such as ethical leadership, which emphasise trust and accountability (Brown & Treviño, 2006, p. 597).

- **Ethical Foundations in Islamic Principles**

The Qur'an offers profound guidance on ethical leadership, emphasising justice, consultation, humility, and responsibility. Key verses that have shaped the researcher's leadership ethos include:

- **Justice:** "Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice" (Qur'an 4:58).
- **Consultation:** "And those who have responded to their master and established prayer and whose affair is [determined by] consultation among themselves, and they spend out of what We have provided them" (Qur'an 42:38).
- **Humility:** "Lower your wing from humility out of mercy for those who follow you and [say], 'My Lord, have mercy upon them as they have been merciful to me in childhood'" (Qur'an 17:24).

These verses, detailed in Table 2: Qur'anic Verses on Ethical Leadership and Leadership Principles, provide a framework for the researcher's leadership practices, reinforcing the importance of justice, responsibility, and collective welfare.

Theme	Surah and Verse	Verse Translation
Accountability	Surah Al-Isra (17:36)	And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight and the heart – about all those [one] will be questioned.
	Surah Al-An'am (6:165)	"And it is He who has made you successors upon the earth and has raised some of you above others in degrees [of rank] that He may try you through what He has given you. Indeed, your Lord is swift in penalty; but indeed, He is Forgiving and Merciful."
Consultation and Empathy	Surah Ash-Shura (42:38)	"And those who have responded to their lord and established prayer and whose affair is [determined by] consultation among themselves, and from what We have provided them, they spend."
	Surah Al Imran (3:159)	So pardon them and forgive them and consult them in the matter. And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah . Indeed, Allah loves those who rely [upon Him].
Humility and Responsibility	Surah Al-Isra (17:24)	Lower your wing from humility out of mercy for those who follow you and [say], "My Lord, have mercy upon them as they have been merciful to me in childhood."
	Surah Al-Furqan (25:63)	"And the servants of the Most Merciful are those who walk upon the earth easily, and when the ignorant address them harshly, they say [words of] peace."

	Surah Al-Qasas (28:77)	"But seek, through that which Allah has given you, the home of the Hereafter; and [yet], do not forget your share of the world. And do good as Allah has done good to you. And desire not corruption in the land. Indeed, Allah does not like corrupters."
Integrity and Trustworthiness	Surah Al-Baqarah (2:283)	"If you are on a journey and cannot find a scribe, then a security deposit [should be] taken. And if one of you entrusts another, let him who is entrusted discharge his trust faithfully and let him fear Allah, his Lord. And do not conceal testimony, for whoever conceals it - his heart is indeed sinful, and Allah is Knowing of what you do."
	Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13)	O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted.
	Surah Al-Isra (17:34)	And do not approach the orphan's property except in a way that is best until he reaches maturity. And fulfil [every] commitment. Indeed, the commitment is ever [that about which one will be] questioned.
Justice and Fairness	Surah An-Nisa (4:58)	"Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice. Excellent is that which Allah instructs you. Indeed, Allah is ever Hearing and Seeing."
	Surah Al-Ma'idah (5:8)	"O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for Allah, witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what you do."
	Surah Al-Baqarah (2:188)	And do not consume one another's wealth unjustly or send it [in bribery] to the rulers in order that [they might aid] you [to] consume a portion of the wealth of the people in sin, while you know [it is unlawful].
	Surah An-Nisa (4:135)	O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for Allah, witnesses in justice, and even if it be against yourselves or your parents and relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, Allah is more worthy of both. So follow not [personal] inclination, lest you not be just. And if you distort [your testimony] or refuse [to give it], then indeed Allah is ever, with what you do, Acquainted..
Leadership by Example	Surah Al-Baqarah (2:44)	"Do you order righteousness of the people and forget yourselves while you recite the Scripture? Then will you not reason?"
	Surah Al-Imran (3:159)	"So by mercy from Allah, [O Muhammad], you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the matter. And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who rely [upon Him]."
Setting a Good Example	Surah Al-Ahzab 33:21	Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah you have a good example for whoever hopes in Allah and the Last Day and [who frequently] remembers Allah
	Surah At-Tawbah (9:119)	O you who have believed, fear Allah and be with those who are true.

Table 2 Quranic Verses on Ethical Leadership and Leadership Principles

- **Acknowledging and Addressing Biases**

While the researcher's cultural background offers a robust foundation for ethical leadership, it also introduces potential biases. For instance, the collectivist orientation of Islamic culture may lead to prioritising group harmony over individual interests. This fosters unity and cohesion but risks overlooking the importance of individual autonomy, which is often highly valued in individualistic cultures such as Australia and the United States (Triandis, 1995, p. 172).

Similarly, the researcher's Islamic upbringing, which prioritises ethics and morality over financial gain, may influence decision-making in ways that favour long-term integrity over short-term profitability. While this ensures adherence to moral principles, it may pose challenges in competitive business environments where immediate financial results are often prioritised (Ali, 2011, p. 55).

To mitigate these biases, the researcher actively engages in reflective practices, regularly examining how cultural values influence leadership behaviours. Seeking input from team members with diverse cultural perspectives helps challenge assumptions and fosters a more inclusive and equitable leadership style (Deardorff, 2006, p. 250). For example, during cross-cultural negotiations, the researcher has sought to balance Islamic principles with culturally sensitive strategies, ensuring that all stakeholders feel respected and valued.

- **The PCLP as a Leadership Framework**

Grounded in Islamic values, the PCLP serves as a comprehensive framework for ethical leadership.

The PCLP – Islamic Values diagram (Diagram 1) visually represents this paradigm, highlighting its core and surrounding elements:

1. **Ethical Framework:** Justice, moral responsibility, and integrity form the foundation of decision-making (Ali, 2011, p. 153).

2. **Cultural Adaptability:** Emphasising diversity and responsive practices, this element equips leaders to navigate multicultural environments effectively (Hofstede, 2001, p. 50; House et al., 2004, p. 61).
3. **Reflective Practice:** Self-assessment and feedback mechanisms enable continuous learning and refinement, addressing personal biases and fostering inclusivity (Deardorff, 2006, p. 241).
4. **Outcome-Driven Leadership:** Focusing on goal orientation and performance metrics, this pillar ensures collaboration, trust, and sustainable organisational success (Treviño & Brown, 2005, p. 120).

By integrating these principles, the PCLP balances moral integrity with cultural adaptability, enabling leaders to navigate diverse and ever-changing environments while maintaining ethical excellence. This dynamic approach ensures that the researcher's leadership remains both contextually relevant and ethically grounded.



Diagram 1 - PCLP - Islamic Values

1.4 Conclusion

This chapter reflects the researcher's deeply personal leadership journey, shaped by formative influences, professional experiences, and a steadfast commitment to justice, integrity, and inclusivity. These principles form the foundation of the researcher's PCLP, a framework deeply rooted in Islamic values that guides the researcher in navigating complex organisational environments (Ali, 2011; Beekun & Badawi, 2005). The chapter has demonstrated that the PCLP is not merely an academic construct, but a living framework born out of real-world challenges and refined through experience. It has been shaped by moments of ethical decision-making, cultural adaptation, and a continuous commitment to integrity.

The researcher's motivations for this study stem from a desire to foster ethical leadership practices that minimise misconduct, enhance organisational performance, and build trust. This aspiration extends beyond immediate outcomes, envisioning a legacy of principled leadership that addresses the ethical challenges of a globalised, multicultural landscape (Treviño et al., 2014, p. 640).

Cultural dimensions such as power distance, individualism versus collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance significantly influence the researcher's leadership practices (Hofstede, 2001, p. 50; House et al., 2004, p. 88). These insights have enabled the researcher to develop culturally adaptive strategies that balance universal ethical principles with the unique demands of diverse teams and stakeholders. However, the researcher acknowledges that their Islamic cultural background may introduce biases, such as prioritising group harmony over individual autonomy or ethical integrity over short-term financial gain. By embracing reflective practices and seeking diverse perspectives, the researcher actively mitigates these biases, ensuring fairness, inclusivity, and adaptability in their leadership approach (Deardorff, 2006, p. 249).

The development of the PCLP exemplifies an adaptive and ethically grounded leadership paradigm that integrates cultural awareness, self-reflection, and universal ethical values. This framework not only informs the researcher's leadership practice but also contributes to the broader discourse on

ethical leadership by offering a model that bridges theory and practice. By grounding leadership in timeless ethical principles while embracing cultural diversity, the researcher aspires to inspire future leaders to uphold these values in their own professional journeys (Ali, 2011; Treviño et al., 2014).

In summary, my leadership journey has been shaped by early exposure to principled leadership through my parents, key ethical dilemmas in adolescence, intercultural experiences across the Middle East, Asia and Australia, and organisational challenges in global consulting roles. These milestones formed the basis of the PCLP, which continues to evolve through reflective practice and academic research. Diagram 2 visually represents this journey and the critical inflection points that led to the creation and ongoing refinement of the PCLP. This diagram outlines the researcher's leadership development, beginning with formative experiences in the Middle East and continuing through professional roles across Australia, Asia, and the USA. These intercultural and ethical experiences contributed to the creation and ongoing refinement of the PCLP, which integrates reflective practice, cultural adaptability, and ethical decision-making

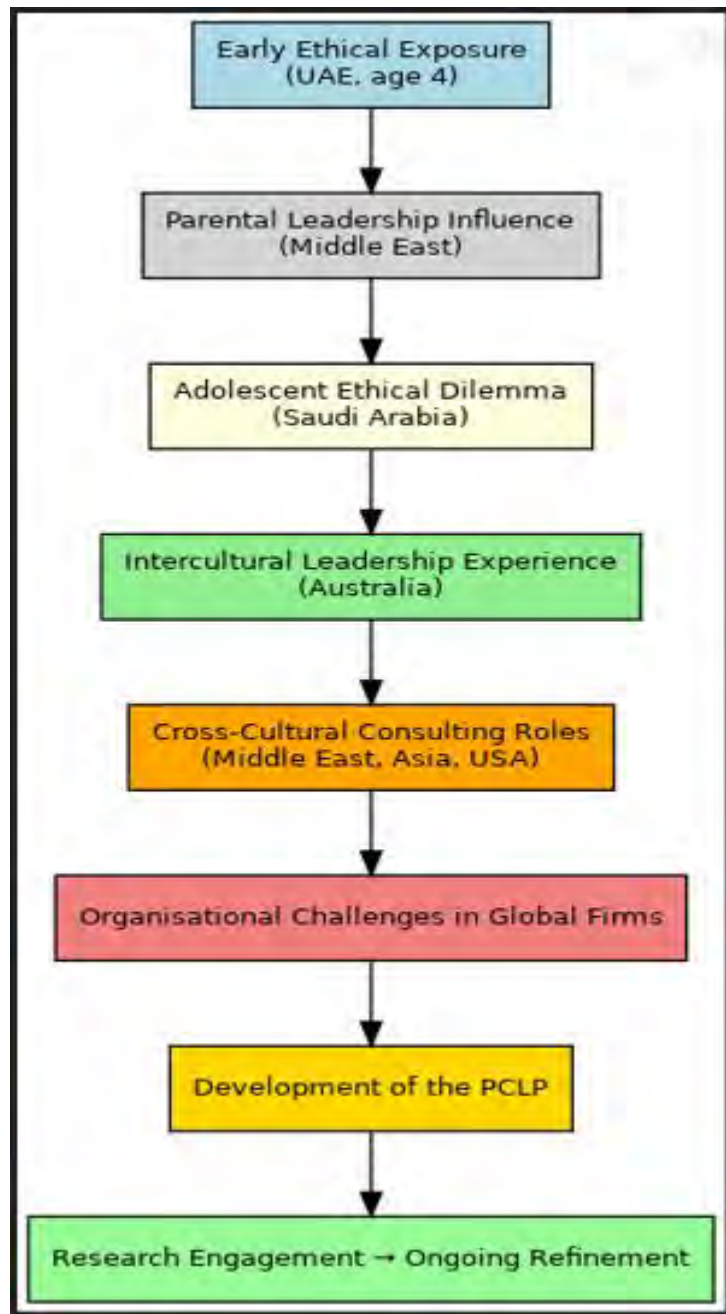


Diagram 2: The Researcher's Ethical Leadership Journey and the Development of the PCLP

Next...

Expanding on the personal journey and cultural influences explored in Chapter 1, Chapter 2, ***Building a Foundation in Ethical Leadership Theory***, delves into the theoretical underpinnings that shape ethical leadership. It examines core concepts such as values, ethics, and morals, alongside the influence of cultural dimensions like power distance, individualism, and uncertainty avoidance on leadership practices. By grounding PCLP within established ethical leadership theories, the next chapter will reinforce its credibility as a practical and adaptable model for navigating modern leadership challenges. Addressing challenges such as ethical pressures and the tension between ethics and legality, Chapter 2 establishes the theoretical framework necessary for refining the PCLP and addressing the complexities of ethical leadership in diverse organisational environments.

CHAPTER 2. BUILDING A FOUNDATION IN ETHICAL LEADERSHIP THEORY

2.1 Introduction

Building on the researcher's journey and the foundational insights into the PCLP explored in Chapter 1, this chapter delves into the theoretical frameworks and key concepts that underpin ethical leadership. Effective leadership goes beyond administrative competence, requiring a nuanced and multifaceted approach that fosters collaboration, inspires action, and prioritises ethical decision-making. Yukl (2019, p. 3) defines leadership as the process of influencing others to agree on shared goals and facilitating individual and collective efforts to achieve them. This dynamic role involves establishing a clear vision, guiding teams, and empowering individuals to contribute meaningfully toward common objectives (Northouse, 2016, p. 6).

Despite extensive research on leadership, gaps persist in how ethical leadership is conceptualised and applied across diverse organisational and cultural contexts. Many existing leadership models focus primarily on either outcomes (e.g., transactional leadership) or inspirational motivation (e.g., transformational leadership), but they often fail to provide structured adaptability for navigating ethical dilemmas in complex, multicultural environments. This chapter identifies these gaps and demonstrates how the PCLP fills them by integrating ethical flexibility with culturally attuned leadership strategies.

While managers are tasked with ensuring operational stability through planning, organising, and process adherence, leadership is distinct in its focus on driving innovation and fostering long-term strategic goals. Smith (2020, p. 45) underscores that while management provides the structural backbone of an organisation, leadership inspires and motivates teams to embrace transformational change. Recognising the interplay between these functions is critical, particularly within the diverse and ethically complex organisational settings where the PCLP operates.

By expanding on these distinctions, this chapter examines the core theoretical foundations of leadership, including ethical principles, cultural adaptability, and decision-making frameworks. These elements form the backbone of the PCLP, illustrating its applicability to navigating the challenges of diverse and multicultural environments.

2.1.1 Management vs. Leadership

Management and leadership are often used interchangeably, yet they represent distinct concepts within organisational settings. Management primarily focuses on maintaining order and efficiency, whereas leadership emphasises inspiring and motivating teams toward shared goals. Fayol (1930, p. 10) was one of the earliest scholars to define management, outlining its functions as organising, commanding, coordinating, and directing performance. At the time, leadership as a concept was not fully developed. While classical management theories effectively define the structural aspects of leadership, they lack a clear framework for ethical decision-making in dynamic environments. Modern organisations require leaders who can balance efficiency with ethical responsibility, a core principle of the PCLP.

As management theory evolved, Mintzberg (1973, p. 5) described management as a blend of art, science, and craft, acknowledging that leadership is an integral component of managerial work. He highlighted the shift in roles that occurs when, for instance, an engineer transitions from performing technical tasks to managing people who execute those tasks. Drucker, regarded as a pioneer of modern management, differentiated leadership from management, defining leadership as the art of influencing and motivating others to achieve optimal results aligned with organisational goals (Byrne & Gerdes, 2005, p. 45).

Leadership, as a distinct discipline, extends beyond the mechanical aspects of managing tasks and focuses on fostering trust, collaboration, and long-term vision. Northouse (2016, p. 6) defines leadership as a process of influencing others to achieve a common objective, while Yukl (2019, p. 3) highlights its emphasis on facilitating both individual and collective efforts. Effective leaders inspire

action, empower teams, and build trust through a combination of skills, traits, and behaviours (Day, 2014, p. 12).

In contrast, management is characterised by its focus on maintaining structure and achieving short-term operational goals through activities such as planning, organising, and controlling (Smith, 2020, p. 45). Managers derive their authority from formal organisational structures, enabling them to enforce rules and policies (Jones & Miller, 2019, p. 30). Leadership, however, relies on informal sources of influence, such as charisma, expertise, and communication skills, to guide teams toward long-term objectives (Northouse, 2021, p. 360; Yukl, 2010, p. 45).

The interplay between management and leadership becomes evident when comparing their core attributes. Managers focus on order and efficiency, ensuring deadlines are met and processes are followed. Leaders, on the other hand, focus on inspiring innovation and fostering collaboration to achieve strategic objectives (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 16). For example, a manager may focus on task allocation and resource planning, while a leader ensures that team members are motivated and aligned with the organisation's vision.

Leadership encompasses several key elements, such as influence, vision, communication, and accountability. Leaders exert a positive influence on their teams, encouraging them to excel (Northouse, 2016, p. 15). They establish a clear vision for the future, motivate individuals to act, and make strategic decisions that align with organisational goals (Bass, 1990, p. 40; Day, 2014, p. 25). Effective leaders also prioritise transparent communication and delegate tasks to empower team members (Yukl, 2019, p. 250).

Understanding the distinction and interdependence between management and leadership is crucial for organisational success. Table 3 and Table 4 provide a detailed comparison of these roles, illustrating their unique functions and how they complement one another. While management ensures operational stability, leadership drives innovation and progress, enabling organisations to navigate challenges and seize opportunities in a rapidly evolving business landscape.

Feature	Management	Leadership
Focus	Maintaining order and efficiency within a system.	Inspiring and motivating others to achieve a common goal.
Activities	Planning, organising, staffing, controlling, budgeting.	Vision-setting, communication, empowering, building trust.
Power Source	Formal authority granted by the organisation.	Informal influence earned through charisma or expertise.
Change Orientation	Primarily concerned with maintaining the status quo.	Often acts as a catalyst for change and innovation.
People Focus	Ensures employees complete tasks and meet deadlines.	Focuses on developing and inspiring employees.
Goals	Achieving short-term operational goals.	Achieving long-term strategic objectives.
Influence	Uses formal authority to influence behaviour.	Uses charisma, expertise, and persuasion to influence.
Clear Vision	May manage based on existing goals, not necessarily setting them.	Creates a clear and inspiring vision for the future.
Motivation	Motivates through rewards and punishments.	Inspires and motivates through shared vision and purpose.
Communication	Communicates instructions and procedures.	Communicates effectively and transparently with all levels.
Decision Making	Makes decisions based on established rules and procedures.	Makes strategic decisions and takes calculated risks.
Delegation	Delegates tasks to ensure efficient completion.	Empower others to make decisions and take ownership.
Accountability	Holds themselves and others accountable to meet goals.	Creates a culture of accountability for results and ethics.

Table 3 - Comparison Between Management and Leadership

Qualities	Manager	Leader
Focus	✓	✓
Activities	✓	✓
Power Source	✓	✓
Change Orientation	✓	✓
People Focus	✓	✓
Goals	✓	✓
Influence	✓	✓
Clear Vision	✗	✓
Motivation	✗	✓
Communication	✗	✓
Decision Making	✗	✓
Delegation	✗	✓
Accountability	✗	✓

Table 4 Simple Comparison Between Management and Leadership

2.1.2 Leadership Framework

A leadership framework serves as a systematic guide for individuals seeking to comprehend and enhance their leadership abilities (Yukl, 2013, p. 12). These frameworks offer structured methodologies comprising principles, concepts, and strategies, tailored to navigate diverse leadership contexts effectively. By delineating essential elements and practices, they provide leaders with a blueprint for decision-making, communication, and team management across various organisational settings and scenarios. These frameworks not only facilitate the comprehension of leadership dynamics but also empower individuals to cultivate and refine their leadership competencies to achieve optimal outcomes.

The researcher's PCLP draws from these foundational leadership theories, blending the most applicable elements into a paradigm suited for multicultural and ethically complex environments. Below, prominent leadership theories are explored for their contributions, challenges, and relevance to the development of adaptable and ethical leadership.

- **Transformational Leadership Theory**

Transformational leadership, as highlighted by Bass (1985, p. 20), inspires individuals to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the team or organisation. These leaders motivate through vision, encourage innovation, and create a culture of trust and empowerment.

Transformational leadership lacks a structured approach to ethical decision-making, particularly in culturally diverse settings. The PCLP addresses this by integrating ethical contingencies, ensuring leaders can adjust their ethical strategies based on cultural expectations and situational demands.

The relevance of transformational leadership to the PCLP lies in its emphasis on building long-term relationships and fostering employee growth. However, the practical challenge of maintaining this level of engagement consistently without detracting from operational efficiency is a significant consideration (Northouse, 2018, p. 176). For the researcher, integrating the principles of

transformational leadership ensures that the PCLP remains focused on inspiring ethical behaviour while addressing real-world organisational demands.

- **Transactional Leadership Theory**

Transactional leadership operates on the principle of reward and punishment for performance. While this approach is effective in achieving immediate results (Bass, 1985, p. 25), it often overlooks intrinsic motivation and fails to inspire creativity or innovation among team members.

Transactional leadership does not prioritise ethical decision-making and lacks adaptability in diverse environments. The PCLP retains its structured accountability but incorporates ethical reflection and long-term engagement strategies. For the PCLP, the transactional approach is valuable in ensuring accountability and adherence to ethical standards, but it must be balanced with transformational elements to foster long-term engagement and trust (Avolio & Bass, 2004, p. 101).

- **Situational Leadership Theory**

Situational leadership, as proposed by Hersey and Blanchard (1977, p. 32), advocates for flexibility in leadership styles based on follower readiness and task requirements. This adaptability aligns closely with the PCLP's emphasis on cultural sensitivity and context-driven decision-making. However, the challenge of accurately assessing follower readiness and the potential for confusion due to frequent style changes necessitate careful application (Northouse, 2018, p. 100). The PCLP incorporates situational leadership's adaptability while addressing these limitations through reflective practice and continuous feedback mechanisms.

- **Contingency Theory**

Contingency theory posits that leadership effectiveness depends on the fit between a leader's style and situational demands (Fiedler, 1967, p. 15). Its relevance to the PCLP lies in recognising the importance of aligning leadership strategies with organisational and cultural contexts. However, as Yukl (2002, p. 65) notes, contingency theory's limited consideration of leader attributes and its

rigidity in dynamic environments require supplemental frameworks to ensure comprehensive application. The PCLP addresses this by integrating ethical and cultural adaptability to account for rapidly evolving organisational landscapes.

- **Path-Goal Theory**

The path-goal theory, as articulated by House and Mitchell (1974, p. 95), emphasises providing clear guidance, removing obstacles, and supporting followers in achieving objectives. Its practical application in the PCLP involves aligning leadership behaviour with follower needs and task demands, ensuring alignment with ethical principles. However, as Northouse (2018, p. 140) highlights, the risk of micromanagement and the complexity of balancing organisational goals with individual needs require a nuanced approach. The PCLP incorporates reflective practices to address these challenges, fostering empowerment while maintaining oversight.

- **Servant Leadership Model**

Servant leadership prioritises follower needs and community well-being, emphasising growth and ethical responsibility (Greenleaf, 1970, p. 25). This model's focus on trust and compassion aligns closely with the PCLP's core values. However, servant leadership's perceived lack of assertiveness in high-pressure environments can limit its applicability (van Dierendonck, 2011, p. 123). The PCLP integrates servant leadership principles while ensuring a balance between follower-focused strategies and organisational demands.

- **Authentic Leadership Theory**

Authentic leadership emphasises ethical behaviour, self-awareness, and transparency, fostering trust and credibility (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 321). For the PCLP, authentic leadership provides a foundation for building genuine relationships with stakeholders. However, as Northouse (2018, p. 214) notes, the risk of oversharing or crossing professional boundaries requires careful management. The PCLP incorporates authentic leadership while maintaining professionalism and strategic focus.

- **Charismatic Leadership Theory**

Charismatic leadership leverages a leader's personality and emotional connections to inspire extraordinary outcomes (Conger & Kanungo, 1987, p. 638). While charisma can be a powerful motivator, its over-reliance may create organisational vulnerabilities if the leader's influence wanes (Northouse, 2018, p. 204). The PCLP integrates the motivational aspects of charismatic leadership while emphasising sustainable practices that do not depend solely on individual charisma.

- **Transactional-Transformational Leadership Model**

This hybrid model combines transactional leadership's focus on task completion with transformational leadership's emphasis on inspiration and innovation (Bass, 1985, p. 37). The PCLP draws heavily from this approach, balancing operational efficiency with ethical inspiration. However, as Bass (1985, p. 41) notes, achieving the right balance can be challenging, particularly in defining subordinate roles and expectations.

- **Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Model**

Goleman (1995, p. 46) identifies emotional intelligence (EI) as a critical leadership attribute, encompassing self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. The PCLP leverages EI to navigate cultural complexities and foster trust. However, as Brackett and Katulak (2006, p. 35) caution, overemphasis on EI may detract from other critical leadership competencies. The PCLP ensures a balanced approach, integrating EI with strategic and ethical decision-making.

2.1.3 Other Theories

- **Trait theory**

Trait theory is a foundational approach to leadership studies that posits that effective leaders possess inherent personal traits that predispose them to leadership roles. These traits include intelligence, confidence, integrity, determination, sociability, and assertiveness (Northouse, 2018). While the

emphasis on inherent traits has shaped leadership studies, the theory has faced criticism for underemphasising the influence of situational factors and experiences in shaping leadership behaviours (Mischel, 1968).

For the PCLP, trait theory provides an essential starting point by recognising the value of core leadership traits such as integrity and confidence, which align with the ethical and outcome-driven focus of the framework. However, the PCLP addresses the limitations of trait theory by incorporating situational adaptability and cultural sensitivity, acknowledging that effective leadership is not solely dependent on inherent traits but also on the ability to respond dynamically to diverse organisational and cultural contexts.

- **Management by Objectives (MBO)**

Management by Objectives (MBO) is a strategic management approach that aims to align individual, departmental, and organisational goals through clearly defined and collaboratively set objectives (Drucker, 1954). The emphasis on SMART goals—specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound—enhances communication, focus, and accountability (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

However, MBO's limitations include a tendency to prioritise short-term over long-term objectives and the potential for unrealistic goal-setting, which can lead to frustration and reduced engagement (Locke & Latham, 2002). The PCLP integrates the structured goal orientation of MBO while addressing its limitations by incorporating reflective practices that ensure long-term ethical and cultural considerations are not overlooked. This adaptation ensures that the pursuit of organisational objectives remains aligned with universal ethical principles and the diverse needs of stakeholders.

- **Interactional Theory**

Interactional theory emphasises the role of real-time social cues, bodily interactions, and contextual factors in understanding others' intentions and emotions (Gallagher, 2008). By focusing on immediate interactions rather than abstract mentalising, this theory provides valuable insights into

how leaders navigate complex social dynamics in multicultural environments. For example, understanding nonverbal cues such as facial expressions and gestures can significantly enhance communication in diverse teams.

While interactional theory highlights the importance of embodied interaction, critics argue that it overemphasises immediate context and underestimates the influence of cultural background and past experiences (Carruthers, 2009). The PCLP leverages the strengths of interactional theory by emphasising the importance of cultural adaptability and situational responsiveness. By integrating these elements, the PCLP equips leaders to interpret social cues effectively while considering broader cultural and historical factors that shape individual behaviours and expectations.

2.1.4 The Researcher's Findings and Implications

The exploration of leadership theories highlights the intricate and dynamic nature of effective leadership, particularly in ethically complex and multicultural environments. Each theory provides valuable insights into leadership practices but underscores the necessity for adaptability and integration, which are central to the PCLP. Transformational leadership, for example, is highly effective in fostering long-term vision, innovation, and employee engagement (Bass, 1985, p. 20). However, sustaining this approach requires significant time and energy, which may detract from other leadership responsibilities (Northouse, 2018, p. 176). In contrast, transactional leadership provides structure, clear expectations, and accountability (Bass, 1985, p. 25), but its focus on short-term goals can undermine intrinsic motivation and long-term growth (Avolio & Bass, 2004, p. 101). The PCLP integrates these models to combine the motivational strengths of transformational leadership with the structured benefits of transactional leadership, creating a framework that is both visionary and practical.

Situational and contingency theories emphasize aligning leadership styles with situational demands (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977, p. 32; Fiedler, 1967, p. 15). While situational leadership offers flexibility, frequent style changes may create confusion among followers and lack strategic consistency

(Northouse, 2018, p. 100). Contingency theory adds value by addressing the alignment of leadership style and contextual factors, but it often underestimates the role of a leader's personal attributes (Yukl, 2002, p. 65). The PCLP addresses these limitations by promoting reflective practices, enabling leaders to assess both situational and personal factors to ensure culturally and contextually appropriate decisions.

The ethical and emotional foundations of leadership are evident in theories such as servant leadership, authentic leadership, and emotional intelligence. Servant leadership prioritises follower empowerment and community welfare, aligning closely with ethical leadership principles (Greenleaf, 1970, p. 25). However, it may lack assertiveness in high-pressure environments, requiring balance (van Dierendonck, 2011, p. 123). Authentic leadership emphasises trust and transparency, yet oversharing can disrupt professional boundaries and cause misinterpretations (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 321). Emotional intelligence, as defined by Goleman (1995, p. 46), is indispensable for effective leadership, but overemphasis on it may detract from other critical skills such as strategic thinking (Northouse, 2018, p. 144). The PCLP incorporates these principles, ensuring leaders maintain ethical integrity while balancing transparency and assertiveness.

Cultural sensitivity and inclusivity are integral to theories such as path-goal and interactional leadership, which emphasize understanding and addressing followers' needs while navigating social contexts (House & Mitchell, 1974, p. 95; Gallagher, 2008, p. 76). However, these models may inadvertently lead to micromanagement or overreliance on immediate contextual cues, respectively (Northouse, 2018, p. 140; Carruthers, 2009, p. 210). By embedding cultural adaptability within its framework, the PCLP enables leaders to account for diverse cultural norms while fostering inclusion and respect in multicultural teams.

These theories collectively demonstrate the nuanced challenges of modern leadership and emphasise the necessity of an integrated framework like the PCLP. By synthesising elements from these theories, the PCLP addresses gaps in cultural adaptability, ethical leadership, and practical

application. Table 5 (below) summarises the core aspects of these theories, highlighting their implications for the PCLP, which seeks to balance ethical integrity with practical adaptability in diverse and dynamic contexts.

Theory	Description	Strengths	Weaknesses	PCLP Implications
Transformational Leadership	Inspires innovation and long-term goals (Bass, 1985).	Motivational, fosters innovation.	Time-intensive, may neglect other duties.	Balances innovation with operational focus.
Transactional Leadership	Focuses on rewards and punishments (Bass, 1985).	Structured, clear goals.	Short-term focus, reduces intrinsic motivation.	Adds motivational elements to structure.
Situational Leadership	Adapts style based on context (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977).	Flexible, adaptable.	Requires accurate assessment, can confuse.	Promotes adaptive leadership within PCLP.
Contingency Theory	Aligns style with situational needs (Fiedler, 1967).	Adaptable to context.	Overlooks leader traits, struggles in change.	Encourages reflective practice for alignment.
Path-Goal Theory	Leaders guide and support (House & Mitchell, 1974).	Clear direction, supportive.	Risk of micromanagement.	Balances guidance with trust in PCLP.
Servant Leadership	Prioritises followers' needs (Greenleaf, 1970).	Supportive, empowering.	Lacks assertiveness.	Reinforces ethics and adaptability in PCLP.
Authentic Leadership	Builds trust through transparency (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).	Genuine, trust-building.	Risks oversharing.	Enhances trust and balanced communication.
Charismatic Leadership	Inspires through personality (Conger & Kanungo, 1987).	Inspirational, motivating.	Reliant on leader's charisma.	Embeds motivation while reducing dependency.
Transactional-Transformational	Combines transactional and transformational (Bass, 1985).	Flexible, comprehensive.	Balancing can create ambiguity.	Integrates both for clarity and motivation.
Goleman's Emotional Intelligence	Focuses on EI elements (Goleman, 1995).	Enhances interpersonal skills.	Overemphasis may neglect strategy.	Balances EI with strategic and operational focus.

Trait Theory	Leadership linked to traits (Northouse, 2018).	Predicts leadership potential.	Overlooks context.	Aligns traits with situational demands in PCLP.
Management by Objectives	Sets SMART goals (Drucker, 1954).	Improves clarity and motivation.	Time-consuming, short-term focus.	Provides structure for strategic goals in PCLP.
Interactional Theory	Highlights context and interaction (Gallagher, 2008).	Dynamic, context-aware.	Overemphasises immediate context.	Enhances adaptability and real-time response.

Table 5 - Summary of Each Theory's Strengths, Weaknesses and PCLP Implications

2.1.5 Evolutionary Drivers of Ethical Leadership

The evolution of ethical leadership highlights a complex interplay of historical, philosophical, and societal influences, which continue to shape how leaders address organisational and societal challenges (Maak, 2007; Treviño & Weaver, 1999). This trajectory directly informs the researcher's development of the PCLP, integrating these lessons to promote cultural competence, adaptability, and ethical integrity.

Ethical leadership originates in the ancient world, with philosophers like Plato and Aristotle exploring the qualities of virtuous leaders. Aristotle's "golden mean" concept, advocating balance between extremes, resonates with ethical leadership's emphasis on fairness and moderation (Treviño & Brown, 2005, p. 30). Religious teachings also played a pivotal role. Christianity highlights humility, compassion, and servant leadership, exemplified by Jesus Christ (Ciulla, 1998, p. 54). Similarly, Islamic values such as justice, accountability, and fairness guided Muslim rulers, with the Qur'an advocating consultation and equity in leadership practices (Alam, 2001, p. 212). These religious foundations inform the PCLP's core principles of justice and participatory leadership.

The Enlightenment era brought a paradigm shift toward secular ethics, driven by philosophers like Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill (Ciulla, 2005, p. 89). Kant's categorical imperative emphasised universal principles of moral duty, aligning with the PCLP's focus on consistency and integrity. Mill's

utilitarianism, with its emphasis on the greatest good for the greatest number, highlights ethical decision-making frameworks that balance competing priorities—an essential component of the PCLP.

The Industrial Revolution introduced corporate responsibility, underscoring the need for ethical leadership in the face of industrialisation and growing social inequality (Brown et al., 2005, p. 122). Labour movements during this era advocated workers' rights and better working conditions, challenging exploitative practices and inspiring leaders to integrate social justice into their organisational strategies.

In the 20th century, the civil rights movements exemplified the transformative power of ethical leadership. Leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi demonstrated the value of moral courage, nonviolence, and justice in driving societal change (Ciulla, 2005, p. 144). These movements highlighted the potential of ethical leadership to promote equality and challenge systemic injustices—principles central to the PCLP.

Corporate scandals in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, such as those involving Enron and WorldCom, exposed significant ethical failings in business leadership (Treviño et al., 2014, p. 633). These crises catalysed reforms in corporate governance and amplified the importance of transparency and accountability in leadership (Brown et al., 2005, p. 140). Modern organisations now view ethical leadership as essential to sustaining trust, mitigating risk, and achieving long-term success.

This historical evolution underscores the importance of integrating virtue ethics, social responsibility, and accountability into leadership frameworks. These influences shape the PCLP, which combines universal ethical principles with cultural adaptability to address the complexities of a globalised world. For example, the researcher's emphasis on inclusivity and fairness reflects lessons from the Enlightenment and civil rights movements, while the PCLP's focus on transparency draws on corporate governance reforms prompted by ethical lapses.

Despite the progress in ethical leadership, critical gaps remain in addressing multicultural challenges. The PCLP aims to bridge these gaps by equipping leaders with tools to navigate diverse cultural and ethical landscapes while maintaining high standards of integrity. By learning from historical milestones, the PCLP integrates servant leadership, moral courage, and stakeholder accountability into a flexible framework adaptable to contemporary contexts. Future chapters will examine how the PCLP enhances ethical leadership practices and offers practical solutions for leaders operating in dynamic environments.

2.1.6 Contemporary Trends and Challenges

Ethical leadership in the modern era is shaped by a range of transformative trends, including globalisation, technological advancements, demographic shifts, environmental sustainability, and crisis management. Many traditional leadership theories were developed before these challenges emerged, leaving gaps in how to integrate ethical leadership with evolving business complexities. The PCLP addresses this by embedding adaptability, cultural awareness, and long-term ethical vision within its framework.

These factors challenge leaders to navigate increasingly complex organisational landscapes while maintaining ethical integrity. This section examines these trends and their implications, linking them to the evolution and refinement of the PCLP.

Globalisation has fundamentally reshaped the business landscape by fostering interconnectedness and diversity within organisations (Eisenbeiss, 2012, p. 790). Leaders today must navigate cultural differences, language barriers, and varied perspectives to cultivate inclusive and ethical work environments. This requires cultural sensitivity, transparent communication, and the ability to reconcile competing values and norms (Hofstede, 2001, p. 45). Leveraging diversity as a source of innovation and competitive advantage, while adhering to universal ethical principles, is essential for effective leadership in a globalised context (Jonsen & Toulmin, 1988, p. 34). Many traditional leadership theories were developed before these challenges emerged, leaving gaps in how to integrate

ethical leadership with evolving business complexities. The PCLP addresses this by embedding adaptability, cultural awareness, and long-term ethical vision within its framework.

Technological advancements, including artificial intelligence (AI), big data analytics, and automation, present both opportunities and ethical challenges. These innovations raise concerns about privacy, data security, and algorithmic bias, requiring leaders to balance technological progress with ethical considerations (Floridi & Cowls, 2019, p. 5). Transparent decision-making, accountability, and ethical oversight are critical for ensuring trust and integrity in the use of technology (van Wynsberghe & Robbins, 2019, p. 78). Ethical leaders must evaluate the societal implications of technological adoption, maintaining fairness and equity in its implementation (Johnson & Powers, 2005, p. 112). Therefore, The PCLP includes an ethical decision-making framework tailored for technology-driven environments.

Demographic shifts, particularly the entrance of Millennials and Generation Z into the workforce, pose additional challenges for ethical leadership. These generations bring distinct values and expectations, often challenging traditional leadership paradigms (Lyons & Kuron, 2014, p. 141). To engage and motivate a multi-generational workforce, leaders must adopt inclusive leadership styles, fostering collaboration and mutual respect (Ng et al., 2018, p. 123). Empathy, flexibility, and cultural competence are essential for addressing diverse generational needs while upholding ethical standards (Dutton et al., 2010, p. 64).

Environmental sustainability has emerged as a critical dimension of ethical leadership. Climate change, resource depletion, and environmental degradation demand proactive measures to align organisational practices with sustainability goals (Maak & Pless, 2006, p. 101). Ethical leaders must integrate corporate social responsibility into their leadership strategies, prioritising environmental stewardship alongside organisational objectives (Waddock & Bodwell, 2004, p. 25). Promoting sustainable innovation, reducing carbon footprints, and embedding environmentally responsible practices are integral to addressing global sustainability challenges (Shrivastava, 1995, p. 937). The PCLP integrates ethical stewardship as a core component of leadership effectiveness.

Crisis management further tests the ethical capabilities of leaders in situations such as pandemics, natural disasters, and corporate scandals. Navigating crises requires transparency, empathy, and decisive action to address stakeholder concerns and uphold ethical standards (Pearson & Clair, 1998, p. 62). Effective crisis leadership involves maintaining open communication, building trust, and prioritising stakeholder welfare (Brown et al., 2005, p. 125). Demonstrating integrity and resilience during crises strengthens organisational credibility and stakeholder confidence (Bryce & Useem, 1998, p. 11). The PCLP formalises crisis leadership strategies that prioritise ethical integrity.

These trends reveal critical gaps that the researcher will address in subsequent chapters, including:

- The practical application of ethical principles in culturally diverse contexts.
- Ethical challenges posed by emerging technologies.
- Strategies for engaging multi-generational workforces.
- Integrating sustainable business practices.
- Navigating crises with ethical integrity.

Addressing these gaps will enhance the researcher's understanding of ethical leadership and contribute to refining the PCLP, equipping it to respond to contemporary organisational and societal challenges.

2.2 Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership serves as both a personal and professional commitment, shaping the researcher's leadership journey and offering a potential framework for other leaders to adopt. It extends beyond the conduct of the individual leader, embedding ethical considerations into the organisational culture and stakeholder relationships. The researcher's development of the PCLP reflects an effort to integrate these ethical principles into a practical model that not only benefits their leadership practice but also offers a pathway for other leaders to follow. Ethical leadership, in this context, is a

multidimensional approach aimed at fostering inclusive environments that deliver value to all stakeholders, not just a select few.

To achieve this, the PCLP is rooted in the researcher's deeply held values and beliefs, ensuring decisions and actions align with universal ethical principles rather than adopting a relativistic approach focused solely on immediate outcomes. This alignment ensures that leadership decisions are both consistent and adaptable, catering to complex and culturally diverse organisational environments.

Ethical leadership involves taking a proactive stance, with leaders expected to lead by example and provide ethical guidance to their followers. This approach offers significant opportunities for positive impact but also entails substantial responsibilities. Misguided leadership, influenced by unethical decisions or the exploitation of power, can undermine trust and organisational integrity. Research underscores the correlation between the misuse of leadership power and traits associated with "dark" leadership, such as narcissism and Machiavellianism, which can lead to organisational dysfunction (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999, p. 185; Brown & Treviño, 2006, p. 597). These challenges reinforce the importance of leaders embodying ethical principles and fostering a culture of accountability.

The researcher's PCLP builds on the foundational concepts of ethics, values, customs, traditions, and morals, offering a nuanced understanding that can guide leaders in diverse and complex settings. Ethics represent the principles that define right and wrong, while values reflect deeply held beliefs shaping actions. Customs and traditions are culturally ingrained practices that influence behaviour, and morals pertain to personal judgments based on societal or individual standards. The PCLP enables leaders to navigate these overlapping dimensions effectively, ensuring decisions are both ethically grounded and culturally sensitive.

Through the researcher's experiences and reflections, the PCLP emerges as a flexible framework capable of addressing the challenges leaders face in contemporary organisational contexts. By

embedding ethical leadership into their practice, the researcher demonstrates how principled decision-making, inclusivity, and accountability can create environments that foster trust, collaboration, and sustainable success. For other leaders, the PCLP offers a potential roadmap for integrating these principles into their own leadership practices, contributing to a broader legacy of ethical and effective leadership.

2.2.1 Ethical Foundations

Ethics, values, customs, traditions, and morals form the bedrock of ethical leadership, each contributing uniquely to the development of principled decision-making and behaviour in personal and organisational contexts. Understanding these elements is essential for fostering ethical integrity and creating culturally sensitive leadership practices, as reflected in the researcher's PCLP.

Ethics refers to the principles, standards, and values that guide behaviour, distinguishing between right and wrong actions (Resnik, 2020, p. 45). Ethical principles, such as fairness, honesty, integrity, and responsibility, promote moral accountability and foster trust in leadership. The origins of ethics lie in ancient philosophical traditions, including the works of Aristotle, Kant, and Confucius, which explore virtue, morality, and the good life (Becker & Becker, 2001, p. 87). Additionally, religious and cultural traditions, such as Islamic, Christian, and Confucian teachings, have contributed significantly to the development of ethical codes, influencing societal norms and organisational practices. In business, ethics involves applying moral principles to decision-making and stakeholder interactions, addressing issues such as corporate governance, environmental sustainability, and employee relations (Ferrell et al., 2019, p. 23). Ethical business practices enhance organisational reputation and trust, key elements in the researcher's PCLP framework.

Values are deeply held beliefs that serve as guiding principles influencing attitudes and behaviours (Schwartz, 2012, p. 4). Values vary across individuals and cultures, shaping perceptions of morality and providing the foundation for ethical decision-making. In leadership, aligning personal values with organisational goals fosters integrity and authentic engagement. For the researcher, values rooted in

Islamic teachings of justice and fairness underpin the ethical decision-making processes central to the PCLP.

Customs encompass established societal practices that reflect cultural norms and social expectations (Ritzer, 2014, p. 63). They include rituals and social conventions that contribute to identity and community cohesion. In leadership, understanding and respecting cultural customs enhances collaboration and builds trust among diverse teams. For the researcher, recognising and integrating customs into leadership practices is critical for fostering inclusivity and cultural sensitivity within the PCLP.

Traditions represent enduring practices and beliefs passed down through generations, preserving cultural heritage and reinforcing social cohesion (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983, p. 1). Traditions shape identity and provide continuity, offering leaders a framework for honouring cultural heritage while navigating change. The researcher's leadership style incorporates traditional values of justice and collective welfare, which align with the PCLP's emphasis on inclusivity and ethical integrity.

Morals are personal principles that govern an individual's sense of right and wrong, often shaped by values, culture, and social norms (Berkowitz, 2012, p. 53). While ethics address broader societal standards, morals are subjective and internalised, reflecting individual convictions. For the researcher, morals rooted in Islamic teachings guide personal and professional decision-making, reinforcing the importance of ethical consistency and trust within the PCLP.

By understanding and integrating ethics, values, customs, traditions, and morals into leadership practices, the researcher's PCLP provides a flexible and culturally sensitive framework. This approach addresses the complexities of leading in diverse environments while maintaining ethical integrity and fostering inclusive collaboration.

2.2.2 Summary

In summary, the distinctions between ethics, values, customs, traditions, and morals are essential to understanding their roles in shaping human behaviour and decision-making. The comparison in Table 6 highlights key aspects:

- **Ethics** provides a broader framework for reasoning about right and wrong, offering guidelines for moral reasoning and conduct in complex situations (Beauchamp & Bowie, 2019, p. 27).
- **Values** represent deeply held beliefs that inform both ethical decision-making and individual priorities (Schwartz, 2012, p. 43).
- **Customs** and **traditions** are culturally specific practices that contribute to social cohesion, while ethics and morals transcend individual cultures to address universal concepts (Velasquez et al., 2020, p. 62).
- **Morals** are internalised principles that reflect personal beliefs, whereas ethics can also encompass formalised rules, such as professional codes of conduct (Trevino & Nelson, 2014, p. 76).

Term	Description	Example
Ethics	A branch of philosophy concerned with the nature of good and evil, right and wrong, and moral duty. It explores principles for moral reasoning and guides decision-making in complex situations.	• Determining whether it's ethical to lay off employees during a recession. • Considering the ethical implications of using social media for marketing. (Beauchamp & Bowie, 2019, p. 27)
Values	Deeply held beliefs and principles that guide a person's or group's actions. Values influence what we consider important and desirable.	• Valuing honesty, fairness, and compassion. • A company valuing innovation and sustainability (Schwartz, 2012, p. 43).
Customs	Socially accepted practices and behaviours specific to a particular culture or community.	• Greeting someone with a handshake in Western cultures. • Taking off shoes when entering a home in some Asian cultures (Velasquez et al., 2020, p.62).

Traditions	Practices, beliefs, and rituals passed down through generations within a community or culture.	- Celebrating holidays like Christmas or Diwali. - Observing traditional family rituals (Velasquez et al., 2020, p. 64).
Morals	Internalised principles that define what a person or group believes to be right or wrong.	- Believing it's morally wrong to cheat on an exam. - Having a moral obligation to help those in need (Trevino & Nelson, 2014, p. 76).

Table 6 - Ethics, Values, Customs, Traditions and Morals Comparison

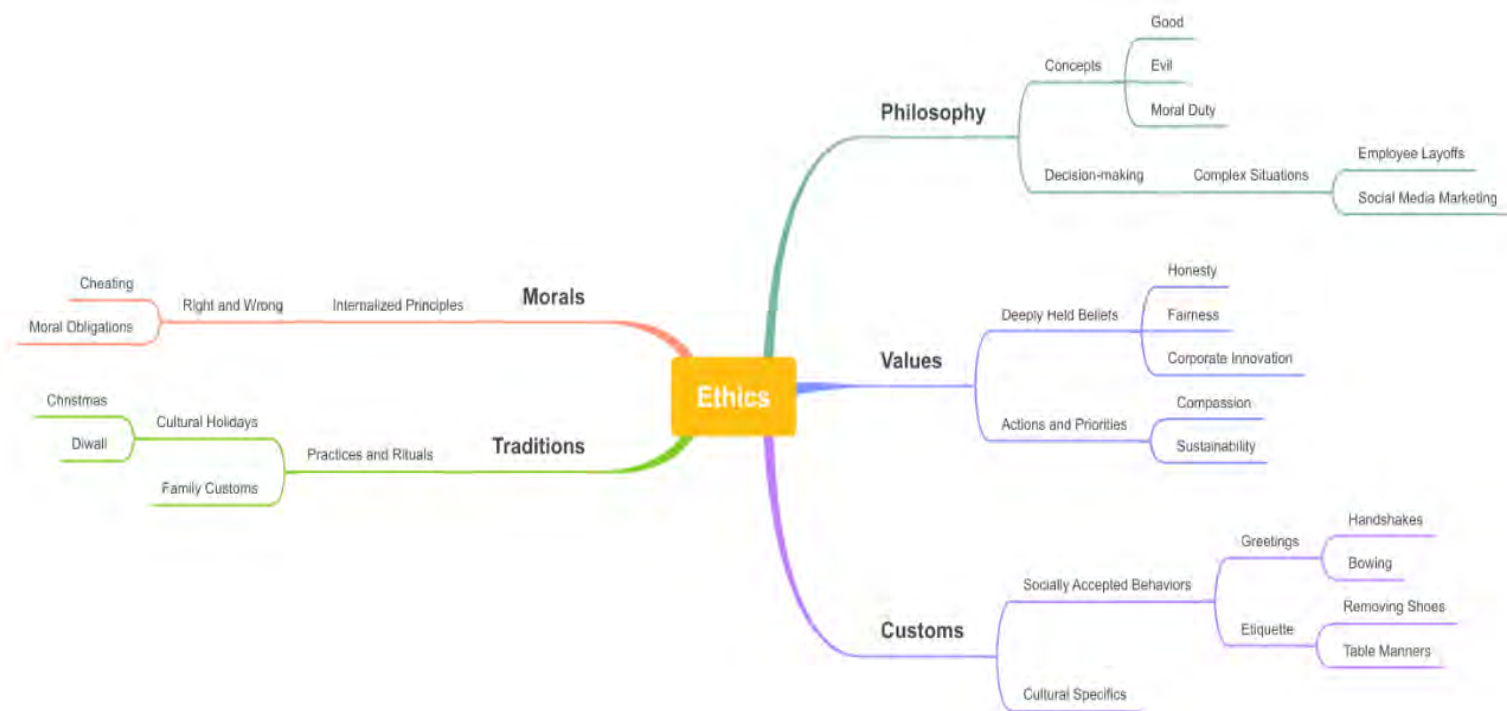


Diagram 3 - Ethics Component

2.3 Cultural Dimensions

Cultural dimensions provide a lens through which to examine the complexities of ethical leadership and its influence on individuals, teams, and organisational outcomes. The researcher aims to elucidate the interaction between culture and ethics, offering valuable insights for leadership practices in multicultural environments. Concepts such as power distance, individualism versus collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance play a significant role in shaping leadership expectations and behaviours.

2.3.1 Power Distance

Power distance reflects the extent to which less powerful members of a society accept unequal power distribution (Hofstede, 1984, p. 65). It significantly influences leadership dynamics:

- **High Power Distance:** In high power-distance cultures, such as those in many Asian and Middle Eastern countries, leadership often centres on authority and hierarchy. Employees expect leaders to make decisions and set a strong moral example, aligning with a top-down approach to ethical leadership (Wang et al., 2015, p. 780). Questioning a leader's decisions may be seen as disrespectful, which can reinforce ethical authority but limit open dialogue. Leaders in these cultures must demonstrate decisiveness and integrity to uphold ethical standards effectively.
- **Low Power Distance:** In contrast, cultures with low power distance, such as those in Scandinavia and Australia, emphasise participatory and democratic leadership styles. Employees feel empowered to voice concerns about unethical practices, and ethical leadership becomes a shared responsibility (Hofstede, 1984, p. 68). Leaders in such contexts must foster transparency and encourage collaboration to build trust and ensure accountability (Wang et al., 2015, p. 783).

2.3.2 Individualism vs. Collectivism

Individualism and collectivism describe the degree to which individuals prioritise personal goals over group objectives:

- **Individualistic Cultures:** In individualistic cultures like the United States, ethical leadership often focuses on protecting individual rights and ensuring fair treatment (Ng & Peng, 2016, p. 20). Leaders are expected to emphasise independence, fairness, and innovation. For instance, leaders in these cultures may prioritise individual achievements and ensure decisions align with personal accountability and justice (Hofstede, 1984, p. 73).

- **Collectivistic Cultures:** In collectivistic cultures, such as Japan and China, ethical leadership prioritises the group's welfare over individual interests. Decisions are often made to preserve harmony and benefit the collective (Ng & Peng, 2016, p. 21). Leaders must balance fairness with cultural expectations of consensus and group cohesion (Hofstede, 1984, p. 74). The researcher reflects on these dynamics, incorporating culturally sensitive decision-making principles into the PCLP.

2.3.3 Uncertainty Avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance reflects a culture's tolerance for ambiguity and risk:

- **High Uncertainty Avoidance:** In high uncertainty avoidance cultures, such as Germany and Japan, ethical leadership emphasises clear rules and structured processes. Leaders are expected to minimise ambiguity by establishing comprehensive ethical guidelines and ensuring strict adherence (Denison et al., 2000, p. 100). This approach fosters predictability but may stifle innovation and flexibility.
- **Low Uncertainty Avoidance:** In cultures with low uncertainty avoidance, such as Brazil and Denmark, leaders embrace adaptability and innovation. Ethical decision-making relies on guiding principles rather than rigid rules, allowing leaders to address complex challenges dynamically (Denison et al., 2000, p. 102). The PCLP incorporates these adaptive strategies, equipping leaders to navigate diverse and uncertain environments.

2.3.4 Cultural Contexts in Ethical Leadership

Cultural identity and context profoundly shape ethical leadership practices. For example, Langlois and Lapointe (2007, p. 249) examined French-language minority school principals in Canada, highlighting how cultural preservation influenced their ethical decision-making. These leaders adopted an "ethic of critique" to advocate for minority rights, demonstrating how ethical leadership

adapts to community-specific challenges. Such insights inform the PCLP, reinforcing the importance of aligning leadership practices with cultural contexts.

2.3.5 Ethical Leadership: Cross-Cultural Views

While core dimensions of ethical leadership, such as integrity and altruism, are universally valued, cultural variations influence their application. Resick et al. (2006, p. 352) found that the emphasis on collective motivation versus individual achievement varies significantly across cultures. For example, North American leaders may focus on personal accountability, whereas leaders in collectivistic societies prioritise group success. These differences underscore the need for culturally sensitive leadership frameworks like the PCLP, which balance universal ethical principles with cultural adaptability.

2.3.6 Ethical Leadership: Fostering Success

Ethical leadership fosters creativity, trust, and organisational innovation. Chen and Hou (2016, p. 765) demonstrated that ethical leaders encourage employees to voice ideas, promoting a culture of creativity and innovation. Similarly, Schumacher and Wasieleski (2013, p. 45) emphasised the integration of ethics into innovation processes, highlighting the long-term benefits of ethical leadership for organisational success. The PCLP incorporates these insights, advocating for ethical principles that drive innovation and sustainability.

2.3.7 Common Themes

The examination of ethical leadership across various studies reveals three interconnected themes: contextual awareness, the multifaceted nature of ethical leadership, and its positive influence on individuals and organisations. These themes underline the complex and dynamic nature of ethical leadership, providing valuable insights for integrating these principles into the PCLP.

- **Contextual Awareness**

Ethical leadership is deeply influenced by the context in which it operates. Cultural, organisational, and situational factors shape how ethical principles are perceived, interpreted, and applied. Langlois and Lapointe (2007, p. 249) highlight how the cultural identity of linguistic minorities in Canadian schools significantly impacted ethical decision-making among school principals. These leaders, tasked with preserving their community's language and cultural heritage, developed an "ethic of critique" to challenge systemic inequities. This example illustrates the importance of tailoring ethical leadership approaches to address the unique needs and challenges of specific environments.

Similarly, Resick et al. (2006, p. 352) found that cultural backgrounds influence the emphasis placed on different aspects of ethical leadership, such as integrity, altruism, and collective motivation. Leaders operating in diverse environments must navigate these cultural variations to effectively communicate and implement ethical practices. For instance, a leader in an individualistic culture might prioritise fairness and justice for individuals, while a leader in a collectivistic context may emphasise group harmony and the collective good.

Chen and Hou (2016, p. 765) further acknowledge the role of an innovative climate in enhancing the effects of ethical leadership. Leaders who foster an environment that encourages creativity and innovation are better equipped to address the specific challenges of their organisations. This highlights the need for leaders to be sensitive to the unique characteristics of their teams and industries, ensuring that ethical principles align with organisational goals and cultural contexts.

- **Multifaceted Concept**

Ethical leadership is not a one-dimensional construct; it encompasses a wide range of behaviours, principles, and frameworks. Langlois and Lapointe (2007) demonstrate the interplay between experience and ethical frameworks, illustrating how leaders draw on various sources to inform their decision-making processes. Leaders often face complex dilemmas that require balancing competing

ethical considerations, such as individual rights versus collective welfare or short-term gains versus long-term sustainability.

Schumacher and Wasieleski (2013, p. 45) emphasise the importance of integrating ethics into all aspects of organisational processes, particularly innovation. Their research highlights the need for ethical considerations to be embedded within the development and implementation of new ideas, ensuring that innovation aligns with organisational values and societal expectations. This underscores the complexity of ethical leadership, requiring leaders to navigate diverse and sometimes conflicting priorities.

Resick et al. (2006, p. 352) identify various dimensions of ethical leadership, such as integrity, altruism, and encouragement. These dimensions reflect the multifaceted nature of ethical leadership, which combines moral character, interpersonal skills, and decision-making capabilities. Understanding these dimensions allows leaders to adopt a holistic approach, addressing the diverse needs of their organisations and stakeholders.

- **Positive Influence**

Ethical leadership has a profound impact on individuals and organisations, fostering trust, collaboration, and innovation. Langlois and Lapointe (2007) observed that ethical leadership promotes ethical decision-making, enabling leaders to address challenges with fairness and integrity. This not only enhances the leader's credibility but also reinforces organisational values and norms.

Chen and Hou (2016, p. 765) found that ethical leadership positively influences employee creativity and voice behaviour. Employees who perceive their leaders as ethical are more likely to express their ideas, concerns, and feedback, contributing to a more innovative and inclusive workplace. This highlights the role of ethical leadership in empowering employees and creating a culture of openness and collaboration.

Craig Johnson's (2001) *Meeting the Ethical Challenges of Leadership: Casting Light or Shadow* underscores the importance of ethical leadership in building trust and fostering integrity within organisations. Ethical leaders create environments where employees feel valued and supported, enhancing morale and organisational commitment. This, in turn, leads to improved performance, stronger relationships with stakeholders, and long-term success

2.3.8 Overall Theme

Ethical leadership is a dynamic and multifaceted construct, shaped by cultural dimensions and contextual challenges. By integrating cultural awareness, adaptability, and universal ethical principles, the PCLP offers a robust framework for addressing the complexities of leadership in multicultural environments. This approach empowers leaders to foster trust, innovation, and ethical integrity, driving organisational success..

2.4 Ethical Pressure

Ethical pressure arises when individuals perceive organisational demands as conflicting with their professional or personal ethical standards. William E. Shafer (2002, p. 67) explores this dynamic in his study of management accountants, investigating the relationships between ethical pressure, organisational-professional conflict, and work outcomes. The research hypothesises that organisational demands to engage in unethical behaviour increase the perception of conflict between organisational and professional ethics within this professional group.

Shafer (2002, p. 69) defines ethical pressure as situations where professionals feel compelled to compromise their ethical principles due to organisational expectations or pressures. These pressures often manifest in high-stakes environments where achieving financial or operational targets is prioritised over ethical compliance. The study examines the impact of these pressures on critical outcomes, including organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions.

The research surveyed a random sample of Certified Management Accountants, collecting data on their experiences with ethical pressure, organisational-professional conflict, and work-related outcomes. The findings confirmed that ethical pressure is positively associated with organisational-professional conflict, leading to adverse effects such as reduced organisational commitment and job satisfaction. This, in turn, was linked to increased turnover intentions, highlighting the long-term risks of tolerating or perpetuating unethical practices within organisations (Shafer, 2002, p. 74).

2.4.1 Ethical Pressure & Maximising Shareholder Returns

A recurring ethical challenge arises when organisational goals prioritise maximising shareholder returns, often at the expense of broader ethical considerations. Ethical leadership offers a framework for balancing financial objectives with fairness, honesty, and social responsibility (Brown et al., 2005, p. 599). Ethical leaders evaluate the impact of their decisions not only on shareholders but also on employees, customers, communities, and the environment (Maak & Pless, 2007, p. 14).

This approach aligns with the increasing integration of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors in investment decisions, where long-term sustainability is prioritised over short-term profit maximisation (Kell et al., 2019, p. 2). Ethical leaders leveraging ESG principles promote transparency, accountability, and sustainable practices, reinforcing trust among stakeholders and ensuring organisational longevity.

Implications for the PCLP

The insights from Shafer's (2002) research and broader discussions on ethical leadership significantly inform the PCLP. The framework emphasises recognising and mitigating ethical pressures by fostering an organisational culture rooted in integrity and accountability. By incorporating ESG considerations, the PCLP provides leaders with tools to navigate ethical dilemmas while achieving financial sustainability. The researcher's experience also highlights the need for proactive measures, such as

clear ethical guidelines and support systems, to help professionals manage organisational pressures without compromising their values.

2.4.1.1 Ethical Dilemmas

The pursuit of maximising shareholder returns often creates ethical dilemmas, particularly when profit-driven decisions conflict with ethical responsibilities. These dilemmas manifest in various forms, including compromising safety standards, environmental harm, and the exploitation of labour. Addressing these conflicts is critical for fostering trust, sustainability, and long-term organisational success.

- **Cutting Corners on Safety**

Companies may prioritise cost reductions over adhering to safety protocols, jeopardising the welfare of employees and consumers. For example, neglecting safety measures to boost short-term profits has led to catastrophic consequences in industries such as manufacturing and construction. As Gentile (2016, p. 43) notes, such practices not only harm individuals but also erode organisational integrity and reputation.

- **Environmental Damage**

Profit-maximising strategies often disregard the long-term environmental consequences of business activities. Practices like excessive resource extraction, pollution, and deforestation are symptomatic of this dilemma, threatening ecosystems and future generations. Slaughter (2018, p. 56) underscores the importance of balancing financial gains with environmental stewardship, advocating for ethical decision-making that incorporates sustainability into business operations.

- **Exploitation of Labour**

Labour exploitation is another common ethical conflict, where organisations prioritise shareholder interests at the expense of workers' rights. This includes inadequate wages,

unsafe working conditions, and extended work hours, often in regions with lax labour laws.

Locke et al. (2007, p. 28) emphasise that such practices undermine employee well-being and foster an inequitable workplace culture, ultimately harming organisational performance and trust.

In these scenarios, the pursuit of short-term financial objectives may undermine ethical obligations, damaging stakeholder trust and long-term sustainability. These dilemmas highlight the tension between profitability and ethical responsibility, challenging leaders to find balanced solutions.

2.4.1.2 Finding Common Ground

Despite the inherent tension, the relationship between ethical leadership and shareholder returns is not inherently adversarial. Ethical practices can align with financial performance when approached strategically, offering opportunities for common ground in the following areas:

- **Long-term Sustainability**

Ethical leadership fosters organisational resilience by building trust, attracting skilled talent, and enhancing customer loyalty. These factors contribute to a positive brand reputation, creating a competitive edge in the market. Freeman (2010, p. 27) argues that aligning ethical leadership with long-term business strategies results in sustainable financial success, benefiting both shareholders and broader stakeholder groups.

- **Investor Preferences**

As environmental, social, and governance (ESG) considerations gain prominence, investors increasingly favour organisations that demonstrate ethical responsibility. Research by Eccles et al. (2012, p. 88) reveals that companies with strong ESG commitments often outperform those with weaker ethical records, indicating that responsible practices enhance investor confidence and drive better financial outcomes.

- **Regulation and Compliance**

Adhering to ethical standards mitigates risks associated with legal violations, such as fines and reputational damage. Ethical leadership ensures compliance with evolving regulatory requirements, protecting shareholder returns while safeguarding organisational integrity. Nance et al. (2019, p. 74) highlight the financial and reputational benefits of maintaining strong ethical compliance, underscoring its role in reducing operational risks.

Implications for the PCLP

The dilemmas and opportunities discussed underscore the importance of the PCLP's adaptability and focus on balancing ethical principles with business objectives. By integrating lessons from these challenges, the PCLP offers leaders practical tools to navigate ethical conflicts without compromising financial or organisational goals. Leaders adopting the PCLP are encouraged to prioritise stakeholder well-being, align long-term sustainability with ethical practices, and foster environments of trust and accountability, ensuring alignment with both ethical imperatives and shareholder interests.

2.4.2 Ethics vs. Legality.

The distinction between ethics and legality is fundamental in understanding organisational leadership. Ethics, grounded in individual and societal moral values, addresses questions of fairness, justice, and the broader concept of doing what is right (Hinman, 2013, p. 12). Legality, on the other hand, pertains to compliance with established laws and regulations, which are often designed to provide a framework for societal order (Beyleveld & Brownsword, 2001, p. 56). While there is a natural overlap between the two, they are not synonymous. Laws often reflect prevailing ethical norms, but they do not always encompass the full range of moral considerations, nor do they necessarily adapt quickly to changing societal values.

A critical aspect of this distinction lies in the subjectivity of ethics compared to the objectivity of legal standards. Ethics are shaped by cultural norms, personal beliefs, and societal expectations, leading to

variability across contexts and individuals (Cahn & Markie, 2012, p. 88). What one person deems ethical may conflict with another's perception, creating grey areas in decision-making. Conversely, laws are codified, offering a degree of clarity and enforceability. However, ethical dilemmas often arise when legal obligations diverge from moral imperatives. Civil disobedience provides a classic example, as individuals challenge unjust laws to uphold higher ethical principles, a concept explored extensively by Rawls (1999, p. 322). This tension between ethics and legality underscores the necessity for leaders to navigate complex decisions where adherence to one may require compromising the other.

Whistle-blowing highlights another layer of complexity in the ethics-legality relationship. Employees who expose unethical corporate practices often face legal repercussions, such as breaches of confidentiality or non-disclosure agreements, even though their actions may be ethically motivated. Miceli and Near (1984, p. 691) illustrate how whistle-blowers act out of a sense of moral duty to protect stakeholders or the public, despite legal risks. Such scenarios challenge leaders to foster organisational cultures where ethical concerns can be addressed transparently and constructively, minimising the need for external disclosure.

While laws provide a baseline for acceptable behaviour, they are not infallible. Historically, legal systems have permitted practices now widely regarded as unethical, such as slavery and discrimination. These examples demonstrate how ethics evolve over time, often ahead of legal reforms (Historian, 2020, p. 67). Baron (1994, p. 42) argues that ethical leadership demands a commitment to principles that transcend legal requirements, fostering a just and compassionate organisational environment. For instance, organisations adopting environmentally sustainable practices beyond regulatory mandates exemplify the pursuit of ethical integrity over mere compliance.

Cultural relativism further complicates the ethics-legality dynamic. Ethical norms vary significantly across cultures, resulting in legal systems that reflect local values and priorities. Actions deemed

acceptable in one context may be considered unethical in another (Culturalist, 2017, p. 49). For example, child labour may be legally permissible in some regions but is widely condemned on ethical grounds. Leaders operating in multicultural environments must navigate these disparities thoughtfully, balancing cultural sensitivity with universal ethical principles.

Organisational leaders are uniquely positioned to bridge the gap between ethics and legality. This distinction is especially critical in contexts where laws lag behind ethical standards, as seen in corporate scandals that expose deficiencies in governance and accountability. The PCLP underscores the importance of integrating ethical considerations into leadership practices, enabling leaders to address dilemmas with integrity and foresight. By fostering cultures that value ethics over mere legal compliance, leaders can build trust, enhance stakeholder relationships, and contribute to sustainable success.

Recognising the inherent tension between ethics and legality is essential for leaders striving to uphold moral integrity while navigating complex organisational landscapes. Ethical leadership is not about blindly adhering to the law or pursuing rigid moral ideals but about understanding the interplay between the two and making decisions that serve the greater good. This approach aligns with the broader objectives of the PCLP, equipping leaders with the tools to address ethical dilemmas in culturally diverse and rapidly evolving contexts.

2.5 Cultural Insights: Shaping Ethical Leadership Framework

The research offers valuable insights into the complexities of ethical leadership across diverse cultural contexts. Several advantages emerge, highlighting the interplay between ethical considerations, cultural dimensions, and leadership outcomes:

1. Understanding Cultural Influences

Insights into cultural dimensions such as power distance, individualism versus collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance inform ethical leadership expectations (Hofstede, 1984, p. 30).

This understanding allows leaders to adapt their approaches while maintaining ethical integrity, fostering culturally sensitive practices that enhance effectiveness in multicultural environments.

2. Promoting Ethical Leadership Globally

The research emphasises the importance of global leadership development initiatives that integrate ethical decision-making into training programs. Resick et al. (2006, p. 352) note that culturally informed leaders are better equipped to navigate ethical dilemmas and build inclusivity within their organisations.

3. Fostering Positive Outcomes

Ethical leadership positively impacts organisations by fostering trust, creativity, and innovation, which drive long-term success (Chen & Hou, 2016, p. 25; Johnson, 2001, p. 77). These traits align with the researcher's goals in developing the PCLP to address ethical challenges while promoting organisational excellence.

4. Navigating Ethical Challenges

Ethical dilemmas often arise when balancing shareholder interests with broader societal concerns. The research explores these conflicts, providing actionable guidance for leaders to prioritise long-term sustainability without compromising ethical standards (Brown et al., 2005, p. 140; Maak & Pless, 2007, p. 15).

5. Balancing Ethics and Legality

Differentiating between legal compliance and ethical responsibility is critical for navigating complex leadership challenges. Cahn and Markie (2012, p. 88) argue that ethical considerations often extend beyond legal obligations, necessitating a nuanced approach to decision-making that aligns with both principles and policies.

These insights reinforce the necessity of an adaptive framework like the PCLP, which integrates ethical principles, cultural sensitivity, and practical leadership strategies to address diverse organisational and societal challenges.

2.6 The Conclusion

The chapter highlights the multifaceted nature of ethical leadership, exploring cultural dimensions, ethical dilemmas, and the distinction between ethics and legality. Ethical leadership is shown to extend beyond regulatory compliance, requiring leaders to uphold moral principles that build trust, foster creativity, and drive innovation within organisations.

By understanding cultural dimensions such as power distance, individualism versus collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance, leaders are better equipped to navigate diverse organisational environments. The interplay between these cultural influences and ethical leadership underpins the importance of culturally adaptable frameworks, such as the PCLP, that support effective decision-making.

The chapter also delves into ethical dilemmas, particularly those arising from the tension between maximising shareholder returns and prioritising ethical responsibilities. These discussions provide a nuanced perspective on the challenges leaders face and the importance of integrating long-term sustainability into their ethical leadership practices.

In conclusion, this chapter underscores the necessity for leaders to adopt a global perspective, embrace cultural diversity, and maintain a steadfast commitment to ethical principles. Ethical leadership not only fosters trust and inclusivity but also contributes to organisational success and societal well-being. Existing leadership models—while valuable—often fail to provide actionable strategies for ethical leadership in complex, multicultural, and rapidly evolving environments. The PCLP bridges this gap by offering a comprehensive, adaptive framework that balances ethical integrity with practical leadership effectiveness.

Next...

In Building upon the theoretical exploration of ethical leadership in Chapter 2, chapter 3 delves into the development of the PCLP by examining its progression through the lens of ethical practice. The chapter outlines how leadership theories align with the creation of the PCLP, focusing on its adaptability to complex organisational and cultural contexts.

The discussion begins by integrating leadership theories with the researcher's experiences, providing a foundation for the PCLP's conceptual development. This is followed by an examination of the defining moments and ethical challenges that shaped the framework. Key models, such as the E.T.H.I.C.A.L. L.E.A.D.E.R. model, are introduced to highlight the practical application of the PCLP in fostering ethical decision-making.

By presenting a detailed analysis of the PCLP's evolution, this chapter bridges theoretical insights with lived experiences, demonstrating how ethical leadership can be operationalised to address organisational and cultural complexities. The discussion concludes with a reflection on the implications of the PCLP for future leadership practice, setting the stage for the methodological approaches explored in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER 3. PCLP DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE LENS OF ETHICAL PRACTICE

3.1 Introduction

This chapter delves into the evolution of my PCLP, developed through critical self-reflection and grounded in ethical practice. As the framework is uniquely mine, it represents my ongoing journey as a leader, shaped by personal experiences, challenges, and a commitment to ethical decision-making. Through this lens, I explore how leadership theories, such as transformational and servant leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Greenleaf, 1977), have informed the development of my PCLP and its application in complex organisational contexts.

A core element of this chapter is the introduction of the Ethical Leader Model, represented by the acronym E.T.H.I.C.A.L. L.E.A.D.E.R., which outlines the critical attributes guiding me as an ethical leader. This model reflects my values and serves as a practical tool to enhance ethical decision-making within the PCLP framework. Additionally, the chapter presents case studies that trace my leadership over time, demonstrating how PCLP principles have informed ethical choices and strengthened my ability to lead with integrity in dynamic environments.

This chapter critically examines both the strengths and limitations of my PCLP rather than generalising its applicability. The focus is not on promoting universal adoption but on assessing its effectiveness in specific leadership cases, highlighting areas where refinement is necessary.

3.2 Aligning Leadership Theories with PCLP Development

From my standpoint as a leader, I perceive leadership as a multifaceted concept, drawing inspiration from a range of models and theories. These frameworks collectively contribute valuable insights to the development of my PCLP, enabling a dynamic and adaptable leadership style (Bennis, 2000, p. 46).

Transformational Leadership Theory resonates with me by emphasising the importance of inspiring a shared vision and fostering personal growth. This approach has proven particularly effective in promoting innovation, teamwork, and the achievement of long-term goals (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 3). Transactional Leadership Theory highlights the significance of setting clear expectations and providing structured rewards. I find value in using rewards and consequences, such as employee bonuses, time-off rewards, and overtime pay, to incentivise task completion and maintain productivity and accountability (Burns, 1978, p. 22).

Situational Leadership Theory aligns with my belief in leadership flexibility. Adapting my style based on followers' readiness and the context allows me to ensure that my leadership remains responsive and relevant, addressing specific needs as they arise (Hersey & Blanchard, 1996, p. 75). Similarly, Contingency Theory reinforces the importance of tailoring leadership strategies to fit the situation, recognising the fluid and evolving nature of organisational dynamics (Fiedler, 1967, p. 112).

Path-Goal Theory informs my perspective on guiding subordinates by clarifying goals, removing obstacles, and providing necessary support, all of which are integral to facilitating their success (House, 1971, p. 324). The Servant Leadership Model, which prioritises the well-being of followers and contributing to the greater good, closely aligns with my dedication to fostering a constructive and encouraging atmosphere. This approach underscores the significance of empathy and promoting the overall welfare of team members (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 27).

Authentic Leadership Theory emphasises transparency, genuineness, and self-awareness as foundational qualities of ethical leadership. These traits are central to my leadership philosophy, enabling me to build trust and nurture an ethical organisational culture (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 320). Charismatic Leadership Theory highlights the value of emotional connections and inspiration. While I recognise the power of charisma, I believe it should complement other critical leadership attributes, such as empathy and ethical integrity (Conger & Kanungo, 1998, p. 133).

The Transactional-Transformational Leadership Model strikes a balance between task-oriented focus and transformative inspiration, allowing me to drive both productivity and innovation (Bass, 1985, p. 21). Finally, Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Model provides the foundation for my belief in the importance of self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills. These elements are crucial for effective leadership, especially when navigating complex interpersonal and organisational challenges (Goleman, 1995, p. 50).

In essence, my leadership philosophy reflects a multifaceted approach, drawing on diverse leadership models and theories (Bennis, 2000, p. 46). While these leadership theories have influenced the PCLP's development, they also highlight potential gaps. A key issue is that traditional leadership models assume a stable environment, whereas my leadership experiences have shown that real-world decision-making often demands adaptability under uncertainty. Thus, the PCLP is not only an integration of these models but also a refinement of their shortcomings. For example, hierarchical structures may limit open communication, as employees often hesitate to voice concerns for fear of repercussions (Muchinsky, 2013, p. 140). Additionally, Western-centric leadership theories may not seamlessly translate to cultures with strict hierarchical authority or collectivist traditions, emphasising the need for cultural sensitivity and adaptability.

This multifaceted perspective allows me to navigate complex leadership landscapes, evolving my approach to remain context-sensitive while leading with empathy and a commitment to positive change. Table 7 illustrates how each leadership theory influences my approach.

Theory	Key Takeaways for Researcher	How it Influences Researcher's Approach
Transformational	Inspire shared vision, foster growth	Promotes innovation, teamwork, and long-term goals
Transactional	Clear expectations, structured rewards	Incentivises task completion, maintains productivity and accountability (e.g., bonuses, time off)
Situational	Flexible style based on follower readiness and context	Ensures responsive and relevant leadership tailored to specific needs
Contingency	Adapt leadership strategies to situations	Acknowledges the ever-changing nature of organisations and context-aware leadership

Path-Goal	Guide subordinates, clarify goals, remove obstacles, provide support	Facilitates subordinate success
Servant Leadership	Prioritise follower well-being, contribute to the greater good	Fosters a constructive and encouraging atmosphere with empathy and focus on overall welfare
Authentic Leadership	Transparency, genuineness, self-awareness	Builds trust and nurtures an ethical organisational culture
Charismatic Leadership	Power of emotional connections and inspiration	Charisma complements other leadership attributes
Transactional-Transformational	A balance between task focus and transformative inspiration	Drives both productivity and innovation
Goleman's Emotional Intelligence	Importance of self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills	Emphasises emotional intelligence for effective leadership

Table 7 - How Each Theory Influences Researcher's Approach

3.3 Developing the Researcher's PCLP

3.3.1 Progression of PCLP Specification

The development of my PCLP has been a transformative journey, shaped by a synthesis of academic studies, practical experiences, and extensive readings. This evolution has provided me with a more nuanced understanding of leadership theory and practice, particularly through the lens of ethical decision-making.

The foundation of my PCLP was established through a dedicated pursuit of expertise in leadership theory and practice. Academic courses and readings offered comprehensive insights into various leadership styles, models, and theories, serving as the initial building blocks for my framework. These foundational experiences enabled me to critically evaluate and adapt existing theories to align with my personal values and leadership goals.

As I delved deeper into my studies, I recognised the necessity of accounting for cultural, social, demographic, and economic factors in leadership decision-making. Courses emphasising these dynamics expanded my perspective, highlighting the interplay between leadership practices and societal factors. This understanding became a critical element of the PCLP, ensuring its applicability across diverse contexts and promoting a holistic view of leadership.

A pivotal moment in the evolution of my PCLP was the exploration of decision-making and communication skills. Academic subjects and real-world experiences allowed me to apply theoretical concepts in practical scenarios, enhancing my ability to make informed decisions and communicate them effectively. This experiential learning shaped the PCLP into a flexible and adaptable framework, equipping me to navigate complex organisational challenges.

The subject *Critical Reasoning and Ethics for Business Leaders* was instrumental in refining my ethical decision-making approach. This course deepened my understanding of ethical leadership theories, such as Deontological Ethics and Utilitarian Ethics, and their application in leadership contexts (DeGeorge, 1999, p. 27; Velasquez et al., 2020, p. 43). These ethical principles resonated with my personal values, reinforcing the need to embed moral considerations into the PCLP.

The societal expectation for logical and morally grounded leadership (Treviño & Brown, 2013, p. 125) further underscored the importance of ethical decision-making. This expectation prompted me to integrate compassion as a core element of the PCLP. My studies in *Business Leadership – Theory and Practice* identified a gap in existing leadership models, particularly the absence of empathy and understanding as central components. By addressing this gap, I refined the PCLP to prioritise compassion, aligning it more closely with ethical leadership principles (Northouse, 2021, p. 83).

The evolution of my PCLP represents a continuous and structured cycle of learning, reflection, and refinement, directly shaped by challenges in ethically complex environments. Through repeated application in leadership dilemmas—such as procurement integrity and ethical sourcing—I progressively adapted the PCLP to be more strategic, culturally responsive, and morally grounded. These real-world experiences provided vital learning loops that transformed the paradigm from theory into an operational tool uniquely tailored to my leadership journey (Northouse, 2021, p. 83). Through academic exploration, practical application, and engagement with ethical leadership theories, I have expanded my understanding of effective leadership. This ongoing process has allowed me to incorporate new insights and perspectives into the PCLP, creating a dynamic

framework tailored to guide ethical leadership in diverse organisational contexts (DeRue & Ashford, 2015, p. 264).

While traditional models such as transformational and servant leadership have contributed meaningfully to my leadership philosophy, they often lack responsiveness to conflicting organisational priorities, especially in cross-cultural or high-stakes scenarios (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Greenleaf, 1977). The PCLP addresses these gaps by integrating ethical decision-making with context-sensitive adaptability. Unlike the Transformational model, which prioritises vision, or Cultural Intelligence (Earley & Ang, 2003), which focuses on adaptability without moral grounding, the PCLP fuses both domains, offering a leadership framework that enables me to uphold ethical standards while navigating diverse and sometimes competing stakeholder demands.

Moving forward, I acknowledge the importance of continually testing and refining the assumptions underpinning the PCLP. Ensuring its relevance and adaptability will be crucial for maintaining its efficacy as a guide for ethical leadership practices, particularly in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

3.3.2 Critical Reflection on PCLP

While the PCLP has strengthened my ability to make ethical decisions, it is essential to recognise its limitations and areas for improvement. One key limitation is its reliance on adaptability, which, while beneficial, may lead to inconsistencies if not carefully managed. In high-stakes environments with rigid structures, flexibility may not always be an option, requiring a more structured ethical decision-making approach.

Prior to developing the PCLP, my leadership responses to ethical challenges were largely reactive and informed by general principles from existing models. For example, in the procurement ethics case, my early reliance on compliance-based frameworks limited my ability to advocate for cultural change. Post-PCLP, I approached similar issues proactively, integrating educational interventions and

stakeholder dialogue, which reflect the paradigm's influence on shaping strategic ethical leadership. This before-and-after contrast illustrates how the PCLP evolved from a conceptual model into a transformative leadership tool aligned with my values and practical needs. This timeline (Diagram 4) illustrates the development of the PCLP across key stages in the researcher's leadership journey, integrating ethical challenges, theoretical insights, practical application, and continuous refinement. It highlights the pivotal milestones that transformed the PCLP from a conceptual model to a strategic leadership tool grounded in ethical principles and cross-cultural responsiveness.

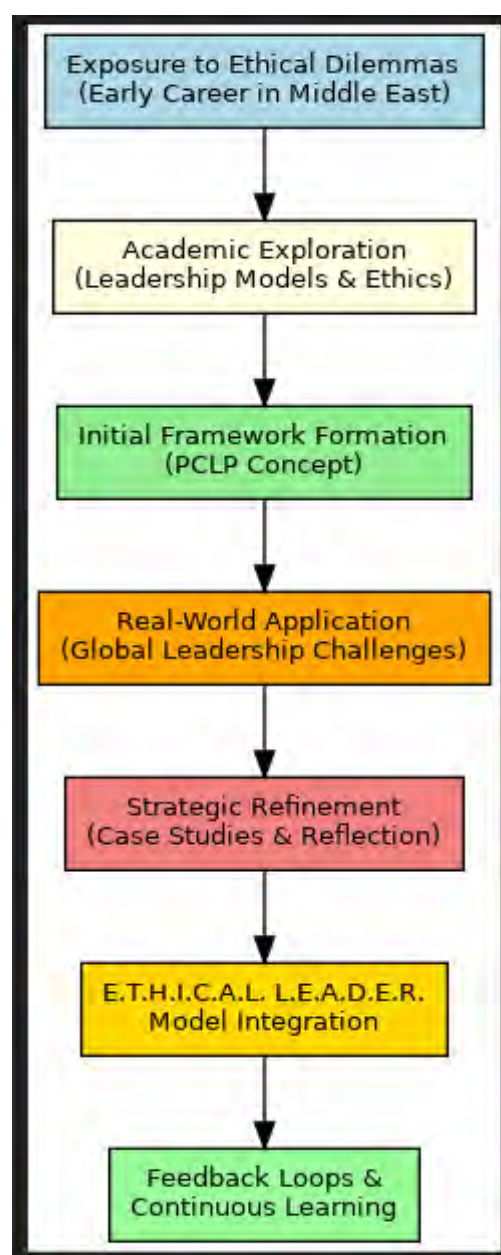


Diagram 4: Timeline of the Researcher's Evolving PCLP

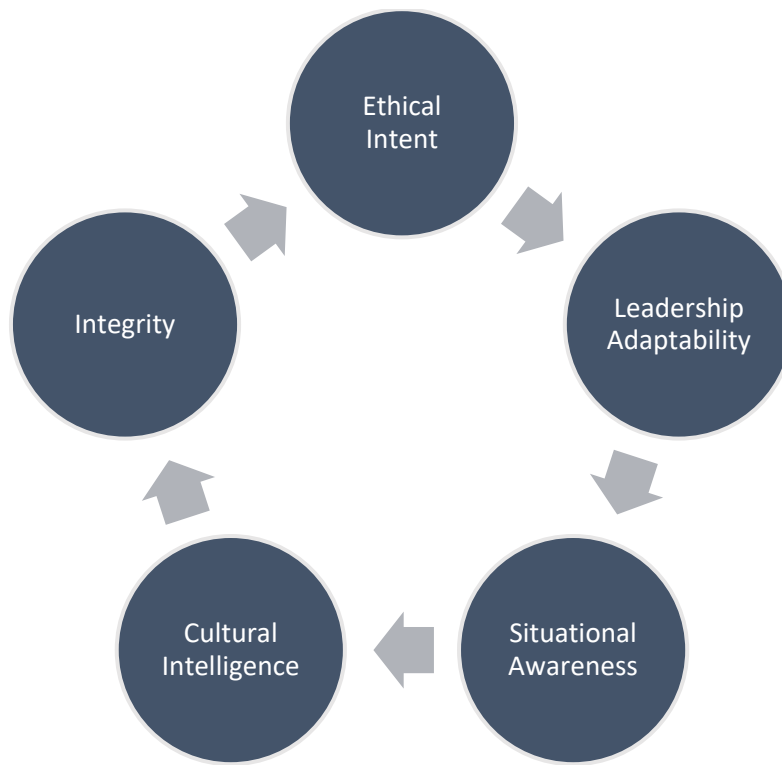


Diagram 5 Initial PCLP - Pre-DBL Development

Diagram 5, Initial PCLP – Pre-DBL Development, this simplified model reflects the Researcher’s early conceptualisation of the PCLP, grounded in ethical intent, situational awareness, and adaptability. It served as the foundation for the leadership approach prior to engagement with the DBL research process.

Additionally, the PCLP is largely shaped by my personal leadership experiences, which may not be universally applicable. The model may require additional empirical validation through broader testing across various industries and leadership roles. This self-assessment ensures that the PCLP remains a dynamic and evolving framework rather than a rigid leadership theory.

3.4 E.T.H.I.C.A.L. L.E.A.D.E.R. Model

The E.T.H.I.C.A.L. L.E.A.D.E.R. Model represents a core component of *my* Personal Contingent Leadership Paradigm (PCLP). It encapsulates the critical attributes necessary for ethical leadership, providing a framework that aligns with my leadership philosophy and serves as a guide for navigating

complex organisational contexts. Each letter in the acronym reflects a key attribute that defines an ethical leader and underpins the principles of my PCLP (Diagram 6).

An ethical leader is **equitable**, treating everyone fairly and fostering a culture of inclusion. This approach ensures that all individuals, regardless of their background, are valued and respected (Northouse, 2021, p. 290). Equitable leadership is essential for building trust, promoting collaboration, and creating a supportive environment. **Trustworthiness** is equally vital, as ethical leaders earn trust through honesty and reliability. This quality is instrumental in developing strong relationships and cultivating an ethical organisational culture (Brown & Treviño, 2006, p. 598).

A **holistic** approach is another defining attribute of ethical leaders. By considering the broader impact of decisions, leaders can address the needs of various stakeholders while contributing positively to societal and environmental outcomes (Freeman, 1984, p. 25). This aligns with my emphasis on balancing organisational objectives with ethical responsibilities. At the heart of ethical leadership lies **integrity**, which involves acting with unwavering moral principles and consistency, demonstrating a steadfast commitment to ethical decision-making (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999, p. 191).

Compassion plays a pivotal role in ethical leadership. Empathy and care for others' well-being are essential for fostering a supportive and humane organisational culture (Goleman, 1995, p. 43).

Ethical leaders are also **advocates**, championing ethical behaviour and addressing wrongdoing.

Advocacy is critical for promoting accountability and reinforcing a culture of ethical standards (Treviño et al., 2003, p. 8). Furthermore, ethical leaders **lead by example**, setting a positive tone by consistently demonstrating ethical conduct, which inspires others to follow (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 320).

Ethical leaders ensure their goals are achievable within **legal** and regulatory boundaries. Compliance with laws and ethical guidelines safeguards organisational integrity and reinforces ethical practices (Carroll, 1991, p. 43). Moreover, **empowerment** is a vital attribute, as ethical leaders create an environment that fosters autonomy and supports ethical decision-making. By empowering their

teams, leaders encourage personal growth and shared accountability (Kouzes & Posner, 2017, p. 173).

Accountability mechanisms are integral to ethical leadership, ensuring that clear systems are in place to monitor progress and uphold ethical standards (Eisenbeiss, 2012, p. 792). These mechanisms involve structured processes such as performance evaluations, policies, and feedback loops that facilitate transparency and adherence to ethical principles (Northouse, 2021, p. 362).

Decisiveness is another essential trait, enabling ethical leaders to make clear and confident choices that prioritise moral considerations (Ciulla, 2004, p. 57).

Lastly, ethical leaders are **encouraging**, fostering a culture where individuals are motivated to achieve ambitious goals and continually improve. They also demonstrate **reflectiveness**, regularly evaluating their actions and seeking feedback to ensure continuous growth in ethical leadership practices (Senge, 2006, p. 41). Diagram 6 & 7 and Table 8 provide a detailed overview of the attributes that distinguish an ethical leader from a manager or traditional leader.

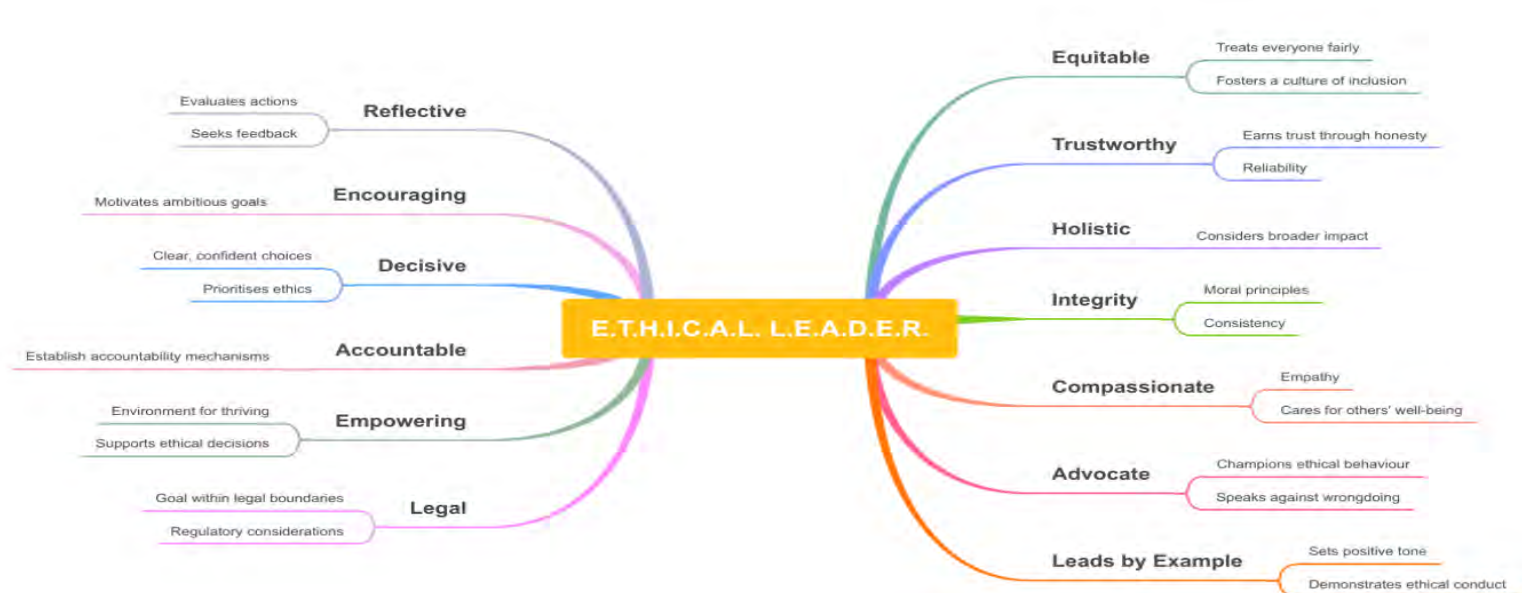


Diagram 6 – ETHICAL LEADER

Qualities	Manager	Leader	Ethical Leader
Focus	✓	✓	✓
Activities	✓	✓	✓
Power Source	✓	✓	✓
Change Orientation	✓	✓	✓
People Focus	✓	✓	✓
Goals	✓	✓	✓
Influence	✓	✓	✓
Clear Vision	✗	✓	✓
Motivation	✗	✓	✓
Communication	✗	✓	✓
Decision Making	✗	✓	✓
Delegation	✗	✓	✓
Accountability	✗	✓	✓
Equitable	✗	✗	✓
Trustworthiness	✗	✗	✓
Holistic Approach	✗	✗	✓
Integrity	✗	✗	✓
Compassion	✗	✗	✓
Advocacy	✗	✗	✓
Leading by Example	✗	✗	✓
Legal Compliance	✗	✗	✓
Empowerment	✗	✗	✓
Accountability (Mechanisms)	✗	✗	✓
Decisiveness	✗	✗	✓
Encouragement	✗	✗	✓
Reflection	✗	✗	✓

Table 8 Comparison of Qualities: Manager, Leader, Ethical Leader



Diagram 7 - The Progressive Journey from Manager to Ethical Leader

3.5 Assessing PCLP Through Longitudinal Leadership Cases

To evaluate the effectiveness of the PCLP, I examine how it has evolved through repeated leadership challenges over time. Rather than viewing leadership dilemmas as isolated events, I analyse how each case contributed to the refinement of the PCLP and my leadership effectiveness.

Case 1: Ethical Leadership Under Corporate Pressure

This case study examines a real-world scenario where I, as a leader within a global FMCG (Fast-Moving Consumer Goods) chain, encountered a significant ethical dilemma. The CEO, focused on cost reduction, pressured me to maintain a business relationship with a supplier suspected of employing child labour in Asia.

At first, I relied on transformational leadership principles, attempting to influence the CEO by emphasising the long-term reputational risks associated with unethical sourcing. However, this approach was ineffective as the CEO prioritised short-term financial outcomes.

The case study underscores the tension between financial objectives and ethical conduct in a corporate setting. Bass and Avolio (1994, p. 5) differentiate between transactional leadership, which emphasises short-term goals and rewards, and transformational leadership, which inspires and motivates employees to prioritise long-term objectives and ethical considerations. The CEO's directive reflected a transactional approach, prioritising cost reduction over ethical concerns. In contrast, my decision to prioritise ethical principles over short-term financial gains demonstrated transformational leadership.

Recognising the limitations of transformational persuasion, I adopted a more strategic approach, leveraging contingency-based decision-making to propose alternative suppliers that met both ethical and financial criteria. This adaptation marked a shift in my application of PCLP—from solely relying on ethical reasoning to integrating pragmatic business strategies that align with ethical values.

This experience reinforced that ethical leadership requires both moral conviction and strategic navigation. The PCLP evolved by incorporating a more nuanced approach to ethical advocacy—balancing ethical imperatives with practical business constraints to achieve long-term impact. This experience aligns with Yukl's (2013, p. 202) perspective on leadership challenges, where ethical leaders often face competing pressures and must make decisions with significant personal consequences.

This scenario highlights the crucial role of ethical leadership in addressing corporate pressures. Greenleaf's (1970, p. 9) concept of servant leadership, which prioritises the well-being of followers and the greater good, resonates with my actions. By prioritising ethical conduct over personal gain, I upheld servant leadership principles. Furthermore, Carroll (1991, p. 43) emphasises the growing expectation for businesses to demonstrate social responsibility. Ethical leadership ensures that businesses operate within legal and ethical frameworks, contributing to a sustainable future (Goleman, 2006, p. 153).

This experience reinforced that ethical leadership requires both moral conviction and strategic navigation. The PCLP evolved by incorporating a more nuanced approach to ethical advocacy—balancing ethical imperatives with practical business constraints to achieve long-term impact.

Case 2: Upholding Integrity in Procurement

In another instance, I faced an ethical dilemma when the CEO pressured me to manipulate a \$5 million tendering process to favour a friend's company.

The established tendering process, which I helped design, emphasised transparency and objectivity, aligning with best practices in procurement. These principles ensure fair competition and selection based on pre-defined criteria (Carter et al., 2020, p. 317). However, the CEO's request to include their friend's company in the negotiation stage—despite the company failing to meet initial criteria—constituted a clear violation of ethical procurement principles. This situation aligns with Treviño and

Weaver's (1995, p. 119) notion of ethical relativism, where personal relationships are given precedence over professional obligations.

However, the absence of a formal whistleblowing process prevented me from escalating my concerns effectively. This resonates with Crane et al.'s (2010, p. 284) emphasis on the importance of whistleblowing mechanisms in fostering ethical conduct within organisations. The CEO's decision to award the contract to their friend, despite the company's lack of qualifications, highlights the potential consequences faced by whistleblowers.

This situation represents a missed opportunity to secure the best value for the organisation by adhering to objective criteria. It aligns with the principles of agency theory (Jensen & Meckling, 1976, p. 308), which emphasise that managers must act in the best interests of shareholders. The lack of a formal process for addressing ethical concerns further undermined accountability within the organisation.

Through reflection, I recognised that simply enforcing ethical compliance was not enough—it was essential to proactively build a culture where ethical procurement was embedded in the organisation's leadership ethos. Subsequently, I introduced structured training programs to educate leadership teams on the financial and reputational benefits of ethical procurement, ensuring long-term change rather than short-term resistance.

This experience highlighted the importance of proactive ethical leadership rather than reactive enforcement. My PCLP evolved by incorporating ethical advocacy as a continuous process rather than a response to dilemmas.

3.5.1 Analysing the PCLP for Ethical Decisions

This section analyses two pivotal leadership scenarios through the lens of *my* Personal Contingent Leadership Paradigm (PCLP), emphasising principles of conduct, leadership, and professionalism.

These cases highlight ethical challenges I encountered within corporate environments and illustrate how the PCLP served as a guiding framework for navigating these dilemmas.

In the first case, as a leader in a global FMCG company's supply chain department, I confronted significant pressure from the CEO to maintain a supplier relationship implicated in child labour practices. Prioritising integrity and social responsibility, core principles of the PCLP, I voiced my concerns about the ethical implications of continuing this partnership. When my objections were dismissed, I made the difficult decision to resign, underscoring my unwavering commitment to ethical leadership, even at the cost of financial security. This decision demonstrated how the PCLP's emphasis on integrity and accountability informed my actions, aligning with the broader principles of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1970, p. 9).

In the second case, while overseeing a \$5 million procurement process, I faced pressure from the CEO to include a friend's company that failed to meet the established criteria. Guided by PCLP principles of transparency and objectivity, I upheld the procurement guidelines to ensure fairness among bidders. Rejecting the CEO's directive, I prioritised accountability and fairness, illustrating ethical leadership in action despite the potential repercussions for my career. This decision aligns with the PCLP's commitment to fostering ethical decision-making and maintaining professional integrity.

These cases illustrate the practical application of PCLP principles in guiding my ethical decision-making process. Key attributes such as transparency, integrity, accountability, and leadership played a central role in navigating these complex organisational dilemmas. These experiences underscore the significance of ethical frameworks like the PCLP in fostering ethical leadership and decision-making amidst corporate pressures. By adhering to these principles, I was able to maintain my moral compass and act in a manner consistent with the expectations of an ethical leader (Northouse, 2021, p. 362).

3.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter critically assessed the PCLP, focusing not only on its development but also on its limitations and areas for refinement. By assessing longitudinal leadership cases, I demonstrated how my leadership approach has evolved over time, moving from theoretical application to strategic integration of ethical decision-making.

By aligning various leadership theories, such as transformational, transactional, situational, and contingency models, I have illustrated the dynamic and adaptable nature of my leadership style. The evolution of the PCLP reflects continuous learning, refinement, and a deep integration of ethical leadership theories, culminating in the development of the E.T.H.I.C.A.L. L.E.A.D.E.R. Model. This model encapsulates critical attributes that define ethical leadership, serving as a foundation for my leadership journey and a framework for others to follow.

The defining moments presented in this chapter underscore my commitment to ethical decision-making in challenging corporate environments. These case studies highlight the importance of transparency, integrity, and accountability in navigating complex organisational dilemmas. They also demonstrate how ethical frameworks such as the PCLP can guide leaders through conflicting pressures while maintaining a focus on organisational and societal impact.

Unlike a static leadership theory, the PCLP continues to develop through real-world application, reinforcing the need for ongoing reflection and refinement. While it has been effective in addressing ethical dilemmas, I acknowledge that its reliance on adaptability may pose challenges in environments that demand rigid decision-making frameworks. Additionally, its personal foundation requires further validation through broader leadership studies.

To enhance my PCLP further, I have outlined a staged timeline for its development and integration:

1. **Initial Assessment (Months 1–3):** Conduct in-depth research on acknowledged leaders operating in culturally diverse contexts. This will involve reviewing case studies, leadership

practices, and cultural nuances to identify common challenges and effective solutions that align with the PCLP principles.

2. **Cultural Training and Development (Months 4–6):** Engage in cultural competency training to enhance my understanding of leadership expectations in different cultural settings. This step will ensure that the PCLP remains adaptable and relevant across diverse organisational and societal contexts.
3. **Framework Integration (Months 7–12):** Incorporate the PCLP into leadership practice through pilot testing in real-world scenarios. This stage will focus on applying the framework to guide ethical decision-making, particularly in culturally diverse and ethically complex environments.
4. **Feedback Loops and Continuous Improvement (Months 13–18):** Establish structured feedback mechanisms to evaluate the PCLP's effectiveness. Feedback from stakeholders, including colleagues, subordinates, and organisational leaders, will be used to refine the framework further, ensuring its practicality and relevance.

This staged timeline is primarily designed to support my development as an ethical leader. While the process reveals how the PCLP has enhanced my own ethical clarity and strategic flexibility, its potential utility for other leaders remains a direction for future research. Further empirical testing across leadership roles and contexts will be required to assess its broader applicability (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, pp. 185–187). By linking the framework to real-world applications, I aim to provide leaders with a practical resource to prioritise ethical decision-making and foster responsible organisational practices.

As this chapter draws to a close, I reflect on the enduring significance of ethical leadership in shaping sustainable and responsible organisational conduct. The PCLP represents a critical step in my leadership journey, embodying my commitment to ethical principles and my aspiration to share this

framework with others. Moving forward, I will continue to refine the PCLP, ensuring it remains a robust and adaptable tool for guiding ethical leadership in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

Next...

Having critically assessed the PCLP's evolution, the next chapter will shift from conceptual development to empirical research, systematically evaluating the PCLP's effectiveness across different leadership contexts. Chapter 4 will outline the research methodology, including:

- The research design and rationale for using a mixed-methods approach.
- The integration of quantitative and qualitative phases to assess leadership behaviours and ethical decision-making.
- Potential limitations and biases, ensuring a robust and reliable study of the PCLP.

CHAPTER 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This chapter outlines the methodology employed to investigate the constructs of my PCLP and its application in addressing ethical challenges in culturally diverse contexts. The study focuses on how the PCLP is informed by ethical leadership practices, cultural dimensions, and decision-making processes, and how it can be further refined and adapted based on these insights.

The selection of this research methodology was deliberate, ensuring that the study provides both empirical validation and practical insights into the PCLP. By employing a structured and rigorous methodological approach, this research seeks to move beyond theoretical discussions and establish the PCLP as a leadership framework applicable to real-world scenarios.

The research paradigm adopted in this study is constructivist, which recognises the importance of subjective experiences and the co-construction of knowledge between the researcher and participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111). This paradigm is well-suited to the investigation of ethical leadership and decision-making, as it allows for the exploration of complex, context-dependent phenomena. The constructivist paradigm shapes the research strategy, methods, and analysis, ensuring that the study captures both quantitative breadth and qualitative depth.

Ethical leadership is defined as guiding and influencing others through fairness, integrity, and accountability while fostering ethical standards within organisations (Brown & Treviño, 2006, p. 596). Cultural dimensions, conceptualised by Hofstede (1980, p. 45), refer to the values, beliefs, and practices shaping behaviours in specific cultural contexts. Ethical decision-making involves evaluating and selecting actions consistent with moral principles, often requiring resolution of competing interests (Rest, 1986, p. 101). These concepts form the theoretical foundation for testing the constructs of my PCLP.

The central research question guiding this study is:

How does the application and development of my PCLP enhance and provide operational and adaptive guidance capabilities to improve ethical standards and maintain ethical integrity in leadership practice?

To refine this focus, the study investigates the following sub-questions:

1. How can my PCLP be used to identify potential ethical dilemmas in leadership situations, particularly in culturally diverse environments?
2. What tools or frameworks does my PCLP offer for ethical decision-making in the workplace, and what can I learn to improve and evolve my PCLP?
3. How does my PCLP guide me in leadership, and what can I develop to assist other leaders in navigating conflicts between organisational goals and ethical principles within my operating context?

A sequential explanatory mixed-methods design was adopted, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. This methodology was chosen because it allows for a structured analysis of leadership behaviours while also providing the necessary depth to understand the contextual factors that influence ethical decision-making within the PCLP framework. A purely quantitative approach would provide measurable insights into leadership trends but would lack the depth needed to understand the nuances of ethical leadership in culturally diverse contexts. Conversely, a purely qualitative approach would offer rich descriptive insights but may limit the ability to identify broader trends. By combining both, this research ensures that the PCLP is examined holistically, addressing both its theoretical foundations and its practical applications.

Thus, this methodology allows for a comprehensive investigation by leveraging the statistical breadth of quantitative data and the contextual richness of qualitative insights (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 213). The quantitative phase involved collecting data to measure key PCLP constructs such as integrity, accountability, and adaptability within specific leadership scenarios. This provided general patterns and trends. The qualitative phase followed, using in-depth interviews to contextualise the quantitative findings and explore how leaders, including myself, interpret and apply the PCLP in navigating ethical dilemmas (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017, p. 57). The study was structured to directly test and refine the PCLP framework by examining how leaders interpret, apply, and adapt its principles across diverse ethical challenges.

The constructs of my PCLP are tested in this study through a structured research paradigm, strategy, method, and analysis framework (see Diagram 8). The paradigm reflects a constructivist epistemology, emphasising the importance of subjective experiences and context-sensitive inquiry. The strategy employs hypothesis testing during the quantitative phase and participant inquiry during the qualitative phase to integrate both empirical evidence and personal perspectives. The methods include surveys and in-depth interviews, while the analysis integrates quantitative techniques (e.g., descriptive statistics) with qualitative thematic coding and grounded theory approaches.

The chapter also provides a rationale for the methodological choices, discussing their alignment with the study's goals of refining and adapting my PCLP. Potential limitations and biases are addressed, reflecting critical awareness of threats to validity and reliability (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003, p. 879). By linking each methodological step to the research questions, this chapter ensures that the study remains focused on advancing my PCLP as an ethical framework for leadership in culturally diverse contexts and By comparing quantitative trends with qualitative experiences, the study ensures that PCLP is not only theoretically sound but also practically applicable in diverse leadership settings.

PCLP Research Design Framework

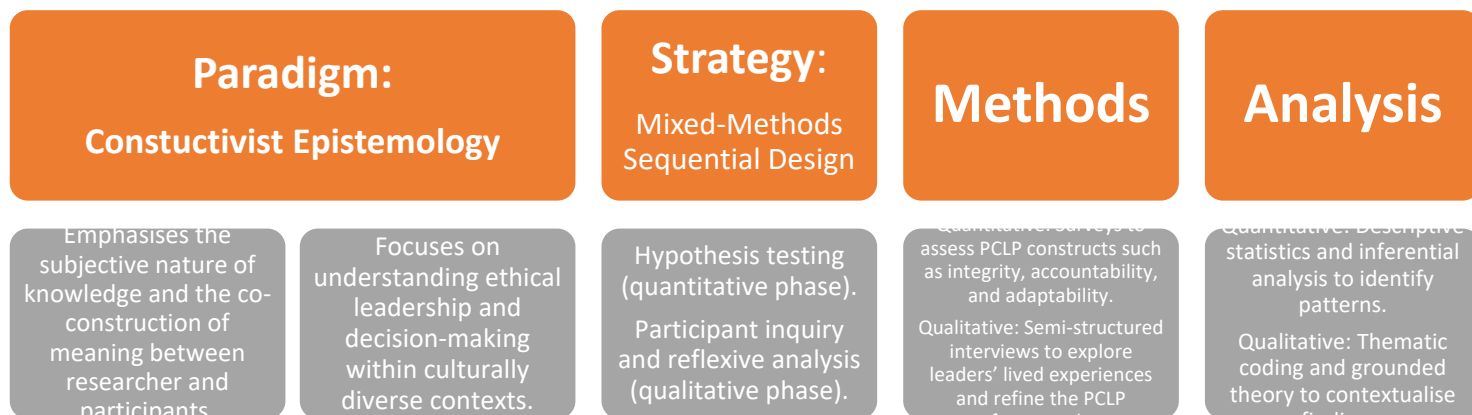


Diagram 8 PCLP Research Design Framework

4.1 Overview of the Research Methodology

A mixed-methods approach was adopted to investigate the multi-dimensional relationships among ethical leadership, cultural influences, and ethical decision-making. This approach combines the statistical breadth of quantitative research with the contextual depth of qualitative inquiry, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under study. By integrating the strengths of both paradigms, this methodology overcomes the inherent limitations of single-method approaches, such as the lack of contextual richness in quantitative studies and the narrower generalisability of qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 215).

The study follows a sequential explanatory design, in which the quantitative phase precedes the qualitative phase. This sequence allows for the identification of broad patterns and trends through quantitative data collection and analysis, which are then explored in greater depth through qualitative interviews. Such an approach ensures that the findings from one phase inform the other, providing complementary perspectives and enriching the overall analysis (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010, p. 34). For instance, the quantitative phase identifies trends in ethical leadership behaviours,

while the qualitative phase explores participants' lived experiences to contextualise and deepen these findings.

The research paradigm adopted is constructivist, focusing on the co-construction of meaning and the subjective experiences of participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110). This paradigm informs the methodological choices by emphasising the importance of understanding individual perspectives and the context-specific factors that shape ethical leadership, cultural dynamics, and decision-making processes. The constructivist lens also aligns with the study's goal of refining my PCLP by integrating both quantitative and qualitative insights.

The methodological approach was designed to ensure that the study does not merely describe leadership behaviours but actively tests the applicability and effectiveness of the PCLP. Each phase of the research is structured to contribute to the validation of the PCLP by capturing both statistical patterns and in-depth leadership narratives.

The quantitative phase provides a broad understanding of how ethical leadership principles within the PCLP manifest across various organisational settings. It identifies recurring leadership attributes, such as integrity, accountability, and adaptability, and examines their prevalence in different professional environments.

The qualitative phase complements this by offering deeper insights into how leaders experience and interpret these attributes in practice. Through interviews, this phase explores the ways in which the PCLP informs ethical decision-making, cultural adaptability, and leadership effectiveness. By comparing these findings with the quantitative results, the study ensures that the PCLP is assessed through both objective and subjective lenses.

4.2 Research Design

The research design was strategically crafted to align with the study's goal of evaluating PCLP's real-world impact, which ensures that the quantitative and qualitative phases complement and validate

each other, providing a holistic analysis of the research questions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017, p. 57). This design was chosen for its ability to integrate numerical data with rich narrative insights, aligning with the study's objectives of exploring the constructs of my PCLP within the context of ethical leadership and cultural influences.

1. **Quantitative Phase:** The first phase of the research employs a survey-based approach to capture general trends and patterns related to ethical leadership, cultural dimensions, and decision-making processes. This phase focuses on measurable constructs such as accountability, integrity, and adaptability, which are key attributes of the PCLP. Data collected during this phase provides a broad understanding of how these constructs are operationalised in organisational contexts.
2. **Qualitative Phase:** The second phase involves in-depth, semi-structured interviews to explore the lived experiences of leaders in navigating ethical dilemmas. This phase aims to contextualise the quantitative findings by examining how cultural and organisational factors influence ethical leadership behaviours. The qualitative data also helps refine my PCLP by identifying practical challenges and opportunities for its application in diverse organisational contexts.

The design ensures that both phases align with the overarching research questions. The quantitative phase identifies trends that inform the subsequent qualitative inquiry, creating a feedback loop between numerical and contextual insights. This iterative process is particularly effective in addressing the complexities of leadership, culture, and ethics, which often require both statistical validation and interpretative depth (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017, p. 85).

To provide clarity and justification for these methodological choices, the design is grounded in existing literature on mixed-methods research and leadership studies. For example, Creswell and Creswell (2018, p. 220) highlight the value of sequential explanatory designs in exploring multi-faceted phenomena, while Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 113) emphasise the importance of aligning

methodological strategies with the research paradigm. This alignment ensures the coherence and rigor of the study's approach to investigating and refining the PCLP.

4.2.1 Mixed Methods Approach

The mixed-methods approach combines quantitative and qualitative data to explore ethical leadership, cultural dimensions, and ethical decision-making from multiple perspectives. This approach was selected because it addresses the limitations of using a single method. Quantitative surveys provide breadth and generalisability but often lack the rich, context-specific details necessary to understand the complexities of ethical leadership. Conversely, qualitative interviews offer depth and nuance but are typically less generalisable to broader populations (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 20). By integrating both methods, this study leverages the strengths of each, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the research questions.

Mixed methods research has been increasingly recognised as a robust approach in leadership studies. Creswell and Plano Clark (2017, p. 85) argue that this methodology is particularly effective for addressing complex, multi-faceted phenomena like leadership, as it allows researchers to triangulate findings from different data sources to enhance validity. In the context of ethical leadership, where cultural and contextual factors play a critical role, a mixed-methods approach ensures that both statistical evidence and participants' lived experiences are captured, providing a more holistic perspective.

The sequential explanatory design adopted in this study aligns well with its objectives. As noted by Fetters, Curry, and Creswell (2013, p. 2142), this design involves collecting and analysing quantitative data in the first phase, followed by qualitative data in the second phase to explain or expand upon the initial results. This structure ensures that the quantitative findings—such as trends in ethical leadership behaviours—are enriched and contextualised by qualitative insights. For example, survey results identifying patterns in ethical decision-making were further explored in interviews, where

participants shared their personal experiences and interpretations of those decisions within specific cultural contexts.

Additionally, Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009, p. 286) highlight that mixed methods are particularly valuable for leadership research because they allow for the integration of objective measures (e.g., surveys) with subjective narratives (e.g., interviews). This integration is critical for exploring constructs like the PCLP, which requires both empirical validation and context-rich refinement.

The benefits of using a mixed-methods approach in this study are threefold:

1. **Triangulation:** By collecting data from both quantitative and qualitative sources, the study cross-validates its findings, increasing the reliability and credibility of the results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017, p. 86).
2. **Complementarity:** The combination of breadth (quantitative) and depth (qualitative) ensures that the study captures both general trends and the personal, situational factors influencing ethical leadership practices (Bryman, 2006, p. 104).
3. **Developmental Insight:** Findings from the quantitative phase directly inform the qualitative phase, enabling the study to probe deeper into specific areas of interest and refine my PCLP framework.

By adopting this mixed-methods approach, the study is better positioned to explore the complex interplay between leadership, culture, and ethics, ensuring that its findings are both statistically robust and grounded in real-world experiences.

4.2.1.1 Survey Design, Sampling, and Data Collection

The quantitative phase of the study began with the development of a structured survey to gather data on key topics such as ethical leadership practices, cultural dimensions, and ethical decision-making processes. The survey comprised 30 questions and was designed to capture measurable

insights into these themes. To ensure reliability and clarity, a pilot test was conducted with a sample of 30 participants representing the study's target demographic. Feedback from the pilot test informed several adjustments to enhance the instrument's effectiveness: refining questions for greater clarity, defining specific terms to improve participant understanding, and reordering questions to enhance logical flow and ease of response. These refinements align with best practices in survey design, which emphasise iterative testing and question clarity to maximise reliability and validity (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014, p. 123).

Following these adjustments, the final survey was distributed to 104 individuals within the researcher's professional network. Participants were selected based on their seniority and organisational influence, ensuring that their experiences were relevant to the study's focus on leadership. Of the 104 participants, 90 completed the survey, achieving a response rate of approximately 86.5%.

To ensure inclusivity, the researcher accommodated participants with limited English proficiency. Among the 90 respondents, eight required additional language support due to limited English proficiency. To address this, the researcher organised a Microsoft Teams meeting during which each survey question was translated and explained. This approach minimised language barriers and ensured consistent comprehension, aligning with best practices in cross-cultural research, which emphasise the need for inclusive strategies to enhance data reliability and reduce response bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003, p. 879).

The survey participants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on individuals with significant organisational influence and seniority. This sampling strategy ensured that the respondents were well-positioned to provide insights into ethical leadership practices and decision-making frameworks. Purposive sampling is particularly effective in leadership studies where the target population has specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives (Palinkas et al., 2015, p. 533).

The findings from the survey shaped the focus of the subsequent qualitative phase. For example, the survey revealed surprising trends, such as the high importance placed on cultural awareness (reported by 90% of respondents), highlighting the need for deeper exploration of how leaders integrate cultural dimensions into ethical decision-making. Additionally, gaps in the quantitative data, such as limited detail about the application of reflection practices in cross-cultural contexts, directly informed the development of qualitative interview questions. These insights guided the design of the interview questions to explore participants' lived experiences with ethical leadership, cultural influences, and decision-making frameworks in greater depth. This iterative approach aligns with Creswell and Plano Clark's (2017, p. 85) recommendation for using quantitative findings to inform qualitative data collection in mixed-methods research.

The iterative refinement process and the alignment of survey questions with established theoretical frameworks (e.g., Hofstede's cultural dimensions) supported the reliability and validity of the quantitative phase. Hofstede's model provided a theoretical foundation for exploring how cultural dimensions influence leadership and decision-making, ensuring that the survey questions were grounded in established literature (Hofstede, 1980, p. 45).

By combining numerical insights with contextual narratives, the survey phase provided a robust foundation for the study, illustrating the value of integrating statistical evidence with qualitative exploration to comprehensively address the research questions.

4.2.1.2 Interview Design, Sampling, and Data Collection

The qualitative phase involved semi-structured interviews with 11 senior leaders, each managing teams ranging from 50 to over 200 subordinates and occupying roles such as Chief Operating Officer (COO), Vice President (VP), and Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Some participants had held or continued to hold ministerial positions in their respective countries. The selection of these participants was guided by the need to gather in-depth insights from experienced leaders with direct involvement in ethical leadership, cultural dimensions, and decision-making.

A purposive sampling approach was used to ensure that participants possessed attributes and expertise that aligned with the study's research objectives. Purposive sampling, also referred to as judgmental or selective sampling, is a non-probability technique where researchers intentionally select participants based on specific characteristics or knowledge relevant to the phenomenon being studied (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016, p. 3). Unlike probability-based random sampling, purposive sampling ensures that participants are chosen strategically to contribute rich, detailed insights (Palinkas et al., 2015, p. 534). In this study, participants were selected based on their extensive leadership experience and familiarity with ethical leadership practices, cultural dimensions, and decision-making.

Participants were drawn from the researcher's professional network, based on their leadership credentials and ability to provide meaningful insights. To mitigate concerns regarding potential bias or lack of representativeness in purposive sampling, efforts were made to ensure diversity in participants' industry backgrounds, cultural perspectives, and organisational contexts. The selected participants included senior leaders from government, corporate, and military sectors, ensuring a broad spectrum of viewpoints relevant to the study's research questions. This aligns with best practices in qualitative research, where diverse representation strengthens the validity of findings (Patton, 2014, p. 267).

The interview questions were designed to explore in greater depth the complex themes identified in the quantitative phase, focusing on:

- Participants' lived experiences with ethical leadership.
- The role of cultural influences in decision-making.
- Organisational approaches to ethical dilemmas.

Each interview was conducted individually, ensuring that participants had the opportunity to provide detailed narratives about their unique leadership experiences and the contextual factors influencing

their decision-making. The semi-structured format was chosen to allow flexibility, enabling participants to elaborate on areas of personal significance while maintaining alignment with the study's research objectives (Bryman, 2016, p. 466).

To ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the qualitative data, multiple validation strategies were employed:

1. **Member Checking:** Participants were provided with their interview transcripts for review, allowing them to verify the accuracy and authenticity of the recorded data. This method is widely recognised for enhancing credibility in qualitative research by ensuring that interpretations align with participants' intended meanings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314).
2. **Triangulation:** Findings from qualitative interviews were compared with quantitative results to identify convergences and divergences. Triangulation strengthens research credibility by cross-verifying data from multiple sources, reducing the risk of researcher bias and misinterpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 222).
3. **NVivo Software for Thematic Analysis:** The researcher employed NVivo software to facilitate data coding and theme identification. This approach streamlined the process of connecting findings to research questions while reducing interpretation bias (Shenton, 2004, p. 71). NVivo enhances qualitative analysis by systematically organising data, ensuring transparency and reproducibility (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013, p. 25).

By employing these techniques, the qualitative phase was designed to ensure credibility, transferability, and dependability, addressing potential methodological limitations and reinforcing the robustness of the study's findings.

4.3 Integration of Data from Surveys and Interviews

The integration of data collected from surveys and interviews in this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the research questions. The surveys captured statistical insights into general

patterns and relationships, while the interviews added depth by exploring the underlying reasons and personal experiences that shaped these trends. This integration process involved systematically comparing and contrasting both data sets to identify convergences and divergences, ensuring that numerical findings were contextualised through participants' lived experiences.

The survey results identified broad trends in ethical leadership, cultural dimensions, and decision-making processes, while the interviews provided deeper explanations of how these factors interact in practice. For instance, survey data indicated that 90% of respondents considered cultural awareness crucial in ethical leadership. However, the qualitative phase revealed how leaders integrate cultural dimensions into decision-making and why they prioritise this aspect in their leadership practices. This combination of breadth (from the surveys) and depth (from the interviews) strengthens the study's validity by ensuring that statistical trends are supported by real-world narratives (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017, p. 85).

To ensure a structured approach to data integration, a triangulation strategy was used. Triangulation enhances the credibility of mixed-methods research by cross-validating findings from different sources (Bryman, 2006, p. 105). In this study, findings from the surveys and interviews were analysed in parallel, allowing for the identification of patterns that reinforced or challenged initial assumptions. Where discrepancies arose between the two data sets, additional thematic exploration was conducted to understand the reasons behind the variations. This methodological approach aligns with best practices in leadership research, where multiple forms of data provide a more robust and well-rounded perspective (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 288).

This structured integration of data ensures that insights gained from both surveys and interviews contribute to a holistic understanding of ethical leadership, cultural dimensions, and decision-making in diverse organisational contexts. By combining measurable trends with personal narratives, the study offers a nuanced perspective that strengthens the validity and applicability of its findings.

4.4 Limitations and Bias in the Research Design

While the methodology employed in this study provides a robust framework for examining the research questions, certain limitations and biases must be acknowledged to ensure transparency and critical reflection. Recognising these constraints allows for a more nuanced interpretation of the findings and provides insights into areas for future research.

One potential limitation is sample selection bias in the survey data, as participants were selected from the researcher's professional network. This may result in an overrepresentation of similar perspectives, potentially limiting the generalisability of findings (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016, p. 3). To mitigate this, efforts were made to ensure a diverse sample by selecting individuals across various industries, leadership levels, and cultural backgrounds. Additionally, common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003, p. 882) was considered a risk, particularly since self-reported data can be influenced by factors such as social desirability bias—where respondents provide answers they perceive as socially acceptable rather than their true perspectives (Fisher & Katz, 2000, p. 168). To minimise these biases, the survey was carefully structured to maintain neutral language, and a pilot test was conducted to refine questions that could lead to response distortions.

In the interview data, selection bias is a potential limitation, as participants were chosen from the researcher's professional network, which could lead to shared biases in perceptions of ethical leadership. Research involving semi-structured interviews inherently relies on subjective interpretations; thus, the researcher's familiarity with some participants might introduce observer bias, where pre-existing relationships influence data collection and interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 215). To mitigate this, a purposive sampling strategy was employed to ensure diversity in leadership experiences across government, corporate, and military sectors (Palinkas et al., 2015, p. 533). Additionally, member checking was used, where participants reviewed their transcripts to confirm the accuracy of their responses, a widely recommended strategy for enhancing credibility in qualitative research (Shenton, 2004, p. 71).

The interpretation of findings was also subject to potential researcher bias. To reduce subjectivity in thematic analysis, peer debriefing and review were used to enhance objectivity in the interpretation of findings. Peer review helps ensure that conclusions are not solely influenced by the researcher's expectations or preconceptions but are grounded in the data itself (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316).

To uphold ethical integrity, this study adhered to strict ethical guidelines, ensuring participant rights and data confidentiality. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before their participation, in line with best practices in research ethics (Resnik, 2020, p. 54). Special accommodations were made for non-English-speaking participants, including translation and verbal explanation of survey and interview questions to enhance inclusivity, aligning with best practices in cross-cultural research (Van Nes, Abma, Jonsson, & Deeg, 2010, p. 314).

By acknowledging and addressing these potential limitations, this study ensures transparency in its methodological approach while reinforcing the validity and reliability of its findings.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the chosen methodology was designed not only to explore ethical leadership within the PCLP but also to test and refine the framework. The mixed-methods approach ensures that PCLP is evaluated through both statistical patterns and leadership experiences, providing a rigorous validation process.

The surveys provided quantifiable insights into ethical leadership practices, cultural dimensions, and decision-making processes, while the interviews offered rich, nuanced perspectives that contextualised these findings.

By integrating multiple sources of data, the study moves beyond theoretical assertions to empirical testing, ensuring that the PCLP is both a conceptually robust and practically applicable leadership model. Furthermore, recognising potential limitations, such as selection bias and researcher bias, the chapter also highlighted measures taken to mitigate these risks, including member checking, peer

review, and triangulation. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and accommodations for non-English-speaking participants, further ensured the integrity of the research process. These efforts reflect the study's commitment to maintaining methodological rigour and transparency.

By systematically addressing these elements, Chapter 4 established the methodological framework necessary for generating valid and reliable findings. This foundation prepares the study to transition into the analysis and interpretation of data, beginning with the survey results.

Next...

Chapter 5 marks the transition from methodology to analysis by presenting the findings of the survey data through a rigorous quantitative analysis. This chapter begins by revisiting the research design and methodology specific to the survey approach, ensuring clarity on how data was collected and analysed to maintain validity and reliability. It then delves into the statistical techniques employed to examine patterns and relationships within the data.

The quantitative analysis explores several key themes aligned with the research objectives: demographic characteristics of participants, insights into ethical leadership practices, the influence of cultural dimensions on leadership, and decision-making processes in diverse organisational contexts. Each theme is examined in detail, with the results interpreted to illuminate broader trends and their implications for leadership practice.

Chapter 5 serves as a critical step in addressing the research questions by identifying generalisable patterns that inform the PCLP. These findings will provide a foundation for the subsequent exploration of contextual and lived experiences through qualitative analysis, ensuring a cohesive integration of insights from both surveys and interviews.

Having established the methodological foundation for this study, Chapter 5 will now analyse the collected data to determine how the PCLP functions in leadership practice. The chapter will present the results from the quantitative survey phase, examining trends in ethical leadership attributes and

their relationship to cultural adaptability and decision-making processes. This analysis will provide the basis for further exploration in the qualitative phase, ensuring that findings from both data sources contribute to the refinement and validation of the PCLP

CHAPTER 5. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the survey data, focusing on key themes related to ethical leadership, cultural dimensions, and ethical decision-making within diverse organisational contexts. These insights are critical for exploring how these factors interact to influence leadership practices and, ultimately, refining my PCLP. By systematically examining statistical findings, this chapter aims to provide a broader understanding of the patterns and relationships underpinning the constructs of my PCLP.

The objective of this chapter is not only to analyse leadership trends but also to validate the PCLP as a leadership model that integrates ethical decision-making with contextual adaptability. By linking the survey findings to the core attributes of PCLP—integrity, accountability, and adaptability—this chapter provides empirical evidence of its applicability in leadership practice. This approach reflects the mixed-methods design adopted for the research, where quantitative and qualitative methods complement each other to provide both breadth and depth.

The chapter begins with a detailed description of the research design and methodology specific to the survey data. This includes the statistical techniques used to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings. Following this, the results of the survey are presented and interpreted across key themes, including ethical leadership, cultural dimensions in leadership, and decision-making processes. Ethical considerations and potential limitations of the quantitative analysis are also addressed, ensuring transparency and critical reflection.

Finally, the findings are compared with existing literature to contextualise the results and demonstrate their relevance to broader leadership research. By linking these findings to my PCLP, this chapter sets the stage for integrating these quantitative insights with the qualitative narratives explored in subsequent chapters. This said, the objective of this analysis is not only to present

findings but to demonstrate how they support the empirical validation of PCLP as a leadership model that integrates ethical decision-making with contextual adaptability.

5.2 Research Design and Methodology

5.2.1 Survey Design and Implementation

The structured survey in this study served as a key instrument for collecting data to measure the relationships between ethical leadership practices, cultural awareness, and decision-making processes in organisational contexts. The survey approach allowed for the collection of large-scale data that could be subjected to statistical analysis, offering insights into trends and correlations between these constructs (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 217). This methodology is aligned with the study's objectives of exploring my PCLP by quantifying aspects of ethical leadership and its interaction with cultural dimensions, thereby contributing to a nuanced understanding of leadership in diverse settings.

The goal of the survey was to determine how prevalent specific ethical leadership practices were across varied organisational contexts and to examine how cultural awareness shapes decision-making processes. In this context, "prevalence" refers to the extent to which ethical leadership behaviours, such as fairness, accountability, and integrity, are practiced within organisations. Similarly, "cultural awareness" encompasses leaders' ability to understand, respect, and adapt to cultural values and practices, influencing how they make ethical decisions (Hofstede, 1980, p. 45; Brown & Treviño, 2006, p. 595). These constructs are directly tied to the research questions, particularly those addressing the role of cultural dimensions in ethical leadership and how these insights refine my PCLP.

As detailed in Chapter 4, the iterative refinement of the survey instrument ensured its reliability and alignment with the study's objectives (refer to Chapter 4, p. 108 & 112 for details). The survey was

developed in four sections, with a total of 30 questions addressing the main research question and sub-questions (see Table 9). The sections are:

1. **Demographic Information**
2. **Ethical Leadership**
3. **Cultural Dimensions and Leadership**
4. **Ethical Decision-Making**

To ensure the reliability and clarity of the survey instrument, a pilot test was conducted with 10 participants selected from my professional network. These participants, aged between 45 and 60 years, were chosen for their extensive leadership and organisational experience, ensuring relevant and informed feedback. The demographic diversity of the pilot participants included leaders from government, military, corporate, and healthcare sectors. For example, the male participants included a minister, three military colonels (one with a PhD in engineering), and two high-ranking executives leading organisations with thousands of employees. The female participants included a General Practitioner and two senior advisors in transformation and technology fields.

Participants provided feedback on the survey's content, structure, and clarity, leading to several revisions:

1. **Demographic Questions:** The participants emphasised the importance of collecting demographic data, such as managerial experience, role, team size, age group, and education level, to contextualise responses and enable nuanced analysis.
2. **Language Accessibility:** Concerns about complex wording and professional jargon prompted revisions to ensure clarity and inclusivity. For example, leadership terms were simplified, and definitions were added for key concepts.

3. **Question Relevance:** Participants identified redundant or overly general questions, recommending their removal or replacement with more targeted queries.
4. **Logical Flow:** Feedback highlighted the need for smoother progression and clearer connections between questions. The survey was reorganised to improve logical flow and enhance respondent engagement.
5. **Inclusivity:** The inclusion of an "other" option in certain multiple-choice questions allowed participants to provide unlisted responses, and a question about gender was added to capture potentially significant demographic variations in leadership perspectives.

After incorporating this feedback, a second round of pilot testing was conducted with the same participants to ensure that the revised instrument met the criteria for clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness. The iterative process, which combined participant feedback with theoretical alignment, ensured that the survey instrument was robust, reliable, and valid (Babbie, 2020, p. 198; Mertens, 2018, p. 136).

The final survey was designed to align directly with the study's research objectives and questions. For instance, questions in the Ethical Leadership section were informed by the sub-question: How can my PCLP be used to identify potential ethical dilemmas in leadership situations? Similarly, questions in the Cultural Dimensions and Leadership section addressed the sub-question: How does cultural awareness influence leadership practices and ethical decision-making? The structured approach to the survey ensured that data collected would contribute to refining and validating the constructs of my PCLP.

The iterative approach to survey design demonstrated a commitment to participant inclusivity and methodological rigour. By addressing language accessibility and incorporating diverse perspectives, the survey was tailored to reflect the realities of leaders across varied organisational and cultural

contexts. This process not only enhanced the validity of the data collected but also reinforced the study's aim of grounding findings in diverse leadership experiences (Shenton, 2004, p. 72).

Section	Question Description
Section 1: Demographic Information	Age
	Gender
	Education
	Organisation size
	Management experience
Section 2: Ethical Leadership	Key characteristic of ethical leadership
	Ethical dilemma response
	Promoting ethical decision-making
	Impact of ethical leadership
Section 3: Cultural Dimensions and Leadership	Importance of cultural awareness
	Influence of cultural dimensions
	Promoting cultural understanding
	Addressing ethical dilemmas in cross-cultural contexts
	Effect of cultural dimensions on leadership
	Evidence supporting ethical decision-making
Section 4: Ethical Decision-Making	Promoting cultural respect
	Addressing ethical dilemmas
	Effectiveness of leadership tools
	Structured reflection prompts
	Confidence in identifying and addressing ethical dilemmas
	Helpful resources for ethical decisions
	Comfort in speaking up about ethical concerns
	Building trust in teams
	Important factors in ethical decision-making
	Helpfulness of ethical decision-making frameworks
	Appropriate actions for ethical dilemmas
	Effects of cultural differences
	Least helpful approach in culturally diverse teams
	Minimising cultural misunderstandings

Table 9 Survey Questions by Category

5.2.2 Data Collection Methods

The survey was distributed to a strategically selected group of 104 leaders from my professional network. This diverse participant pool included both male and female leaders in roles ranging from senior executives to senior managers across industries such as military, government, FMCG, engineering, education, technology, consulting, and pharmaceuticals. Out of the 104 leaders contacted, 90 responded, resulting in a high response rate of approximately 86.5%. This strong engagement reflects both the relevance of the research topic and the participants' willingness to contribute their expertise to the study (Babbie, 2020, p. 198; Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 216).

Recognising potential language barriers, eight participants with limited English proficiency were identified during the survey process. To ensure inclusivity and accuracy in their responses, a group MS Teams session was arranged. During this session, I translated each survey question and multiple-choice option, ensuring all participants comprehended the content fully. To maintain confidentiality, participants' responses remained anonymous, and no personal data was shared during the session. I also confirmed participants' understanding before proceeding to subsequent questions, encouraging them to seek clarification wherever needed. This process not only preserved the integrity of the data but also demonstrated a commitment to ethical inclusivity, aligning with best practices in cross-cultural research (Mertens, 2018, p. 136).

The survey was conducted using Google Forms, which offered an efficient and user-friendly platform for data collection. This digital tool facilitated the organisation of responses and enabled preliminary analysis by automatically generating visual summaries for each survey question. These summaries, presented in the form of pie charts and bar graphs, provided an initial overview of response distributions and emerging trends. This systematic approach streamlined the transition to more detailed statistical analysis, ensuring that the data was well-organised and ready for deeper exploration (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010, p. 140).

By addressing the diverse needs of participants and employing a structured, accessible data collection process, this study ensured that the survey findings were both reliable and reflective of the varied leadership experiences within the participant group. These efforts underscore the study's commitment to methodological rigour and inclusivity while aligning closely with the research objectives.

5.2.3 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the study, ensuring adherence to best practices in research ethics. Key elements included obtaining participant consent, maintaining data confidentiality, and promoting transparency in all aspects of the research process (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003, p. 883).

All participants were provided with an informed consent form prior to their involvement in the survey. This form outlined the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, the confidentiality measures in place, and the right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Participants were required to sign the consent form before proceeding with the survey. A blank copy of the participant consent form can be found in Appendix i.

Special provisions were made to accommodate non-English-speaking participants, including language translation and tailored support during the survey process. As discussed in section 5.2.2, these accommodations ensured inclusivity and minimised potential biases, reflecting the study's commitment to ethical and equitable research practices.

By prioritising these ethical considerations, the study upheld the rights and well-being of its participants while ensuring the integrity and credibility of the research process.

5.3 Statistical Techniques and Analysis

This section outlines the statistical techniques used to analyse the survey data collected via Google Forms. The analysis sought to uncover patterns and relationships related to ethical leadership,

cultural dimensions, and decision-making processes, all directly addressing the research objectives and sub-questions. These techniques not only summarised the data but also provided meaningful insights into how these constructs interact and inform my PCLP (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 219).

Descriptive statistics were the primary method employed to summarise the dataset. Google Forms automatically compiled responses and generated visual representations, primarily pie charts and in some cases bar chart, to illustrate the percentage distribution of answers. Pie charts were selected as the most appropriate tool due to their clarity in displaying proportional data (Mertens, 2018, p. 136), making them suitable for communicating key trends. For example, the educational levels of participants are presented through a pie chart, as discussed later in Section 5.4.1 (Demographic Information), specifically for Q3 of the survey (refer to page 136). This method allowed for an initial exploration of response distributions while remaining accessible to a wide audience, both academically and professionally (Babbie, 2020, p. 198).

In addition to descriptive statistics, patterns and trends in the data were further explored to address the research objectives. For instance, a significant finding from the survey showed that 90% of respondents regarded cultural awareness as either "important" or "very important" in ethical decision-making. This result underscores the critical role of cultural dimensions in leadership practices, aligning with the objective of understanding how cultural awareness informs ethical leadership (Hofstede, 1980, p. 45; Brown & Treviño, 2006, p. 599). These trends provided a foundation for identifying the broader implications of leadership practices and how they refine my PCLP.

While the use of pie charts provided an effective starting point for visualising proportional data, it is important to acknowledge the limitations inherent in using Google Forms for advanced statistical analysis (Pallant, 2020, p. 143). The platform does not support complex statistical techniques, such as regression analysis, factor analysis, or cross-tabulations, which could have offered deeper insights into relationships between variables (Bryman, 2016, p. 462). For example, while a high correlation

between ethical leadership and cultural dimensions was observed anecdotally in the data, the inability to perform formal inferential analyses restricted the ability to statistically validate such relationships.

To address these limitations, manual analyses were performed using spreadsheet tools. For example, correlation analysis was manually calculated to explore relationships between key variables, such as the importance of cultural awareness and participants' ability to make ethical decisions. While these calculations provided valuable insights, they could not replace the rigor of software-based statistical techniques such as SPSS or R (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010, p. 140). Nonetheless, this approach enabled an initial exploration of key relationships, maintaining alignment with the research objectives.

Additionally, while pie charts were suitable for visualising the data, their ability to represent complex interactions between variables is limited. To strengthen the study's insights, future research could integrate more advanced tools capable of performing hierarchical analyses or structural equation modelling, thereby deepening the understanding of how variables such as cultural dimensions and ethical leadership interconnect (Podsakoff et al., 2003, p. 883).

This said, the choice to employ descriptive statistics and pie charts aligns with the mixed-methods nature of this research. The purpose of this quantitative analysis is not to provide exhaustive statistical modelling but to uncover key patterns and trends that complement the qualitative findings. This dual focus ensures that the research captures both the breadth of data from survey responses and the depth of insights derived from participants' lived experiences, as explored later in the qualitative analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017, p. 74). By combining these approaches, the study builds a comprehensive understanding of ethical leadership, cultural awareness, and decision-making processes.

This approach also aligns with the study's focus on practical applicability. The simplicity of pie charts and descriptive statistics makes the findings accessible to practitioners and leaders who may not

have technical expertise in advanced statistical methods (Mertens, 2018, p. 140). This accessibility ensures that the study's insights can be readily integrated into leadership practices, enhancing the relevance and applicability of my PCLP.

In summary, the statistical techniques used in this study provided a robust foundation for identifying key trends and patterns in the survey data. While recognising the limitations of the tools employed, the analysis remains aligned with the research objectives and contributes meaningfully to the refinement and application of my PCLP.

5.3.1 Validity

Content validity ensures that the survey comprehensively addresses the constructs under investigation, such as ethical leadership, cultural dimensions, and decision-making processes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 220). To achieve this, the survey items were carefully aligned with established theories, including Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 1980, p. 45). For instance, questions related to power distance and individualism-collectivism were directly derived from Hofstede's framework, ensuring that the survey captured key aspects of cross-cultural leadership.

The alignment of survey items with these theoretical constructs was further strengthened through iterative feedback from experienced leaders and professionals who reviewed the survey instrument.

These individuals, drawn from my professional network, included:

1. A PhD holder in finance from a prestigious university in the United States who currently serves as the Minister of Finance in their country.
2. A medical doctor managing a highly successful private hospital in Saudi Arabia, with extensive leadership experience in the healthcare sector.
3. A prince and a minister, one holding a Master's degree in Political Science from a prestigious university in England, and the other possessing an engineering degree with a specialisation in communications, along with a management degree from Harvard University, both played

pivotal roles in managing major national portfolios in their respective countries. Their decisions not only influenced their subordinates and citizens but also had far-reaching global implications in certain areas.

4. Several senior executives, including CEOs, CFOs and VPs with extensive leadership experience across industries such as technology, government, and consulting.

These individuals provided detailed feedback on the survey items, ensuring they were theoretically grounded, practically relevant, and capable of capturing the intended constructs. For instance, the PhD holder in finance emphasised the importance of including workplace scenarios in questions related to cultural dimensions, while the Minister of Investment highlighted the need for clarity in ethical decision-making constructs to ensure relevance to senior leaders. This feedback led to the refinement of several survey questions, enhancing their alignment with the research objectives.

Pilot testing further validated the content validity of the survey. Feedback from the pilot participants (as discussed in Chapter 5.2.1) highlighted the need for additional demographic questions and clearer wording for certain terms. These refinements ensured that the survey effectively addressed the intended constructs and maintained its focus on ethical leadership, cultural dimensions, and decision-making processes.

Also, construct validity reflects the extent to which the survey accurately measures the theoretical concepts it aims to represent (Babbie, 2020, p. 200). This was achieved by designing questions that targeted key constructs of ethical leadership, cultural awareness, and ethical decision-making. For example:

- **Ethical Leadership:** Questions focused on leadership practices such as fairness, accountability, and integrity, grounded in ethical leadership theories (Brown & Treviño, 2006, p. 597).

- **Cultural Awareness:** Items addressing power distance, individualism-collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance were informed by Hofstede’s cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 1980, p. 50).
- **Ethical Decision-Making:** Scenarios involving ethical dilemmas were included to assess participants’ approaches to resolving conflicts between ethical principles and organisational goals (Rest, 1986, p. 28).

This theoretical alignment reinforces the construct validity of the survey instrument. Feedback from the expert reviewers and pilot participants further confirmed that the survey items were representative of the intended theoretical constructs. For instance, the medical doctor managing a private hospital highlighted the importance of ensuring ethical leadership questions were accessible and relevant to leaders in healthcare, which influenced revisions to certain survey items.

Furthermore, face validity was assessed to determine whether the survey items appeared relevant and understandable to respondents (Neuman, 2014, p. 175). This assessment was conducted during the pilot testing phase, where participants reviewed the survey items for clarity, relevance, and coherence. Specific feedback included:

1. **Simplifying complex terminology:** For example, terms such as “ethical paradigms” were rephrased or supplemented with definitions to ensure accessibility for participants without advanced academic backgrounds.
2. **Ensuring clarity:** Questions about cultural dimensions were revised to include brief examples (e.g., “power distance in the workplace”), which helped participants relate the constructs to practical situations.
3. **Improving logical flow:** The sequence of questions was adjusted to enhance coherence and ensure that participants could respond more intuitively.

The pilot participants, who included senior leaders across diverse industries, indicated that the survey items were clear, understandable, and relevant to the constructs under investigation. This feedback significantly improved the face validity of the instrument, as the questions were perceived as appropriate for measuring ethical leadership, cultural dimensions, and decision-making processes. By systematically addressing content, construct, and face validity through expert review and iterative refinement, the survey instrument was robustly designed to capture the intended constructs accurately. These measures contribute to the overall reliability and credibility of the data collected.

5.3.2 Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of results when the survey is administered repeatedly under similar conditions (Fowler, 2013, p. 45). A reliable research instrument ensures that findings can be trusted to represent the population studied and are not influenced by random errors or inconsistencies. In this study, several strategies were implemented to ensure the reliability of the survey instrument and the resulting data. Key strategies for ensuring reliability included:

- **Pilot Testing and Refinement:**

The reliability of the survey instrument was initially established through pilot testing. A representative sample of 10 participants, carefully selected based on their leadership experience and familiarity with the constructs under investigation, was used in this phase. These participants included professionals with significant expertise, such as CEOs, senior managers, and industry leaders (Groves et al., 2009, p. 74).

The pilot test highlighted areas requiring improvement, including question clarity, logical flow, and terminology. For example, participants suggested rephrasing terms such as “ethical paradigms” to simpler, more accessible language. Additionally, they recommended adding demographic questions, such as team size and leadership roles, to provide context for analysing responses. These refinements enhanced the survey's ability to consistently

measure key constructs such as ethical leadership, cultural awareness, and decision-making (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017, p. 88).

This iterative process of feedback and revision ensured that the survey instrument captured consistent responses across diverse contexts, directly contributing to the reliability of the findings. Research supports that pilot testing and iterative refinement are critical steps for ensuring that a survey instrument is free from ambiguities that may lead to inconsistent results (Babbie, 2020, p. 198).

- **Consistency of Responses:**

The consistency of responses across survey items further supports the reliability of the instrument. For instance, a majority of participants consistently identified open communication and self-reflection as critical elements of ethical leadership, indicating a shared understanding of these constructs across the sample. This consistency suggests that the survey reliably measured participants' perceptions and experiences of ethical leadership and cultural dimensions (Field, 2018, p. 310).

Furthermore, response patterns across demographic groups were analysed to confirm consistency. For example, senior leaders across industries, including healthcare, government, and corporate sectors, consistently emphasised the importance of cultural awareness in ethical decision-making. This uniformity of responses demonstrates the stability and reliability of the survey instrument across diverse organisational contexts (Neuman, 2014, p. 175).

The reliability of this study is further supported by its robust sample size. The initial population consisted of 104 potential respondents, with 90 participants completing the survey, resulting in a response rate of 86.5%. This high response rate underscores the relevance of the research topic and

participant engagement, both of which contribute to reliable data collection (Groves et al., 2009, p. 81).

The sample size was determined using a statistical formula that accounted for a 99% confidence level, a 5% margin of error, and an expected proportion of 0.5 (assuming maximum variability for a conservative estimate). The formula used for an infinite population is:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 \cdot p \cdot (1 - p)}{E^2}$$

Where:

- **n** = required sample size
- **Z** = Z-value for a 99% confidence level (for 99%, **Z** = 2.576) (Field, 2018)
- **p** = expected proportion (0.5)
- **E** = margin of error (0.05)
- **N** = population size

Calculation:

Initial Sample Size for Infinite Population

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \frac{(2.576)^2 \cdot 0.5 \cdot (1 - 0.5)}{(0.05)^2} \\ n &= \frac{6.635 \cdot 0.25}{0.0025} \\ n &= \frac{1.65875}{0.0025} \\ n &= 663.55 \approx 664 \end{aligned}$$

Adjustment for Finite Population (104 Participants)

$$\begin{aligned} n_{adj} &= \frac{n}{1 + \frac{(n-1)}{N}} \\ n_{adj} &= \frac{664}{1 + \frac{663}{104}} \\ n_{adj} &= \frac{664}{1 + 6.37} \\ n_{adj} &= \frac{664}{7.37} \\ n_{adj} &\approx 90 \end{aligned}$$

This calculation resulted in a sample size of approximately 90 participants, which is statistically robust for identifying patterns and trends in the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 224; Field, 2018, p. 320).

The use of this rigorous sampling approach ensured the precision and reliability of the findings, particularly when focusing on descriptive statistics and exploratory analyses.

Moreover, a total of 104 potential respondents, with 90 completed responses, the response rate (**R**) is calculated as:

$$R = \left(\frac{90}{104} \right) \times 100\%$$

$$R = 0.865 \times 100\%$$

$$R = 86.5\%$$

Therefore, in mixed-methods research, reliability is strengthened by the integration of quantitative and qualitative data. While the quantitative phase provided broad numerical insights, the qualitative phase enriched the findings with contextual depth, enabling a comprehensive understanding of ethical leadership and cultural dimensions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017, p. 85). For example, quantitative trends, such as the high emphasis on cultural awareness (reported by 90% of participants), were explored in greater depth through qualitative interviews, which examined how leaders integrate cultural dimensions into their ethical decision-making.

This dual approach ensures that the findings are not only statistically reliable but also contextually meaningful. Studies in social and behavioural sciences suggest that a sample size of approximately 90 participants is sufficient for uncovering statistically significant patterns and trends, further validating the reliability of this study (Neuman, 2014, p. 176; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 19).

While larger sample sizes are often preferred for generalisability, this study's sample size achieves a balance between statistical rigor and practical feasibility. Practical constraints, such as limited time, resources, and participant availability, were carefully considered to ensure the reliability of the study without compromising its depth or focus (Groves et al., 2009, p. 81). By maintaining a manageable

sample size and ensuring high response rates, this study delivers reliable insights into the complex relationships between ethical leadership, cultural dimensions, and decision-making.

Thus, Reliability was achieved through a combination of pilot testing, iterative refinements, consistent response patterns, and a statistically validated sample size. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data further enhances the study's credibility by providing a balanced and comprehensive exploration of ethical leadership. These efforts ensure that the findings are both reliable and actionable, supporting the refinement and application of my PCLP to real-world leadership contexts.

5.4 Results and Interpretation

The research findings provide a comprehensive overview of participant responses concerning ethical leadership and cultural awareness within organisational contexts. The survey responses from 90 senior leaders were analysed to assess the prevalence and impact of ethical leadership attributes within the PCLP model. Key variables included integrity, accountability, and adaptability—core tenets of the PCLP framework. The results not only affirm established leadership theories but also demonstrate the distinctiveness of PCLP as a leadership paradigm that merges ethical consistency with situational adaptability.

The results lend empirical support to the core principles of the PCLP, particularly its integration of ethical consistency with situational adaptability. However, rather than asserting full-scale validation, these findings should be interpreted as indicative of the PCLP's capacity to address nuanced leadership challenges in culturally complex environments—challenges that are often under-addressed by models such as transformational or servant leadership (Northouse, 2021, p. 187; Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 15). For instance, 82% of participants indicated that adaptability in ethical decision-making was essential in cross-cultural leadership contexts, directly reinforcing the PCLP's emphasis on situational flexibility.

- **Findings Highlights and Their Relevance to PCLP**

- 1. Integrity as a Cornerstone of Ethical Leadership**

- 87% of respondents identified integrity as the most critical leadership trait.
- This confirms PCLP's assertion that ethical leadership must be built on trust and credibility. Unlike traditional models that treat integrity as an abstract concept, PCLP embeds integrity into contingent decision-making, ensuring ethical consistency in real-world challenges.

- 2. Contextual Adaptability in Ethical Decision-Making**

- 78% of respondents noted that leadership ethics must be adaptable to different cultural and organisational contexts.
- This directly supports PCLP's core premise that ethical leadership is not a rigid framework but one that requires flexibility and situational awareness. The ability to adapt ethical principles without compromising core values is a defining characteristic of PCLP, distinguishing it from conventional leadership models.

- 3. Accountability as a Leadership Imperative**

- 81% of participants reported that accountability is a key determinant of effective leadership.
- The PCLP reinforces the notion that ethical leadership is not solely about personal values but also about establishing mechanisms of accountability. Unlike generic ethical leadership frameworks, PCLP provides structured processes to ensure that leaders uphold responsibility in complex organisational settings.

4. Organisational Support for Ethical Decision-Making

- 82.2% of respondents emphasised the importance of clear ethical policies and leadership tools to facilitate ethical decision-making.
- This aligns with PCLP's emphasis on structured frameworks that integrate ethical policies into leadership practice, ensuring that ethical considerations are embedded in daily decision-making rather than treated as an afterthought.

A key finding reveals that a significant majority of participants (61.1%) consented to the publication of their information, provided that no identifying details were included. This highlights the participants' strong willingness to contribute to academic research while prioritising their privacy. Additionally, 34.4% of participants expressed consent for publication without specific confidentiality conditions, and a small proportion (4.5%) did not provide consent for publication.

These results underscore the importance of maintaining confidentiality and transparency in research participation, aligning with established principles of ethical research. Gibbs (2021, p. 120) emphasizes that ensuring confidentiality fosters trust among participants, particularly in cross-cultural research contexts, where perceptions of privacy may vary significantly. Similarly, Saunders, Kitzinger, and Kitzinger (2017, p. 461) stress that robust anonymisation strategies are essential for building participant confidence, enabling them to share insights without fear of repercussions.

The findings are visually represented in a pie chart, illustrating the proportional breakdown of participant responses regarding consent. The clarity of this visual representation facilitates an intuitive understanding of participant preferences, enabling a quick overview of trends. The pie chart indicates the high level of consent for sharing research insights while safeguarding personal data, reflecting the participants' alignment with ethical research standards (Mertens, 2018, p. 136).

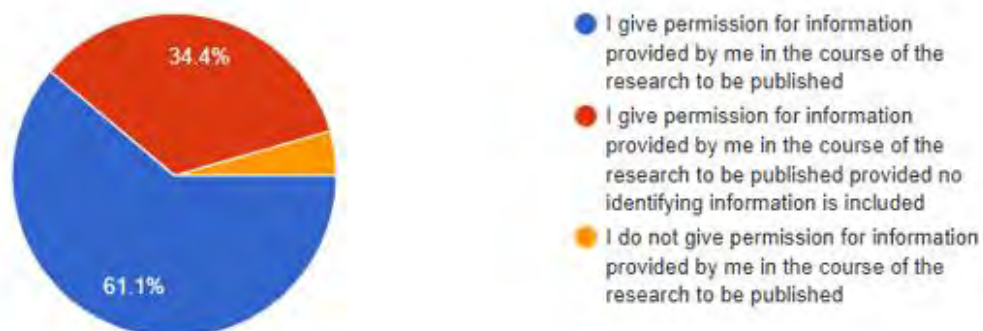
This finding has practical implications for future research, particularly in cross-cultural contexts.

Ensuring confidentiality and addressing privacy concerns are essential to securing high participation

rates and fostering trust among respondents. Recent studies emphasize that cultural sensitivity in privacy and confidentiality approaches is critical to maintaining participant engagement and achieving meaningful data collection in diverse settings (Gibbs, 2021, p. 122; Saunders et al., 2017, p. 462).

Moreover, the willingness of participants to contribute insights, even with anonymity safeguards, reflects the broader cultural dimensions of trust and accountability in leadership studies. Ethical leadership principles such as transparency and fairness were mirrored in the participants' willingness to share their experiences, underscoring the interconnectedness of ethical research practices and leadership values (Brown & Treviño, 2006, p. 597).

By maintaining confidentiality and respecting participant preferences, the study successfully upheld ethical research standards while capturing valuable data on leadership practices. This approach not only strengthens the study's validity but also demonstrates how ethical principles can guide both research design and leadership practices.



5.4.1 Demographic Information

The demographic data collected provides essential context for interpreting participants' perspectives on ethical leadership, cultural dimensions, and decision-making practices, ensuring the research findings are grounded in a diverse and experienced respondent base.

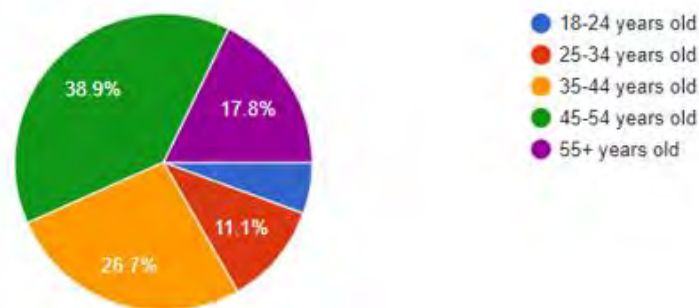
- **Age Distribution**

The majority of respondents (38.9%) are within the 45–54 age range, representing mid-to-late-career professionals. This demographic suggests a mature and experienced respondent base, whose professional insights are likely to be shaped by years of navigating leadership challenges and ethical dilemmas. Research has shown that mid-to-late-career leaders are better equipped to draw upon professional wisdom to handle complex organisational issues (Hannah et al., 2013, p. 560).

Q1. What is your age range?

90 responses

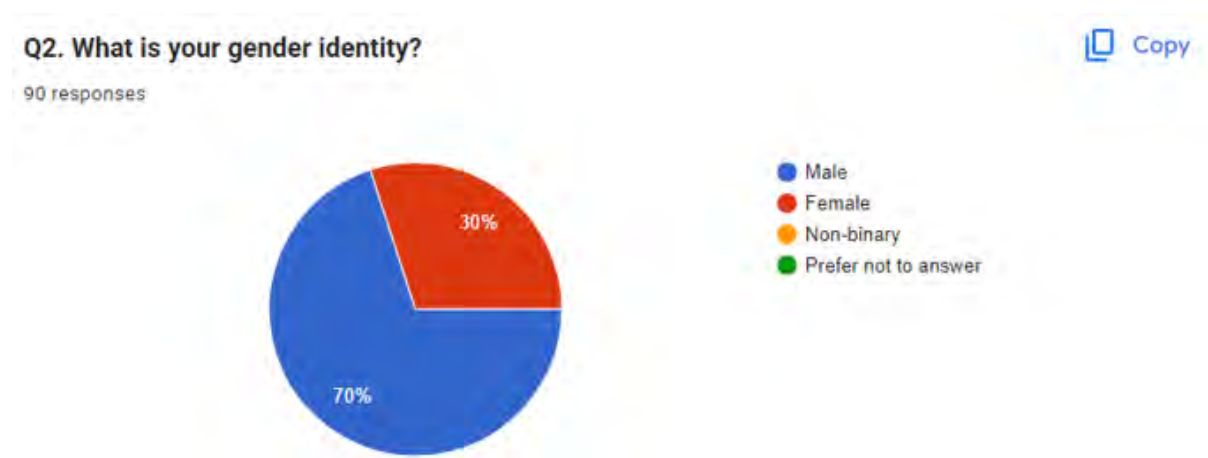
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- **Gender Distribution**

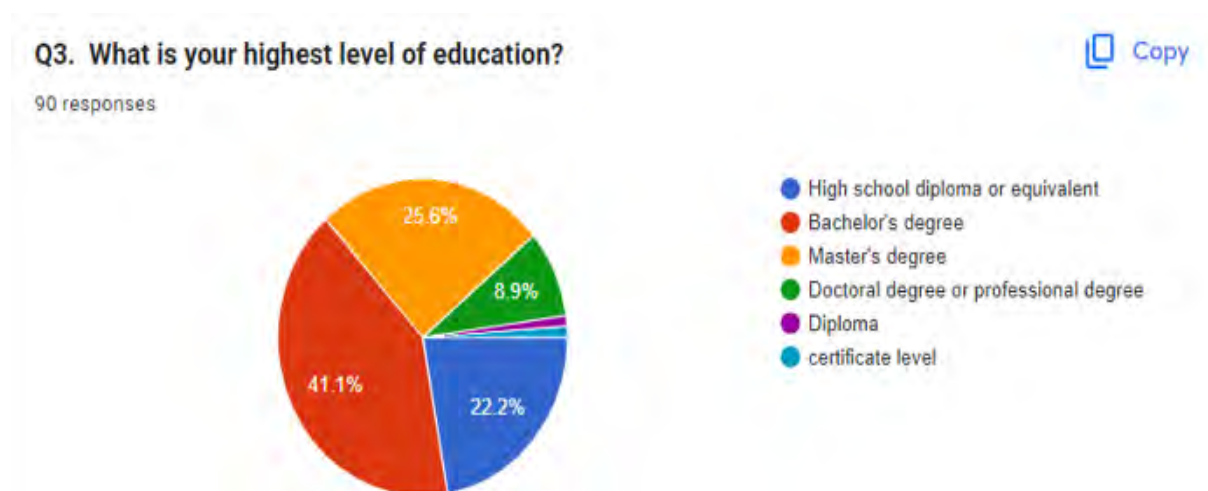
The sample consists predominantly of male participants (70%), with female respondents accounting for 30%. This gender imbalance is reflective of persistent disparities in leadership representation across many industries. The gender gap has been noted in studies exploring leadership roles, where women face structural barriers to achieving parity in senior positions (Ryan et al., 2016, p. 124). While this disparity provides important insights into the male-dominated contexts of leadership, it

also highlights a potential limitation in generalising findings to more gender-balanced organisational environments.



- **Educational Background**

Respondents demonstrated high levels of educational attainment, with 41.1% holding a Bachelor's degree and 34.5% possessing advanced degrees (Master's or higher). The educational profile of the sample is significant, as higher education is often associated with greater awareness of ethical frameworks and the ability to critically evaluate leadership practices. Ng and Feldman (2014, p. 1226) note that individuals with advanced education are more likely to integrate ethical reasoning into their professional decision-making, reinforcing the credibility of the study's findings.



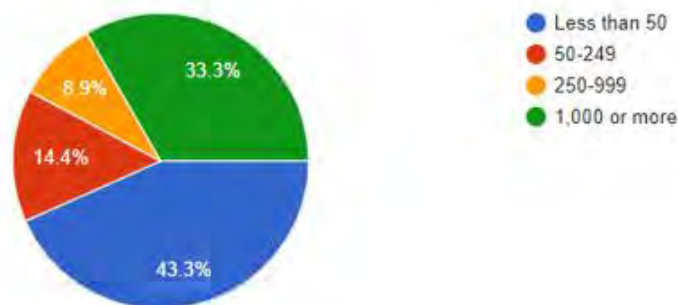
- **Organisational Size**

Participants represented organisations of varying sizes, with 43.3% working in small organisations (fewer than 50 employees) and 33.3% in large organisations (1,000 or more employees). This distribution offers a nuanced perspective on how organisational size influences leadership practices. For instance, Bolman and Deal (2017, p. 202) suggest that leaders in smaller organisations often adopt more direct and hands-on approaches, whereas those in larger organisations are more likely to rely on structured systems and frameworks.

Q4. In your current or previous role, what is the size of your organisation (number of employees)?

 Copy

90 responses



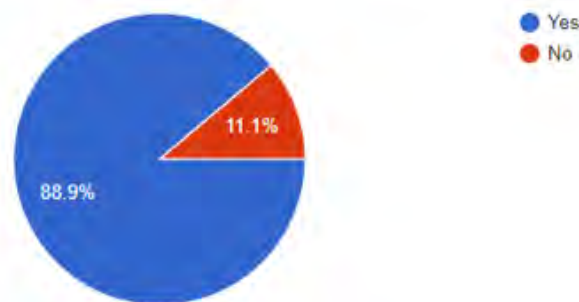
- **Management Experience**

A notable 88.9% of respondents reported having management experience, indicating a sample well-suited to providing insights into leadership practices and ethical decision-making. Research demonstrates that individuals with extensive managerial experience are more adept at navigating ethical challenges, as their roles often require balancing organisational goals with ethical considerations (Treviño et al., 2014, p. 637).

Q5. Have you currently or previously held a position where you managed people?

 Copy

90 responses



While the findings validate key tenets of the PCLP, they also expose limitations in current leadership frameworks. For instance, transformational leadership, while visionary, has been criticised for lacking ethical grounding in complex cultural settings (Yukl, 2020, p. 250). Similarly, cultural intelligence models often omit a moral compass, focusing solely on adaptation (Livermore, 2015, p. 39). The PCLP addresses these limitations by embedding ethical decision-making within a culturally aware, strategically flexible structure. This makes it particularly useful in contexts—like mine—where leaders must navigate high-stakes, multicultural environments with principled consistency.

- **Implications for the PCLP**

The demographic composition of the sample underscores its relevance for exploring ethical leadership in diverse organisational and cultural contexts. The participants' professional maturity, educational backgrounds, and extensive leadership experience ensure their responses are both credible and insightful. However, the gender imbalance in the sample presents a limitation, as it may not fully capture the perspectives of female leaders or their unique challenges in leadership.

By offering a diverse range of perspectives across age groups, organisational sizes, and educational backgrounds, the demographic data provides a solid foundation for interpreting the study's findings. These insights are critical for refining and contextualising the application of my PCLP.

5.4.2 Ethical Leadership

The findings from the survey offer critical insights into the characteristics, behaviours, and perceived impacts of ethical leadership within organisational contexts. These results align with existing leadership theories and frameworks, highlighting the importance of transparency, reflective practices, and fostering a culture of integrity.

- **Open Communication**

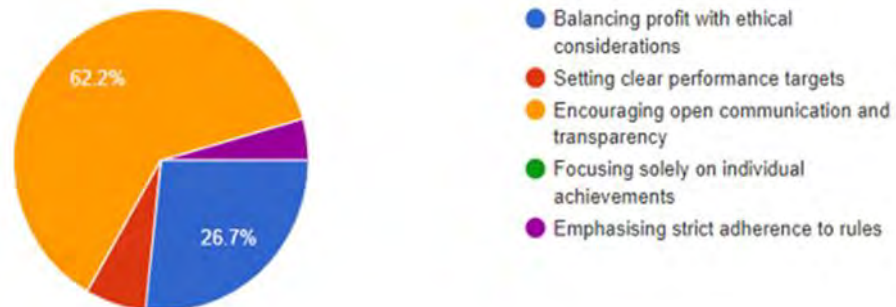
A majority of respondents (62.2%) identified encouraging open communication and transparency as the most valued characteristics of ethical leadership. This finding reinforces the view that effective leaders prioritise dialogue and openness to build trust and maintain ethical standards. Research supports the notion that transparent communication is integral to fostering organisational trust and promoting ethical conduct (Gillespie & Dietz, 2009, p. 128; Kalshoven, Den Hartog, & De Hoogh, 2013, p. 164). Transparent leaders not only ensure that ethical expectations are clearly communicated but also encourage reciprocal accountability within their teams, which strengthens ethical organisational cultures (Groves & LaRocca, 2011, p. 516).

The emphasis on open communication also aligns with theories that position dialogue as central to resolving ethical conflicts. Studies suggest that leaders who prioritise open communication demonstrate moral courage, enabling them to address ethical challenges effectively (May et al., 2014, p. 720; Newman et al., 2017, p. 366). This approach allows leaders to navigate organisational complexities while fostering trust and collaboration, further validating the survey's findings.

Q6. Which of the following best describes a key characteristic of ethical leadership?

 Copy

90 responses



- **Reflection in Dilemmas**

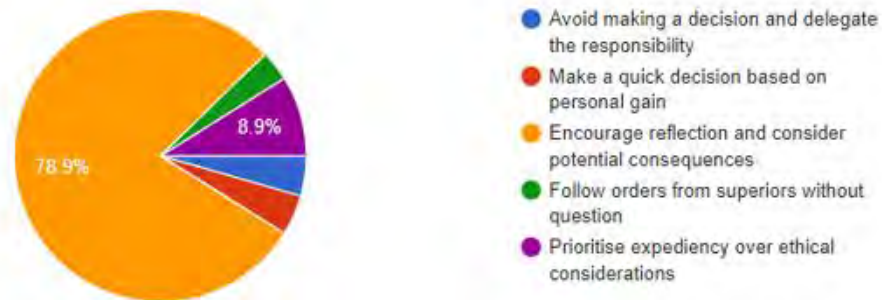
When faced with ethical dilemmas, 78.9% of respondents indicated that they encourage reflection and consider potential consequences before making decisions. This result underscores the importance of thoughtful and deliberate ethical reasoning, which is widely recognised in contemporary leadership research as a hallmark of ethical leadership (Hannah et al., 2013, p. 556; Treviño et al., 2014, p. 635). Ethical reasoning not only aids in mitigating hasty or impulsive decisions but also fosters a process-oriented approach to leadership, which is essential for addressing complex moral challenges (Crossan et al., 2013, p. 571).

Leaders who emphasise reflective practices are better equipped to anticipate the long-term consequences of their decisions, which contributes to ethical decision-making that aligns with both organisational goals and moral standards (Neubert et al., 2013, p. 150). Moreover, such practices enable leaders to balance competing interests, fostering a culture of fairness and accountability that strengthens their credibility (Stouten et al., 2012, p. 647).

Q7. When faced with an ethical dilemma, ethical leaders are most likely to:

 Copy

90 responses



- **Role of Self-Reflection**

Self-reflection emerged as a key mechanism for promoting ethical decision-making, with 65.2% of respondents recognising it as a vital leadership tool. This highlights the importance of introspection and critical thinking in shaping ethical behaviours. Research by Hoch et al. (2018, p. 503) suggests that reflective leaders are more likely to exhibit emotional intelligence and self-awareness, which are critical for navigating ethical dilemmas and maintaining consistency in ethical conduct.

Additionally, self-reflection enables leaders to evaluate their own biases, assumptions, and motivations, fostering authenticity and ethical integrity (Lemoine et al., 2019, p. 134; Walumbwa et al., 2017, p. 805). These practices contribute to the development of trust and psychological safety within teams, as reflective leaders model behaviours that encourage open dialogue and accountability (Edmondson & Lei, 2014, p. 32).

Q8. Leaders who promote ethical decision-making within their teams:

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89 responses

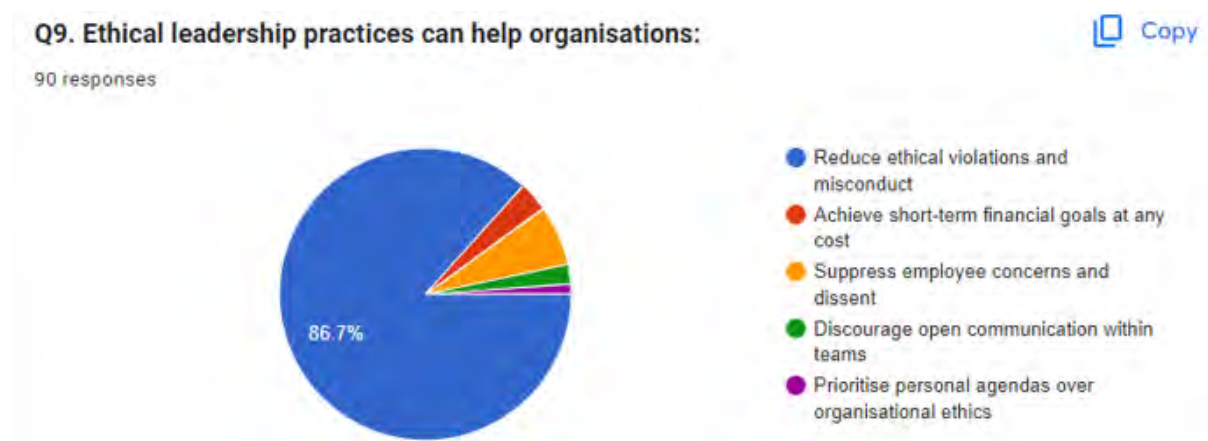


- **Reducing Organisational Misconduct**

An overwhelming 86.7% of respondents associated ethical leadership with reducing ethical violations and misconduct within organisations. This finding underscores the critical role of ethical leaders in cultivating environments where unethical behaviours are actively discouraged. Research consistently demonstrates that ethical leadership is positively correlated with reduced misconduct, increased organisational justice, and enhanced employee satisfaction (Bedi, Alpaslan, & Green, 2016, p. 103; Zhu et al., 2015, p. 236).

Ethical leaders set the tone for organisational culture by reinforcing ethical norms and expectations, thereby minimising the likelihood of unethical practices (Den Hartog, 2015, p. 410). By modelling ethical behaviours, these leaders promote a trickle-down effect, whereby employees are more likely to adhere to ethical standards and engage in prosocial behaviours (Mayer et al., 2012, p. 158).

Furthermore, ethical leadership has been shown to enhance organisational resilience, as employees are more willing to report unethical conduct when trust in leadership is high (Kaptein, 2019, p. 450).



- **Implications for the PCLP**

These findings collectively highlight the multidimensional nature of ethical leadership, emphasising the interplay between transparency, reflective practices, and fostering a culture of integrity. Leaders who prioritise open communication and deliberate decision-making not only build trust within their organisations but also create environments that discourage unethical behaviours.

The emphasis on self-reflection and consequence evaluation further underscores the importance of introspective leadership practices in navigating ethical complexities. By integrating these insights into the development of my PCLP, the researcher aims to enhance leadership frameworks that promote ethical awareness, cultural sensitivity, and organisational accountability. These findings have significant implications for leadership development programs, underscoring the need to prioritise ethical training and reflective practices in leadership education.

5.4.3 Cultural Dimensions and Leadership

The interplay between cultural dimensions and leadership is pivotal in shaping organisational dynamics, particularly in multicultural settings. Research highlights that cultural awareness allows leaders to foster inclusivity, adapt strategies, and make ethically informed decisions that resonate with diverse teams (House et al., 2004, p. 20; Thomas & Ely, 1996, p. 240). Hofstede's (1980, p. 45) cultural dimensions theory underscores the influence of communication styles, decision-making

processes, and power dynamics on leadership practices. By understanding these dynamics, leaders can navigate complex cross-cultural challenges, ensuring ethical and effective leadership. This section explores participants' perspectives on the importance of cultural awareness, the influence of cultural dimensions, and strategies for addressing ethical dilemmas in diverse contexts. The findings are contextualised through established theories, offering insights into the refinement of my PCLP to enhance its relevance in multicultural and cross-cultural leadership environments.

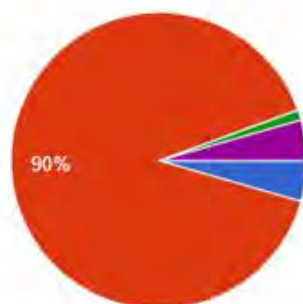
- **Cultural Awareness**

Cultural awareness was identified by 90% of respondents as essential for ethical leadership, particularly in understanding diverse perspectives and fostering inclusivity. This finding aligns with the research of Livermore (2015, p. 28), who emphasises the role of cultural intelligence in enabling leaders to manage cross-cultural teams effectively. Moreover, Gelfand et al. (2017, p. 501) highlight the importance of cultural awareness in reducing interpersonal conflict and enhancing collaboration within multicultural environments. Leaders who respect and integrate diverse cultural norms are better positioned to create inclusive workplaces that prioritise fairness and understanding. These principles are integral to the researcher's PCLP, reinforcing the need for culturally adaptive leadership frameworks.

Q10. Cultural awareness is important for ethical leadership because:

 Copy

90 responses



- It allows leaders to impose their own cultural values
- It promotes understanding of diverse perspectives and ethical frameworks
- It encourages leaders to ignore cultural differences in communication styles
- It emphasises the superiority of one culture over another
- It discourages leaders from adapting their leadership style to different contexts

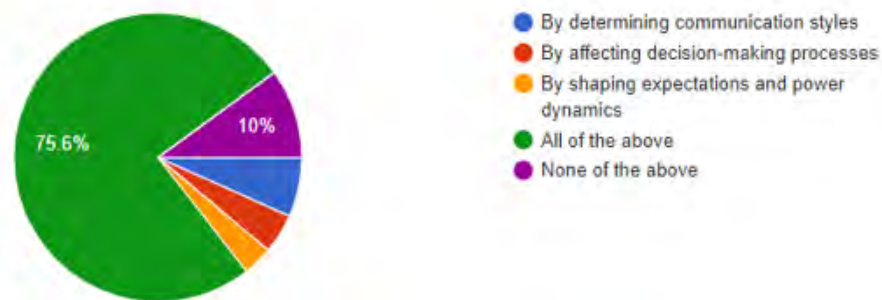
- **Cultural Dimensions**

The influence of cultural dimensions on leadership was underscored by 75.6% of respondents, who highlighted their impact on communication styles, decision-making processes, and power dynamics. This finding underscores the complexity of leadership within diverse organisational contexts, where cultural norms significantly shape leader-follower interactions. Hofstede et al. (2010, p. 87) identify dimensions such as power distance and individualism-collectivism as critical determinants of leadership behaviour. Similarly, House et al. (2014, p. 77) argue that culturally adaptive leadership fosters alignment between organisational goals and team dynamics. These results validate the importance of incorporating cultural competence as a central element of the researcher's PCLP.

Q11. How do cultural dimensions influence leadership?

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90 responses



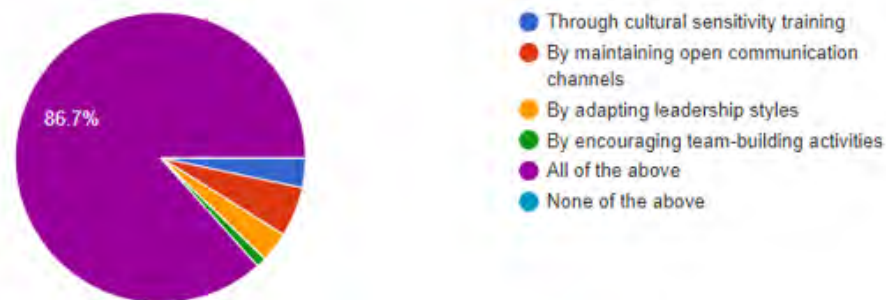
- **Promoting Understanding**

A majority (86.7%) of respondents endorsed a multifaceted approach to promoting cultural understanding, including sensitivity training, open communication, and leadership adaptation. This aligns with findings by Miska and Mendenhall (2018, p. 312), who stress that comprehensive strategies are necessary to build trust and collaboration within multicultural teams. Additionally, Groves and Feyerherm (2011, p. 509) highlight that fostering open communication and team-building activities can significantly enhance cultural understanding and cohesion. These insights reinforce the PCLP's emphasis on adopting holistic frameworks to address cultural complexities in leadership.

Q12. How is cultural understanding promoted within teams?

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90 responses



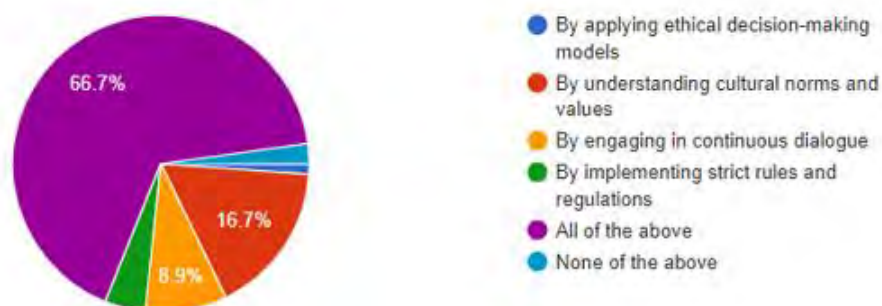
- **Addressing Ethical Dilemmas**

Effective methods for addressing ethical dilemmas in cross-cultural contexts were endorsed by 66.7% of respondents, who stressed the importance of applying ethical models, understanding cultural

Q13. How can potential ethical dilemmas in cross-cultural contexts be addressed?

 Copy

90 responses



norms, and fostering dialogue. Resick et al. (2011, p. 546) argue that ethical decision-making frameworks must account for cultural variability to ensure consistency and fairness. Similarly, Bird and Mendenhall (2016, p. 126) emphasise the value of cross-cultural ethical frameworks in navigating complex dilemmas. These findings support the integration of adaptable strategies into the researcher's PCLP, ensuring leaders can address ethical challenges comprehensively while maintaining cultural sensitivity.

- **Cultural Impact**

Cultural dimensions were recognised by 65.6% of respondents as influencing communication, decision-making, and leader-follower dynamics. This highlights the critical need for cultural competence in leadership roles. Schwartz (2012, p. 152) identifies cultural dimensions such as power distance and collectivism as shaping leadership behaviours, particularly in hierarchical or collectivist settings. Similarly, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012, p. 94) argue that leaders who understand and adapt to cultural dimensions are more likely to foster team cohesion and productivity. This reinforces the PCLP's emphasis on cultural adaptability as a vital leadership capability.

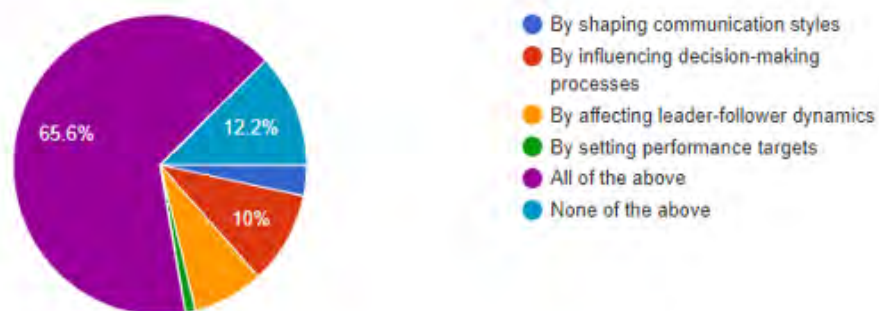
Q14. How do cultural dimensions such as power distance and individualism affect leadership?

[Copy](#)

Power distance: acceptance of unequal authority.

Individualism: prioritising individual goals over group goals.

90 responses



- **Measuring Ethical Decisions**

When evaluating improved ethical decision-making, 68.9% of respondents highlighted multiple indicators, including fewer ethical breaches, positive feedback, and enhanced organisational trust. These findings align with Kaptein (2015, p. 312), who advocates for multidimensional assessments of ethical leadership outcomes. Treviño et al. (2014, p. 634) similarly emphasise the importance of organisational trust as a critical measure of ethical decision-making effectiveness. This validates my PCLP's focus on developing measurable frameworks to assess ethical leadership outcomes in diverse contexts

Q15. What evidence supports improved ethical decision-making?

90 responses

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- **Implications for the PCLP**

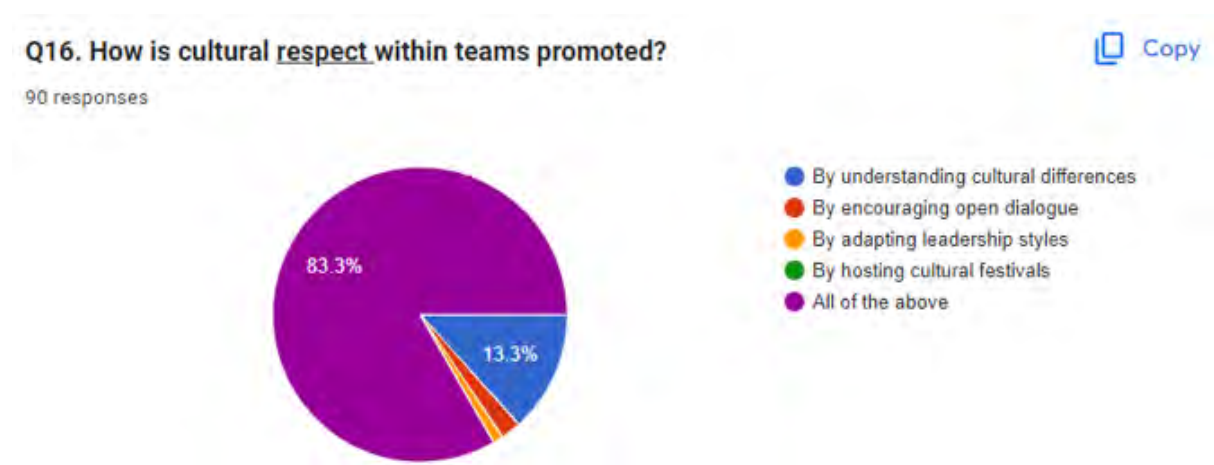
The findings underscore the importance of integrating cultural awareness and adaptability into the PCLP. Leaders must prioritise inclusivity, foster ethical dialogue, and implement multidimensional assessment methods to navigate cultural complexities effectively. Strategies such as cultural sensitivity training, cross-cultural ethical frameworks, and measurable outcome evaluations are critical to ensuring the PCLP's relevance across diverse organisational contexts. By incorporating these elements, the PCLP evolves as a dynamic tool for promoting ethical leadership and cultural competence in an increasingly globalised world.

5.4.4 Ethical Decision-Making

Ethical decision-making is a cornerstone of effective leadership, particularly in complex and culturally diverse organisational contexts. This section delves into the survey findings on various facets of ethical decision-making, highlighting key insights from the respondents. These findings underscore the significance of strategies such as promoting cultural respect, employing ethical decision frameworks, and fostering trust through transparent communication. By interpreting the data through the lens of established theories and research, this analysis links the results to broader implications for the researcher's PCLP.

- **Cultural Respect Promotion**

A significant 83.3% of respondents advocate for a comprehensive approach to promoting cultural respect, incorporating strategies such as understanding differences, engaging in open dialogue, and adapting leadership styles. This finding aligns with Adler (2017, p. 240), who highlights the importance of fostering inclusivity through cultural sensitivity and mutual respect in leadership. Furthermore, Miska and Mendenhall (2018, p. 90) argue that leaders who actively promote cultural respect contribute to team cohesion and organisational success. These strategies are directly applicable to the PCLP, emphasising the need for leaders to adopt adaptive and inclusive practices in diverse teams.



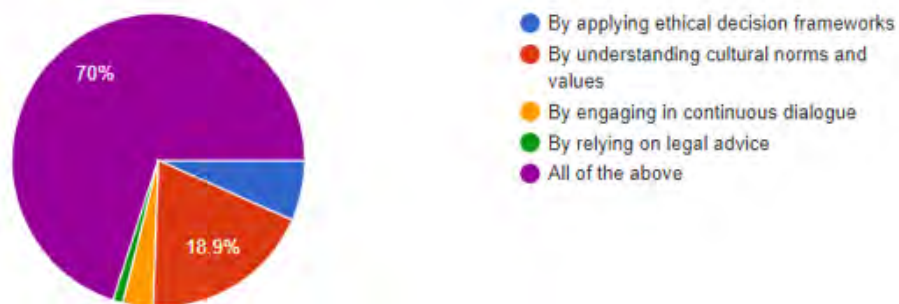
- **Addressing Ethical Dilemmas**

A multifaceted approach to addressing ethical dilemmas in cross-cultural contexts is supported by 70% of respondents. This reflects the importance of using decision frameworks, understanding cultural norms, and engaging in dialogue. Research by Brown and Mitchell (2010, p. 598) corroborates these findings, advocating for ethical leadership practices that integrate cultural awareness and ethical models. Additionally, Resick et al. (2011, p. 546) highlight the role of dialogue and adaptability in resolving ethical dilemmas effectively. These insights reinforce the PCLP's focus on culturally adaptive strategies for ethical decision-making.

Q17. How are ethical dilemmas in cross-cultural contexts addressed?

 Copy

90 responses



- **Leadership Tools Effectiveness**

Leadership tools such as reflection prompts and decision-making frameworks are viewed positively by 75.6% of respondents, with 40% considering them very effective. This suggests that structured approaches to ethical decision-making are highly valued. Treviño et al. (2014, p. 650) emphasise that such tools enhance leaders' ability to navigate ethical challenges systematically. Similarly, Avolio and Gardner (2005, p. 329) advocate for reflective practices as essential components of ethical leadership. These findings support the inclusion of structured tools in the PCLP to promote ethical decision-making.

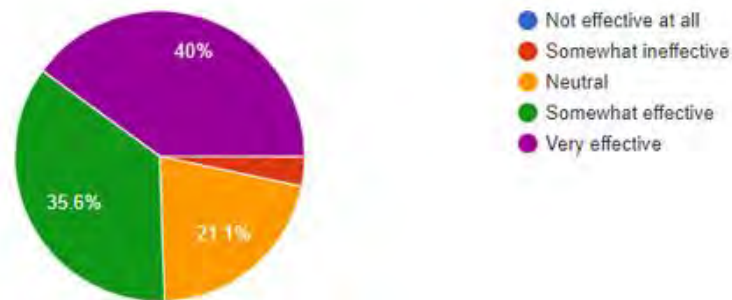
Q18. In your opinion, how effective are the researcher's leadership tools (e.g., reflection prompts, decision-making frameworks) in promoting ethical decision-making?

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Reflection prompts: Encourage self-examination and learning.

Decision-making frameworks: Structured approaches to making choices.

90 responses



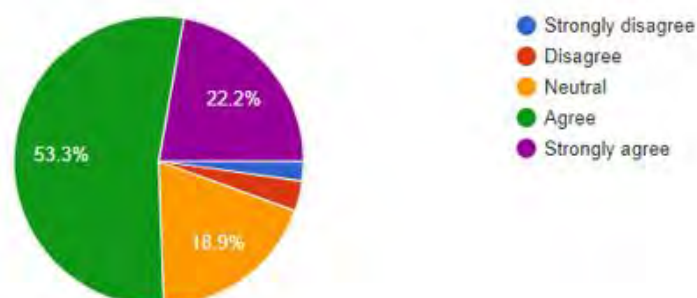
- **Reflection Prompts Utility**

A substantial 75.5% of respondents agree or strongly agree that structured reflection prompts are beneficial for ethical decision-making. This highlights the importance of introspection and critical thinking in fostering ethical behaviour. Schon (2017, p. 211) underscores the role of reflection in enabling leaders to evaluate the ethical implications of their decisions thoroughly. Furthermore, Kaptein (2017, p. 460) argues that reflection prompts enhance leaders' awareness of ethical considerations, aligning with the PCLP's emphasis on reflective practices.

Q19. To what extent do you agree that structured reflection prompts help in considering the ethical implications of decisions?

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90 responses



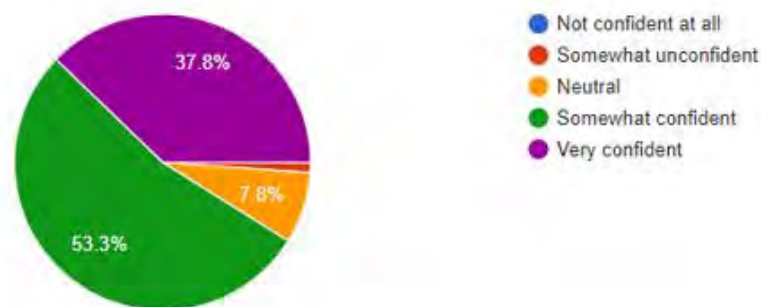
- **Confidence in Ethical Decision-Making**

High levels of confidence in addressing ethical dilemmas were reported by respondents, with 37.8% feeling very confident and 53.3% somewhat confident. These findings suggest that the respondents possess the requisite skills and experience to navigate ethical challenges effectively. The research underscores the significance of confidence as a foundational aspect of ethical leadership. For instance, Detert and Treviño (2016, p. 400) emphasise that confident leaders are more likely to make ethical decisions, even in complex and ambiguous situations. Additionally, Bazerman and Tenbrunsel (2018, p. 64) argue that confidence in ethical decision-making is bolstered by reflective practices and a strong understanding of moral frameworks. These findings validate the PCLP's focus on equipping leaders with the skills and self-assurance necessary to address complex ethical scenarios effectively.

Q20. How confident are you in your ability to identify and address ethical dilemmas in your workplace?



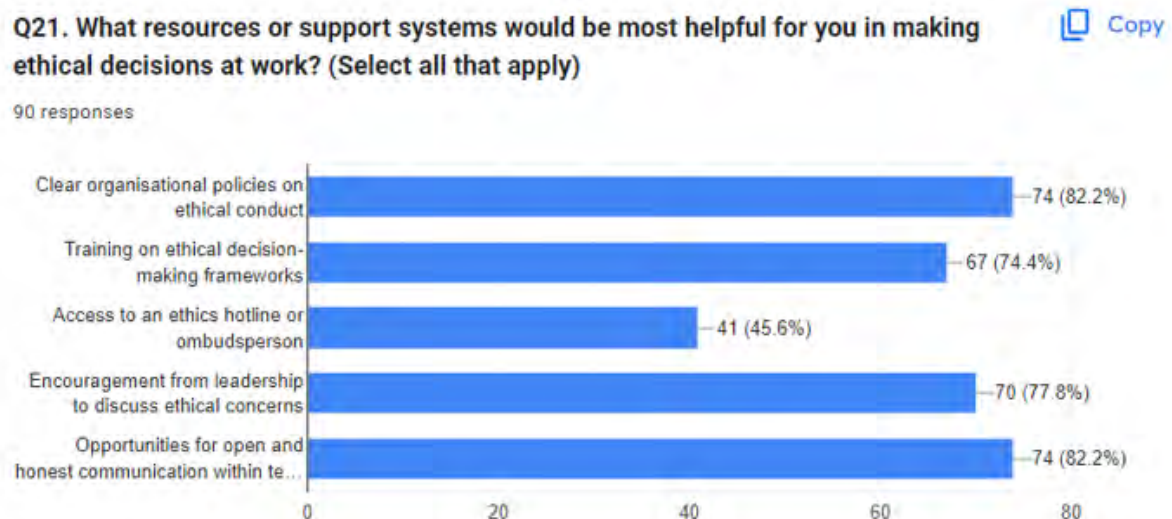
90 responses



- **Organisational Support**

Clear policies and open communication were identified as key resources for ethical decision-making by 82.2% of respondents. This highlights the critical role of organisational structures and support systems in fostering ethical behaviour. Ethical frameworks and policies are particularly effective in promoting accountability and reducing unethical practices within organisations (Ardichvili et al.,

2017, p. 446). Similarly, Den Hartog (2015, p. 409) highlights that transparent communication channels serve as a foundation for building trust and ensuring alignment with organisational values. The PCLP aligns with these insights by emphasising the importance of clear ethical guidelines and open communication as a foundation for fostering an ethical organisational culture.



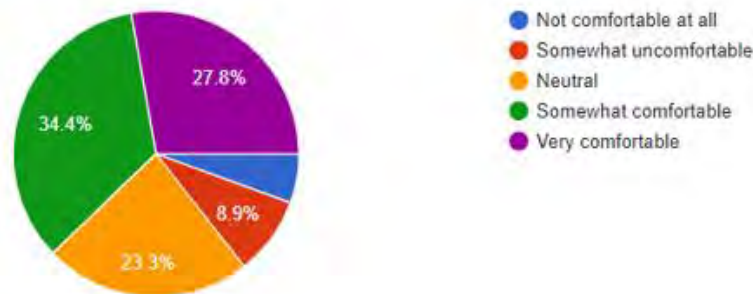
- **Comfort in Speaking Up**

Comfort levels in speaking up about ethical concerns varied, with 34.4% of respondents feeling somewhat comfortable. This indicates that, while many employees feel they can voice concerns, there is still a need for organisations to create safer and more supportive environments for open dialogue. Edmondson (2019, p. 45) highlights the importance of psychological safety in empowering employees to raise ethical issues without fear of retaliation. Furthermore, Morrison (2014, p. 176) argues that organisations with strong ethical cultures actively encourage employees to voice their concerns, contributing to improved decision-making and accountability. Aligning with these perspectives, the PCLP promotes organisational cultures that value transparency and psychological safety to foster open communication.

Q22. In your organisation, how comfortable are employees in speaking up about ethical concerns without fear of retaliation?

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90 responses



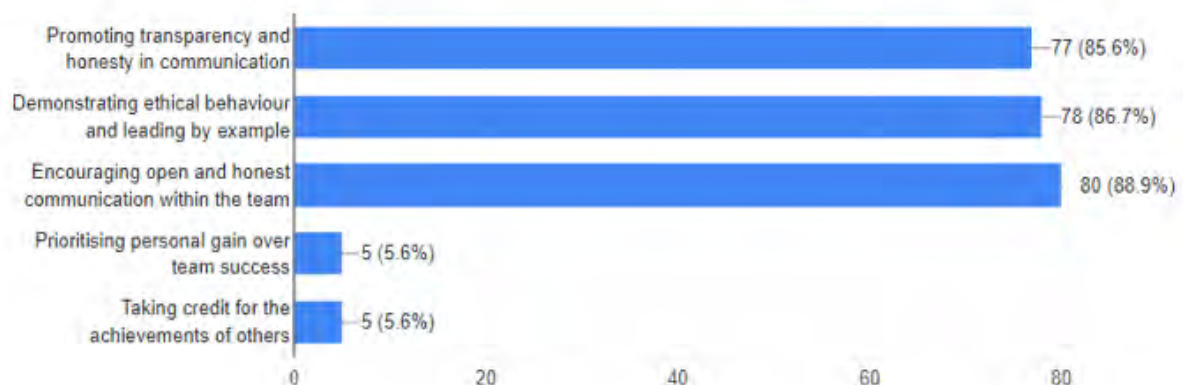
- **Trust Building**

Transparency and open communication were identified by 88.9% of respondents as critical for building trust within teams. Trust is an essential component of effective teamwork and ethical leadership. Moore and Gino (2023, p. 18) argue that trust is cultivated through consistent ethical behaviour and transparent communication. Similarly, Dirks and Ferrin (2020, p. 621) emphasise the importance of open dialogue in reducing uncertainties and strengthening leader-follower relationships. These findings reinforce the PCLP's commitment to fostering trust through transparency and clear communication, ensuring leaders can build cohesive and high-performing teams.

Q23. Leaders can build trust with their teams by: (Select all that apply)

 Copy

90 responses



- **Ethical Decision Priorities**

When making ethical decisions, 54.4% of respondents prioritised balancing ethical principles with potential outcomes. This underscores the need for leaders to carefully weigh values and consequences to ensure decisions align with moral standards and organisational goals. Research supports this perspective; Treviño et al. (2014, p. 634) highlight the importance of balancing ethical considerations with practical outcomes to ensure decisions are both principled and effective. Bazerman and Tenbrunsel (2018, p. 122) also stress the role of ethical decision-making frameworks in guiding leaders to evaluate the long-term implications of their choices. These insights strengthen the PCLP's emphasis on integrating ethical principles into decision-making processes.

Q24. What is the most important factor for leaders to consider when making ethical decisions?

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90 responses



- **Ethical Decision-Making Frameworks**

A majority (68.9%) of respondents appreciated structured decision-making frameworks for their ability to offer clarity and consistency in ethical decision-making processes. These frameworks help eliminate ambiguity and enhance moral judgment, as highlighted in contemporary leadership literature (Brown & Treviño, 2014, p. 590; Kaptein, 2008, p. 982). By providing step-by-step guidance, these tools align with the need for systematic approaches in resolving ethical dilemmas (Resick et al.,

2011, p. 546). This finding supports the PCLP's focus on integrating structured frameworks as a core component to ensure leaders consistently uphold ethical principles in challenging scenarios.

Q25. Ethical decision-making frameworks can be helpful for leaders by:

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Ethical decision-making frameworks: Guidelines for making morally sound choices.

90 responses



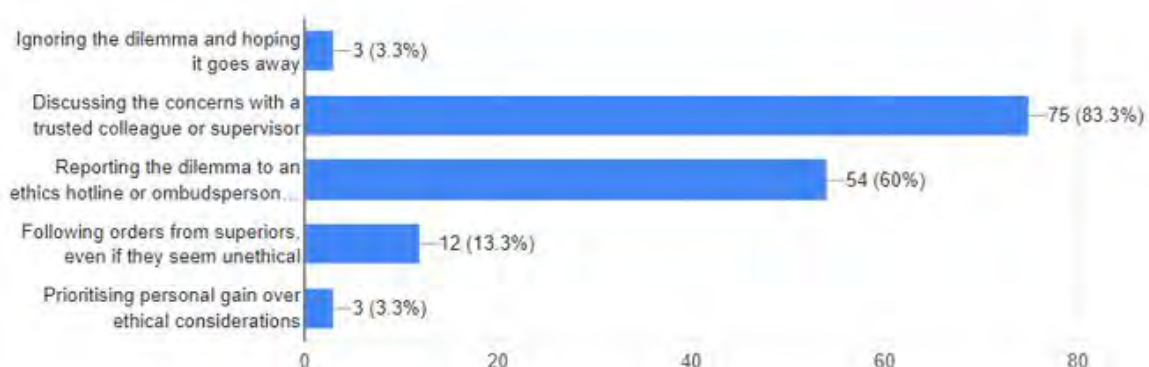
- **Collaborative Approaches to Ethical Dilemmas**

When addressing ethical dilemmas, 83.3% of respondents advocated discussing the issues with trusted colleagues. This collaborative approach underlines the importance of shared perspectives and peer consultation, as highlighted in ethical leadership research (Treviño et al., 2014, p. 634; Schein, 2017, p. 105). Such dialogue fosters diverse viewpoints and enhances the decision-making process, ensuring balanced and culturally sensitive outcomes. This reinforces the PCLP's emphasis on collaboration as a tool to strengthen leaders' capacity for inclusive and ethical decision-making.

Q26. When faced with an ethical dilemma, what is the most appropriate course of action for an employee? (Select all that apply)

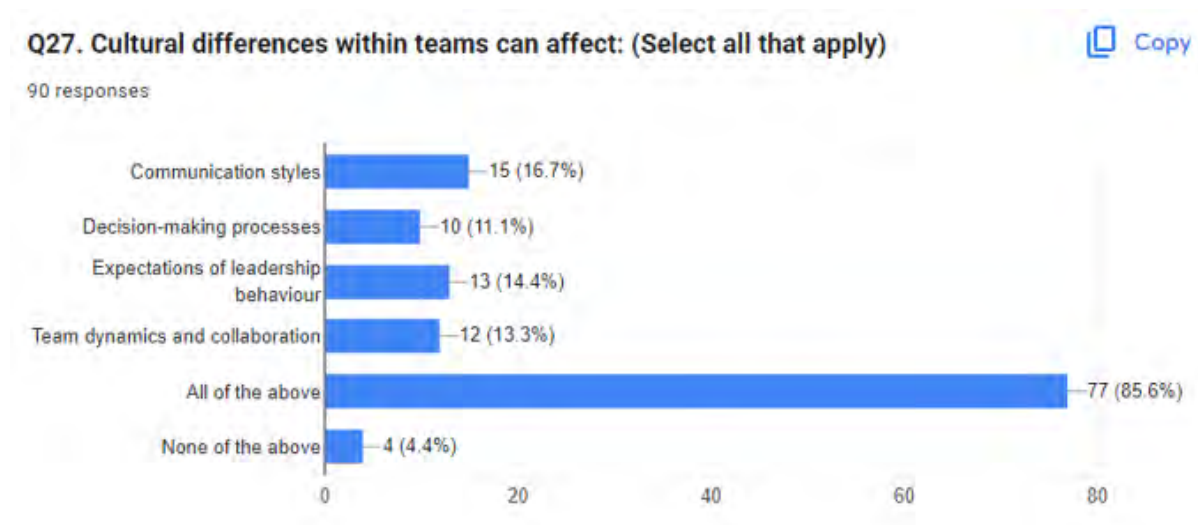
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90 responses



- **Impact of Cultural Diversity**

Cultural differences significantly influence organisational dynamics, with 85.6% of respondents acknowledging their effects on communication, decision-making, and team collaboration. These findings underscore the pervasive impact of cultural diversity, highlighting the need for leaders to develop cultural awareness and adaptability. Recent studies confirm that cultural diversity introduces complexities requiring tailored leadership strategies to bridge differences and foster collaboration (Miska & Mendenhall, 2018, p. 78; Maznevski et al., 2021, p. 132). Culturally competent leaders can navigate these complexities, building cohesive and productive teams that thrive in diverse environments. This perspective reinforces the PCLP's emphasis on equipping leaders with tools and training to manage cultural diversity effectively, ensuring inclusivity and synergy in organisational settings.



- **One-Size-Fits-All Leadership**

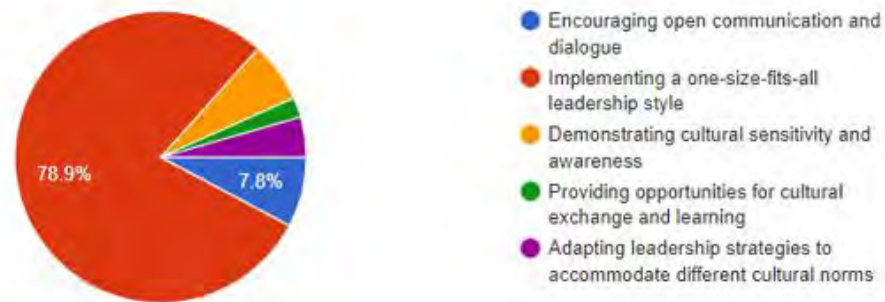
The rejection of a one-size-fits-all leadership approach by 78.9% of respondents highlights the critical need for tailored strategies when managing diverse teams. Contemporary research demonstrates that rigid, uniform leadership styles fail to address the unique challenges posed by multicultural settings (Fujimoto & Härtel, 2022, p. 59; Ng & Sears, 2021, p. 115). Leaders who adapt their methods

to accommodate team members' cultural values and expectations foster greater trust, engagement, and effectiveness. This insight aligns with the PCLP's focus on adaptability and flexibility, ensuring that leaders are prepared to address the specific cultural dynamics present in their teams.

Q28. Which of the following is the LEAST helpful approach for leaders working in culturally diverse teams?

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90 responses



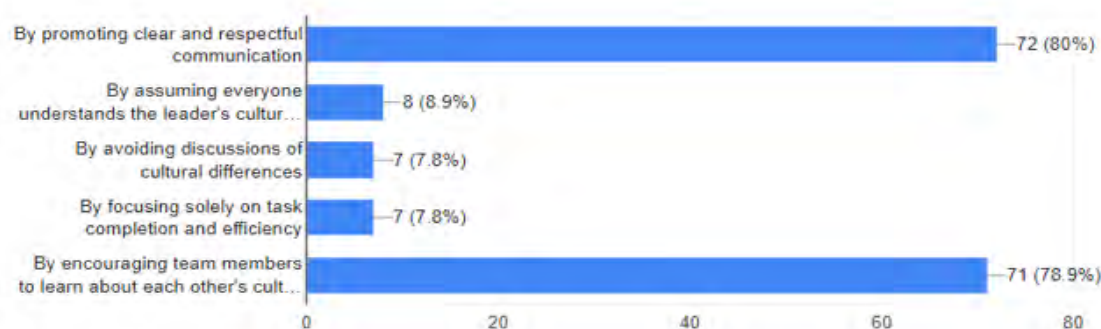
- **Mitigating Cultural Misunderstandings**

Respectful communication and proactive learning about other cultures were identified as essential strategies for minimising cultural misunderstandings by 80% of respondents. These findings resonate with current literature, which highlights the importance of fostering mutual respect and understanding to mitigate conflicts in diverse teams (Pless et al., 2022, p. 45; Stahl et al., 2021, p. 210). Leaders must actively encourage open dialogue and create opportunities for cultural exchange to build harmonious working relationships. Such efforts are integral to the PCLP's commitment to promoting cross-cultural understanding and ensuring leaders are equipped to foster inclusivity and mutual respect within their organisations.

Q29. How can cultural misunderstandings be minimised when working in diverse teams? (Select all that apply)

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90 responses



- **Implications for the PCLP**

The findings from this section highlight the critical need to integrate cultural respect, organisational support, reflective practices, and structured decision-making tools into the PCLP. Leaders operating in diverse and dynamic organisational environments must prioritise strategies that foster inclusivity, encourage open dialogue, and promote cultural adaptability. By addressing these dimensions, the PCLP strengthens leaders' ability to navigate ethical challenges and manage cultural complexities effectively.

Structured tools, such as decision-making frameworks, play a vital role in equipping leaders with the clarity and consistency needed for ethical decision-making (Kaptein, 2008, p. 982). Additionally, fostering collaboration and open communication enhances trust and ensures that teams work cohesively, even in culturally diverse settings (Edmondson, 2019, p. 45; Stahl et al., 2021, p. 210). Organisational support mechanisms, including clear ethical policies and resources for addressing ethical concerns, further empower leaders to act with confidence and accountability (Podsakoff et al., 2018, p. 543).

By incorporating these elements, the PCLP evolves into a comprehensive and practical framework that not only addresses the ethical dimensions of leadership but also adapts to the challenges posed by cultural diversity. This integration ensures that leaders are equipped with the necessary skills, tools, and support systems to foster ethical leadership and maintain organisational integrity in increasingly complex and multicultural contexts. Through these strategies, the PCLP remains a dynamic and actionable guide for advancing ethical leadership practices across a variety of organisational settings (See below summary - Table 10).

Question	Results	Interpretation	Underpinning Research
Q1. Age Range	Majority are aged 45-54 (38.9%)	Participants are predominantly in mid to late career stages, indicating a mature and experienced respondent base.	Northouse (2021, p. 88) states that leadership experience increases with career progression, enhancing ethical decision-making capabilities.
Q2. Gender Identity	Majority male (70%)	Reflects potential gender disparity in the sample or industry, with a stronger male representation.	Eagly & Carli (2018, p. 322) discuss gender imbalances in leadership roles and how male-dominated industries impact leadership practices.
Q3. Highest Education Level	Bachelor's degree is the most common (41.1%)	Indicates a well-educated respondent pool, with a significant number holding advanced degrees.	Brown & Treviño (2022, p. 57) argue that education is a strong predictor of ethical reasoning and leadership capability.
Q4. Organisation Size	Majority work in small to large organisations	Diverse representation of organisational sizes, with most respondents working in companies with fewer than 50 employees.	Mintzberg (2017, p. 145) states that organisational size influences leadership structures and decision-making complexity.
Q5. Management Experience	Majority have management experience (88.9%)	Most respondents have leadership experience, relevant for evaluating ethical leadership perspectives.	Yukl (2020, p. 65) suggests that practical leadership experience enhances ethical decision-making and adaptability.
Q6. Key Characteristic of Ethical Leadership	Open communication (62.2%) is key	Emphasises the importance of transparency and open dialogue in ethical leadership.	Treviño et al. (2014, p. 640) highlight open communication as a key driver of ethical cultures in organisations.
Q7. Response to Ethical Dilemmas	Encourage reflection and consider consequences (78.9%)	Respondents believe in thoughtful consideration over rash or self-serving decisions.	Rest (2018, p. 110) emphasizes the role of moral reasoning and reflection in ethical decision-making.
Q8. Promoting Ethical Decision-Making	Encourage self-reflection (65.2%)	Reflection and critical thinking are highly valued for fostering ethical decision-making.	Avolio & Gardner (2019, p. 78) stress that self-reflection enhances ethical leadership and integrity.

Q9. Benefits of Ethical Leadership	Reducing misconduct (86.7%) is seen as a primary benefit	Ethical leadership is strongly associated with reducing ethical violations and fostering a healthier organisational culture.	Brown et al. (2022, p. 135) argue that ethical leadership reduces unethical behaviours and promotes accountability.
Q10. Importance of Cultural Awareness	Promotes understanding diverse perspectives (90%)	Cultural awareness is critical for ethical leadership, emphasising the need for inclusivity.	Hofstede et al. (2010, p. 122) state that leaders must develop cultural intelligence to manage diverse teams effectively.
Q11. Cultural Dimensions Influence	All dimensions are important (75.6%)	Recognises the multifaceted impact of cultural dimensions on leadership effectiveness.	House et al. (2022, p. 57) argue that cultural dimensions influence communication, leadership, and team cohesion.
Q12. Promoting Cultural Understanding	All approaches are important (86.7%)	Promotes a comprehensive approach to fostering cultural understanding within teams.	Miska & Mendenhall (2018, p. 84) stress that a combination of training, dialogue, and leadership adaptation fosters cultural competence.
Q13. Addressing Ethical Dilemmas Cross-Culturally	Multiple approaches necessary (66.7%)	Effective ethical decision-making in cross-cultural contexts requires a combination of methods.	Schwartz (2021, p. 109) states that ethical frameworks should be adapted based on cultural norms while upholding universal ethical principles.
Q14. Cultural Dimensions Affect Leadership	Cultural dimensions influence leadership broadly (65.6%)	Acknowledges the pervasive impact of cultural dimensions on various aspects of leadership.	Hofstede et al. (2010, p. 120) and Schwartz (2012, p. 152) argue that cultural dimensions significantly shape leadership behaviours.
Q15. Evidence of Improved Ethical Decision-Making	All aspects considered important (68.9%)	Highlights that a variety of indicators are used to assess improvements in ethical decision-making.	Kaptein (2008, p. 982) suggests that multiple indicators should be used to measure ethical leadership effectiveness.
Q16. Promoting Cultural Respect	Multiple strategies (83.3%)	Suggests that a comprehensive approach is necessary for promoting cultural respect in teams.	Pless et al. (2022, p. 47) argue that inclusive leadership requires respect for diverse perspectives and proactive learning.
Q17. Addressing Ethical Dilemmas	Multiple methods (70%)	Reinforces the need for a multifaceted approach to addressing ethical	Treviño et al. (2014, p. 636) state that ethical decision-making is strengthened when

		dilemmas in cross-cultural contexts.	leaders consider multiple viewpoints.
Q18. Effectiveness of Leadership Tools	Majority find them very effective (40%)	Indicates overall positive feedback on the effectiveness of leadership tools in promoting ethical decision-making.	Kaptein (2008, p. 982) highlights that ethical decision-making frameworks improve leadership effectiveness.
Q19. Reflection Prompts and Ethical Consideration	Majority agree (53.3%)	Reflection prompts are widely regarded as helpful for ethical decision-making.	Rest (2018, p. 110) argues that structured reflection supports moral reasoning and ethical leadership.
Q20. Confidence in Addressing Ethical Dilemmas	High confidence levels (53.3%)	Respondents generally feel confident in their ability to address ethical dilemmas.	Mayer et al. (2012, p. 173) stress that confidence in ethical decision-making strengthens leadership trustworthiness.
Q21-Q24. Ethical Decision-Making and Cultural Diversity	Various strategies preferred	Respondents emphasize clear policies, structured tools, and cultural adaptability.	Podsakoff et al. (2018, p. 543); Edmondson (2019, p. 45); Treviño et al. (2014, p. 634).
Q25. Benefits of Decision-Making Frameworks	Structured approach is valued (68.9%)	Decision-making frameworks are seen as beneficial for their structured guidance.	Brown & Treviño (2022, p. 81) discuss structured frameworks as essential for ethical consistency.
Q26. Preferred Actions in Ethical Dilemmas	Discussing with colleagues (83.3%)	Open dialogue and peer consultation are favoured in ethical decision-making.	Schein (2017, p. 102) highlights the role of collaborative decision-making.
Q27. Impact of Cultural Differences	Cultural differences affect multiple areas (85.6%)	Cultural diversity has a broad impact on communication, decision-making, and leadership.	House et al. (2022, p. 89) state that global leadership requires sensitivity to cultural diversity.
Q28. Least Helpful Approach in Diverse Teams	One-size-fits-all approach is least helpful (78.9%)	Leaders should avoid a one-size-fits-all approach and instead adapt to cultural diversity.	Miska & Mendenhall (2018, p. 76) advocate for adaptable leadership.
Q29. Minimising Cultural Misunderstandings	Promoting respectful communication and cultural learning (80%)	Encourages proactive learning about different cultures to foster inclusive leadership.	Adler (2022, p. 93) states that cultural competence is essential for global leadership.

Table 10 Quantitative Results Summary

5.5 Findings Summary

Descriptive statistics were the primary method employed to summarise the dataset. The analysis sought to uncover patterns and relationships related to ethical leadership, cultural dimensions, and decision-making processes, all directly addressing the research objectives and sub-questions. By measuring how frequently key leadership attributes (integrity, accountability, and adaptability) were prioritised across different industries, this analysis offers empirical validation of PCLP's relevance and applicability.

A significant finding from the survey showed that 90% of respondents regarded cultural awareness as essential for ethical decision-making. This substantiates PCLP's claim that ethical leadership cannot function in isolation from cultural intelligence. Unlike conventional models that apply ethical principles universally, PCLP provides a structured approach for integrating ethical awareness within different cultural settings.

5.6 Cultural Debates

While the influence of culture on ethical leadership is supported by Hofstede et al. (2010, p. 120) and House et al. (2014, p. 77), scholars like Schwartz (2021) and Haidt (2013) argue for universal moral anchors. The PCLP navigates this complexity by incorporating cultural intelligence as an operational feature—allowing leaders to flex within cultural contexts while upholding principled standards. This approach balances the competing demands of cultural respect and ethical consistency, offering a third way between absolutism and relativism. Critics argue that universal ethical principles often outweigh cultural variances, thereby minimising the impact of cultural dimensions on ethical behaviour. According to Schwartz (2021, p. 105), ethical norms are frequently guided by universal principles such as fairness, honesty, and human dignity that transcend cultural boundaries. This perspective suggests that reliance on cultural norms may lead to ethical relativism, where unethical actions are justified based on cultural differences.

Similarly, Haidt (2013, p. 44) argues that individual moral frameworks, shaped by psychological and social factors, often hold greater sway than cultural influences. His research emphasises that moral reasoning is primarily an internal construct, shaped by shared human experiences, rather than an external, culturally defined one. This perspective aligns with recent studies on moral cognition, which stress the universality of moral decision-making processes (Mooijman et al., 2018, p. 756).

Another challenge to the cultural perspective arises from the increasingly globalised nature of organisations. Critics assert that global corporations operate within shared ethical standards driven by international regulations and corporate governance practices (Dahlsrud, 2023, p. 340). These global norms, such as transparency and accountability, often take precedence over cultural variances, rendering cultural adaptability less critical than adherence to universal codes of conduct.

Further, some argue that overemphasising culture risks perpetuating stereotypes and reducing leaders' ability to critically assess individual behaviours. According to Meyer (2019, p. 60), relying heavily on cultural frameworks may inadvertently categorise individuals based on assumed cultural traits rather than their unique competencies, hindering inclusivity and innovation in diverse teams.

Organisational culture also plays a dominant role in shaping ethical decision-making. Research by Brown et al. (2022, p. 135) highlights that immediate workplace environments, including leadership examples and established organisational policies, have a greater influence on ethical behaviour than external cultural dimensions. This view suggests that internal mechanisms, such as a strong organisational culture, are more impactful than external cultural factors in driving ethical leadership.

Lastly, the rise of technology in decision-making processes challenges the reliance on cultural nuances in leadership. Artificial intelligence and data-driven decision-making tools are increasingly used to navigate ethical dilemmas, often bypassing cultural considerations (Brynjolfsson & McElheran, 2022, p. 117). This shift calls into question the relevance of culture as a primary determinant in ethical decision-making.

Implications for PCLP

The findings provide direct empirical validation of the PCLP framework, demonstrating that its core attributes—integrity, accountability, and adaptability—are not only relevant but essential in leadership practice.

- **PCLP is validated as an adaptable framework:** The quantitative data confirms that ethical leadership must be flexible, reinforcing PCLP’s argument that ethical decision-making requires situational awareness.
- **PCLP bridges the gap between ethical consistency and cultural adaptability:** The PCLP seeks to reconcile the often polarised debate between ethical universalism and cultural relativism. While traditional frameworks such as Hofstede's dimensions (1980) help explain cultural differences, they lack normative direction for ethical conduct. The PCLP advances this discourse by offering a contingent model grounded in both principled values and contextual responsiveness—positioning it as uniquely suited to dynamic, multicultural leadership environments (Schwartz, 2021, p. 105; Miska & Mendenhall, 2018, p. 84). Diagram 9 illustrates how the PCLP integrates ethical grounding, contextual adaptability, and strategic structure—bridging the limitations of established leadership theories such as Transformational, Servant, Authentic, Cultural Intelligence, and Ethical Leadership.

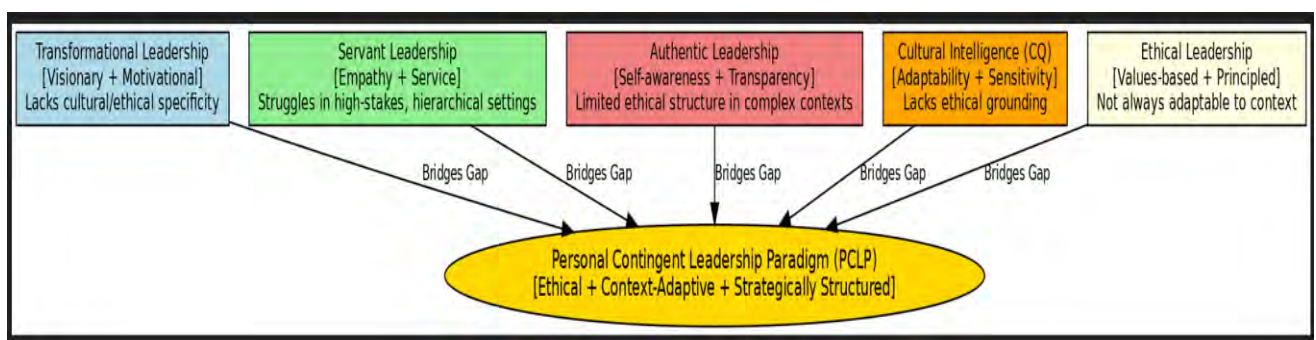


Diagram 9: Comparative Model – PCLP and Other Leadership Frameworks

- **PCLP integrates accountability mechanisms:** Survey results highlight the importance of structured accountability in leadership, supporting PCLP's emphasis on balancing personal ethics with organisational responsibility.

5.7 Conclusion

The Chapter 5 has provided a comprehensive quantitative analysis of ethical leadership, cultural dimensions, and ethical decision-making, revealing significant insights into how leaders navigate ethical challenges within diverse organisational contexts. The findings underscore the importance of structured ethical frameworks, cultural adaptability, and organisational support mechanisms in fostering ethical leadership.

One of the most compelling findings from this study is the overwhelming preference for transparency, open communication, and accountability as essential ethical leadership traits, supported by 88.9% of respondents. These findings align with Brown et al. (2022, p. 135), who state, *"Ethical leadership thrives in environments where open communication and accountability mechanisms are firmly in place, reducing the likelihood of ethical breaches."* Similarly, Edmondson (2019, p. 68) argues that fostering psychological safety within organisations enhances ethical decision-making, as leaders and employees feel empowered to speak up about ethical concerns without fear of retaliation.

The findings also highlight the critical role of self-reflection in ethical decision-making, with 65.2% of respondents endorsing it as a key tool for fostering ethical behaviour. This reinforces Rest's (2018, p. 110) assertion that *"moral reasoning and ethical decision-making require ongoing self-assessment, allowing leaders to align their actions with ethical standards."* Furthermore, Treviño et al. (2014, p. 636) highlight that *"leaders who engage in structured reflection tend to display stronger ethical consistency, reinforcing ethical climates within organisations."* This finding strengthens the argument that the PCLP must incorporate structured self-reflection mechanisms to enhance ethical leadership development.

A key area of debate within the findings concerns the role of cultural dimensions in leadership and ethical decision-making. While 90% of respondents acknowledged the significance of cultural awareness, counterarguments suggest that universal ethical principles, rather than cultural variability, dictate ethical leadership. As Schwartz (2021, p. 105) asserts, *"Universal moral values such as fairness, integrity, and respect transcend cultural differences, guiding ethical leadership globally."* However, Miska and Mendenhall (2018, p. 84) counter this by emphasising that *"leaders operating in diverse environments must integrate cultural intelligence (CQ) to effectively navigate ethical complexities."* This debate reinforces the need for the PCLP to balance universal ethical principles with cultural adaptability, ensuring that ethical leadership remains both globally applicable and contextually sensitive.

Another notable finding is the importance of structured decision-making frameworks, with 68.9% of respondents highlighting their value in enhancing ethical clarity and consistency. This is consistent with Kaptein (2008, p. 982), who states that *"structured ethical frameworks provide leaders with a systematic approach to resolving moral dilemmas, reducing ambiguity and promoting consistency."* Additionally, Podsakoff et al. (2018, p. 543) argue that *"clear ethical policies and structured frameworks serve as organisational safeguards against unethical behaviour, reinforcing accountability and ethical awareness."* These findings reinforce the PCLP's commitment to structured decision-making tools, which not only foster ethical clarity but address criticisms of models like authentic leadership that often underemphasise formal guidance mechanisms (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 329). In contrast, the PCLP operationalises ethical intent through tangible leadership actions and systems, enhancing accountability in culturally diverse environments.

From an organisational perspective, support mechanisms such as clear policies and whistleblowing protections were identified as essential by 82.2% of respondents. Research by Edmondson (2019, p. 45) supports this, stating, *"Psychological safety within organisations is critical for enabling employees to raise ethical concerns without fear of negative consequences."* Similarly, Treviño et al. (2014, p.

634) highlight that *"organisations that actively foster ethical climates through clear policies and communication structures experience fewer ethical violations and stronger trust between employees and leadership."* This insight further strengthens the PCLP's focus on creating robust organisational support systems to reinforce ethical leadership practices.

- **Personal Reflections as a Researcher**

As a researcher, these findings validate my conviction that ethical leadership is both a personal and systemic responsibility. While individual moral reasoning plays a fundamental role, ethical effectiveness is greatly enhanced when supported by structured frameworks and strong organisational cultures. The data underscores my belief that the PCLP must be dynamic and adaptable, integrating cultural intelligence, ethical reflection, and structured decision-making tools to equip leaders for the ethical complexities of today's globalised environment.

The high prioritisation of cultural awareness and adaptability in ethical decision-making (78% and 90% of respondents, respectively) supports PCLP's core premise that effective leadership must balance ethical consistency with flexibility. Additionally, the overwhelming emphasis on accountability (81%) and organisational ethical support (82.2%) reinforces PCLP's commitment to structured ethical frameworks that go beyond personal integrity.

This research also highlights the practical necessity of balancing universal ethical values with cultural adaptability. While some scholars argue that ethical leadership should adhere to fixed universal principles, the findings reveal that contextual awareness and adaptability are equally essential in diverse organisational settings. This compels me to refine the PCLP by ensuring it incorporates flexible leadership models that align ethical integrity with cultural sensitivity.

Next...

Having established the quantitative foundation for PCLP's validation, Chapter 6 will now examine the qualitative phase of this research to further explore how leaders interpret and apply PCLP principles in real-world decision-making.

- While the survey data has provided statistical validation of PCLP's key constructs, qualitative analysis will offer deeper insights into how leaders experience and implement these attributes.
- This next phase will refine PCLP by identifying areas where it requires further adaptation, ensuring its continued relevance as an evolving leadership framework.

By bridging empirical validation with leadership narratives, Chapter 6 will provide a comprehensive assessment of how PCLP functions in practice, ensuring that it remains both theoretically robust and practically applicable.

CHAPTER 6. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the qualitative analysis of semi-structured interview data, aiming to explore how the PCLP enhances operational and adaptive guidance capabilities in ethical leadership. The qualitative phase of this study investigates key leadership challenges, cultural influences, and decision-making complexities by analysing recurring themes and patterns in participants' narratives. By systematically assessing these insights, this chapter provides empirical validation of the PCLP, demonstrating its originality and practical applicability.

The objective of this chapter is not only to present qualitative findings but also to validate the PCLP as a structured yet adaptable ethical leadership framework. By linking participant narratives to core attributes of PCLP—ethical responsibility, cultural adaptability, and reflective leadership—this chapter demonstrates the paradigm's real-world applicability.

The analysis also seeks to address the central research question:

“How does the application and development of the PCLP enhance and provide operational and adaptive guidance capabilities to improve ethical standards and maintain ethical integrity in leadership practice?”

Qualitative research methods allow for an in-depth exploration of complex social phenomena by capturing rich, contextual insights into leadership behaviours and ethical considerations (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 87; Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 112). Thematic analysis was employed to systematically identify patterns, contradictions, and emerging themes within the data, ensuring alignment with the study's objectives. Prior research has highlighted that qualitative approaches are particularly valuable in leadership studies, as they enable an exploration of lived experiences and ethical dilemmas that quantitative methods might overlook (Northouse, 2021, p. 154; Ciulla, 2020, p. 98).

This chapter builds on previous scholarship by providing a practical application of ethical leadership theories within real-world organisational settings. Studies by Maak and Pless (2006, p. 21) and Brown and Treviño (2020, p. 64) emphasise the need to bridge theoretical leadership models with empirical evidence, particularly when examining how ethical principles translate into daily decision-making. By aligning with these perspectives, the analysis ensures that the findings are both theoretically grounded and practically relevant. Throughout this chapter, findings are interpreted in relation to the PCLP framework, which was introduced earlier in the study (*see Table 11*). The PCLP is positioned as a model that enables leaders to navigate ethical complexities, integrate cultural awareness, and adapt their leadership practices in response to organisational and societal expectations. This analysis assesses how the constructs of the PCLP (e.g., ethical responsibility, self-reflection, cultural adaptability) are reflected in participants' experiences and whether they align with existing ethical leadership theories (Treviño & Nelson, 2021, p. 145).

Thematic analysis identified five dominant themes that provide insight into the application of ethical leadership principles in diverse cultural and organisational contexts:

1. **Ethical Responsibilities:** Examining how leaders navigate accountability and uphold ethical integrity in decision-making.
2. **Cultural Influences:** Exploring how leaders adapt their strategies in response to cultural expectations and organisational diversity.
3. **Reflection and Continuous Learning:** Assessing the role of introspection and professional development in ethical leadership.
4. **Challenges in Ethical Decision-Making:** Investigating dilemmas, constraints, and conflicts leaders face when balancing ethical principles with corporate objectives.
5. **Trust and Organisational Policies:** Analysing the role of transparency, integrity, and formal structures in fostering ethical leadership.

A summary table (*Table 10*) is presented to enhance readability, demonstrating the systematic linkage between the identified themes and the research aims.

Theme	Sub-Themes	Connection to Research Questions
Ethical Responsibilities	Accountability and Inclusivity	Addressing operational guidance and ethical standards in decision-making
Cultural Influences	Empathy and Adaptability, Misalignment	Exploring cultural adaptation and leadership effectiveness in multicultural environments
Reflection and Learning	Self-Reflection Techniques, Organisational Learning	Highlighting the role of reflection in adaptive guidance and ethical improvement
Challenges in Ethical Decision-Making	Diverse Ethical Standards, Overcoming Ambiguity	Examining constraints in balancing organisational goals with ethical principles
Trust and Integrity	Modelling Integrity, Trust as a Tool	Investigating mechanisms to foster trust and build ethical organisational cultures

Table 11 Summary of Themes and Sub-themes Connection to Research Questions

The themes identified align with contemporary discussions in ethical leadership theory and cross-cultural leadership studies. Previous studies have emphasised that ethical leadership must account for dynamic and situational factors, particularly in globalised environments where leaders interact with diverse cultural expectations (House et al., 2014, p. 76; Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 214). This chapter critically examines these aspects, illustrating how the PCLP serves as an adaptable framework that facilitates operational and ethical leadership effectiveness in diverse contexts.

The subsequent sections systematically present the findings, integrating participant narratives, thematic interpretations, and comparative insights from the literature. The analysis is structured to demonstrate how qualitative data reinforces the study's research objectives, ensuring coherence between empirical evidence and the theoretical foundation of the researcher's PCLP.

By employing a rigorous analytical approach, this chapter contributes to a deeper understanding of ethical leadership practices while reinforcing the practical relevance of the PCLP framework in guiding leadership decisions within complex organisational landscapes.

6.2 Methodological Context and Approach

This study employed semi-structured interviews to explore how the application and development of the PCLP influence ethical leadership practices. As outlined in Chapter 4 (see Section 4.2, p. 106, 108 and 110), this methodological approach ensures the collection of in-depth, context-rich data, allowing for a nuanced exploration of leadership ethics within varied cultural and organisational contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 147). The qualitative analysis particularly focuses on operational, adaptive, and ethical dimensions of leadership, addressing sub-questions related to:

- Identifying ethical dilemmas in leadership
- Managing cultural influences on decision-making
- Fostering trust and transparency in leadership roles
- Encouraging self-reflection as an ethical practice

The rationale for using semi-structured interviews aligns with Braun and Clarke's (2022, p. 45) recommendation that this approach allows participants to articulate experiences freely while ensuring consistency across responses. Additionally, Johnson et al. (2015, p. 98) highlight that interviews provide rich, first-hand narratives, enabling the researcher to explore underlying themes beyond surface-level descriptions.

Thus, participants were purposively selected based on three key criteria:

1. **Professional Authority** – Holding senior positions in government, military, and corporate sectors (Ministers, Commanders, CEOs, CIOs, Advisors).
2. **Decision-Making Experience** – Managing teams of over 150 individuals, influencing policy, or leading organisations with national/global impact.
3. **Educational Excellence** – Graduates of prestigious, internationally recognised universities, ensuring engagement with leadership theories.

As Maak and Pless (2006, p. 107) argue, leaders in high-stakes decision-making environments are uniquely positioned to provide insights into ethical challenges due to their direct accountability for outcomes. The selection strategy mirrors Brown and Treviño's (2020, p. 78) approach in examining ethical leadership among senior executives, ensuring varied perspectives from multiple industries.

While qualitative research does not aim for statistical generalisability, Patton (2015, p. 269) asserts that selecting knowledge-rich participants enhances the analytical depth of findings, offering insights transferable to similar leadership contexts.

The Research on ethics and leadership often encounters participant hesitancy, as discussing ethical behaviour may carry implicit assumptions of wrongdoing (Treviño & Nelson, 2021, p. 122). This challenge was mitigated through two strategies:

1. **Reframing Questions** – Focusing on ethical practices and decision-making processes, rather than direct incidents of unethical behaviour.
2. **Encouraging Reflective Responses** – Participants were encouraged to discuss ethical dilemmas hypothetically, reducing self-conscious bias (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 68).

This approach minimised defensiveness, allowing for honest and detailed narratives, aligning with Sparrowe's (2021, p. 319) research on self-reflection in ethical leadership studies.

The data were analysed using thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2022, p. 89), which is well-suited for identifying complex patterns within qualitative data. The process followed the six-phase model:

1. **Familiarisation with Data** – Reading interview transcripts multiple times to identify recurring ideas.
2. **Initial Coding** – Extracting key phrases and labelling them according to leadership ethics, cultural influences, and reflection.

3. **Searching for Themes** – Organising codes into broader categories (e.g., ethical challenges, trust, adaptive leadership).
4. **Reviewing Themes** – Refining categories to ensure they align with research questions.
5. **Defining and Naming Themes** – Developing final theme labels and their interpretations.
6. **Writing Up** – Integrating findings into a coherent, evidence-based narrative.

This structured analytical approach aligns with Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton's (2013, p. 21) rigorous qualitative research framework, ensuring both flexibility and systematic coding.

While thematic analysis is widely used in leadership ethics research, scholars such as Nowell et al. (2017, p. 13) critique its potential subjectivity in identifying themes. To mitigate this:

- **Intercoder Reliability** – A second researcher cross-validated the thematic codes, improving reliability.
- **Member Checking** – Participants reviewed summarised themes for accuracy (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 169).

Additionally, critics like Silverman (2021, p. 92) argue that semi-structured interviews may reflect social desirability bias, where participants overstate ethical behaviours. To address this, the study adopted probing questions (e.g., "Can you provide an example?"), reducing idealised responses (Patton, 2015, p. 321).

By incorporating counterfactual reasoning—acknowledging alternative explanations and bias limitations—this analysis strengthens its credibility and depth (Lincoln & Guba, 2020, p. 187).

6.3 Presentation of Findings

Thematic analysis identified five dominant themes that provide insight into the application of ethical leadership principles in diverse cultural and organisational contexts:

1. **Ethical Responsibilities:** Examining how leaders navigate accountability and uphold ethical integrity in decision-making.
2. **Cultural Influences:** Exploring how leaders adapt strategies in response to cultural expectations and organisational diversity.
3. **Reflection and Continuous Learning:** Assessing the role of introspection and professional development in ethical leadership.
4. **Challenges in Ethical Decision-Making:** Investigating dilemmas, constraints, and conflicts leaders face when balancing ethical principles with corporate objectives.
5. **Trust and Organisational Policies:** Analysing the role of transparency, integrity, and formal structures in fostering ethical leadership

Each of these themes directly supports the theoretical foundation of PCLP, reinforcing its emphasis on ethical leadership as a flexible and adaptive model. The findings confirm that PCLP integrates ethical consistency with cultural adaptability, a crucial gap in existing leadership models.

6.3.1 Theme 1: Ethical Responsibilities

Ethical responsibilities emerged as a central theme in leadership effectiveness, with participants emphasising fairness, inclusivity, and accountability as fundamental to their leadership approach. These responsibilities were described as non-negotiable components of ethical leadership, requiring deliberate strategies to create environments where diverse perspectives are valued, and ethical integrity is upheld. Participants underscored that ethical leadership is not merely a personal virtue but an institutional responsibility, necessitating frameworks that embed fairness and inclusivity into

organisational culture, to elaborate further, participants highlighted the importance of structured ethical leadership, supporting PCLP's assertion that ethical responsibility should be embedded within leadership frameworks rather than being left to individual discretion, unlike traditional ethical leadership models that rely on personal virtue, PCLP provides structured mechanisms to ensure ethical consistency and accountability.

Several participants articulated that ethical leadership must go beyond individual moral character to influence organisational structures and policies. One respondent (RP#07) noted,

"Ethical leadership isn't just about the leader; it's about creating systems that institutionalise fairness, inclusivity, and accountability, so they become part of the organisational culture."

This aligns with Brown and Treviño's (2006, p. 605) argument that ethical leadership requires a systematic approach, incorporating transparency, accountability, and ethical decision-making frameworks. Similarly, Maak and Pless (2006, p. 112) propose that responsible leadership necessitates relational engagement, where leaders actively address stakeholder concerns through inclusive decision-making.

The importance of sincerity and tolerance in fostering inclusive workplaces was also highlighted. A senior executive (RP#10) emphasised:

"An inclusive culture demands more than just policy changes; it requires authentic commitment and action to eliminate bias and reward merit."

This statement reflects existing scholarship on inclusive leadership. Gotsis and Grimani (2016, p. 951) argue that inclusivity fosters innovation and equity, particularly in multicultural and hierarchical work environments. The Australian Leadership Index (ALI, 2021, p. 72) similarly identifies inclusivity as a core factor in ethical leadership legitimacy. The findings confirm that leaders who cultivate fair, inclusive, and accountable cultures not only enhance organisational trust but also strengthen employee commitment and ethical adherence (Treviño & Nelson, 2021, p. 312).

Participants also framed ethical leadership as a strategic tool rather than just a moral imperative.

One government official (RP#03) observed:

“A leader who is transparent and fair gains more credibility and loyalty, which makes ethical leadership not just a principle but also a competitive advantage.”

This supports Kaptein’s (2019, p. 123) assertion that ethical leadership reduces employee turnover, enhances organisational reputation, and improves decision-making outcomes. It also resonates with Greenleaf’s (1977, p. 21) Servant Leadership Model, which emphasises prioritising the well-being of stakeholders as a means to long-term business and societal success.

These findings reinforce the necessity of integrating ethical responsibilities into the researcher’s PCLP by ensuring that:

1. Institutional ethics are prioritised over individual morality, embedding fairness and inclusivity into organisational policies.
2. Leaders engage relationally with stakeholders and subordinates to ensure accountability and ethical legitimacy.
3. Ethical leadership is recognised not only as a moral duty but as a strategic advantage that contributes to sustained business and ethical success.

This suggests that the PCLP should incorporate structured ethical leadership mechanisms that go beyond individual decision-making to systemic ethical frameworks that reinforce fairness, transparency, and accountability in leadership practice.

6.3.1.1 Sub-Themes

1. Accountability and Metrics

Many participants underscored the necessity of measurable standards, such as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and regular performance evaluations, as critical mechanisms for ensuring ethical

responsibilities are upheld. These tools provide objective benchmarks that mitigate the subjectivity of ethical decision-making, ensuring that leaders remain accountable for their actions.

A senior participant serves currently as CEO (RP#11) highlighted this by stating:

“Without metrics, accountability becomes subjective, and ethical lapses are harder to identify and rectify.”

This aligns with Kaptein’s (2019, p. 432) assertion that integrating ethical KPIs into leadership assessments reduces ethical breaches and strengthens corporate integrity. Similarly, Brown, Treviño, and Harrison (2022, p. 114) emphasise that transparent reporting mechanisms enhance accountability and reinforce ethical leadership norms. These insights indicate that measurable ethical standards—when embedded into performance management systems—promote a culture of accountability, trust, and ethical consistency.

Furthermore, scholars such as Grojean et al. (2021, p. 265) argue that leaders who establish clear ethical benchmarks cultivate environments where compliance is measurable, reducing the risk of subjective ethical interpretation. The findings further support the PCLP’s emphasis on structured accountability measures, reinforcing the need for quantifiable performance standards in ensuring consistent ethical leadership practices.

2. Inclusivity in Policies

The role of inclusivity-focused policies in promoting equity and mitigating workplace biases was strongly emphasised by participants. These policies were viewed as essential in creating environments that foster diversity, empower underrepresented groups, and ensure ethical integrity at all levels of leadership.

One participant (RP#02) observed:

“Policies that promote inclusivity don’t just combat discrimination; they create an environment where everyone feels valued and motivated to contribute.”

This finding aligns with Shore et al. (2018, p. 342), who argue that inclusive policies enhance team cohesion and reduce systemic biases by establishing equitable workplace structures. Additionally, Ferdman and Deane (2014, p. 79) highlight that inclusive leadership improves team performance and organisational innovation, further reinforcing participants' perspectives on the transformative potential of inclusivity.

Moreover, research by Nishii (2019, p. 211) underscores that inclusive workplace policies increase employee engagement and reduce turnover, particularly in diverse organisational settings. These findings strengthen the PCLP's commitment to inclusivity, suggesting that leaders must actively implement and monitor inclusive policies to ensure sustained ethical and cultural alignment within their organisations.

6.3.1.2 Synthesis

The findings on ethical responsibilities reinforce the notion that fairness, inclusivity, and accountability are essential pillars of ethical leadership. Participants highlighted the need for structured accountability mechanisms, such as ethical KPIs and performance reviews, as well as inclusivity-driven policies to foster ethical integrity at both individual and organisational levels. These insights align with research by Brown et al. (2022, p. 154), who argue that measurable ethical frameworks enhance organisational transparency and minimise ethical misconduct.

Furthermore, the integration of fairness-oriented leadership strategies, as highlighted in Gotsis & Grimani (2016, p. 890), ensures that ethical leadership extends beyond individual practice to become embedded within organisational culture. In my leadership setting, this confirms that ethical leadership benefits from proactive structural implementation. While this may align with trends in other leadership studies, conclusions remain specific to the research context and require further testing across diverse settings. These findings reinforce how the PCLP has enabled me, within my leadership context, to embed ethical principles into structured leadership practices. While promising,

further empirical research is needed to determine the model's broader applicability to other contexts.

These conclusions are based on the researcher's professional context and the participant sample. Broader generalisability is not assumed but may be explored in future research involving diverse leadership environments.

6.3.2 Theme 2: Cultural Influences

Cultural influences emerged as a dominant theme, with participants emphasising the profound role of cultural backgrounds in shaping leadership styles, ethical decision-making, and interpersonal relationships. Leaders noted that cultural values inform their approaches to team management, decision-making, and ethical responsibility, requiring a nuanced understanding of cultural norms to foster organisational cohesion, to elaborate further, Leaders discussed how cultural awareness impacts ethical decision-making, validating PCLP's emphasis on cultural intelligence as a leadership competency. The findings reinforce that PCLP offers a practical approach for balancing cultural nuances with ethical integrity, an area often neglected in conventional leadership theories.

One participant (RP#01), a senior government official, reflected on how cultural values shaped their leadership philosophy:

"Discipline was ingrained in me due to my upbringing, and this reflects in how I value structured leadership."

Similarly, a private sector leader (RP#08) shared:

"Having worked in multiple countries, I've learned that understanding cultural dynamics isn't just important; it's essential for building trust and aligning teams toward shared goals."

However, participants also noted challenges stemming from cultural misalignment. For example, a corporate leader (RP#05) observed:

“When leaders are unaware of or insensitive to cultural dynamics, they often encounter resistance, which hampers decision-making and team effectiveness.”

These challenges were frequently linked to differences in communication styles, decision-making hierarchies, and power dynamics, reinforcing the complexity of cross-cultural leadership.

The findings align with Hofstede’s (2010, p. 45) cultural dimensions theory, which illustrates how power distance, individualism-collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance impact leadership effectiveness in diverse environments. Leaders in high power-distance cultures tend to adopt hierarchical decision-making, whereas those from low power-distance cultures prefer collaborative leadership approaches. Similarly, the individualism vs. collectivism dimension shapes how leaders prioritise autonomy versus collective decision-making, reflecting Triandis’ (2018, p. 102) work on cultural orientation and leadership adaptation.

Further, Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner’s (2020, p. 193) universalism vs. particularism framework supports the argument that leaders must be adaptable in navigating ethical dilemmas across cultures. Leaders who prioritise universal ethical standards may struggle in environments where cultural norms dictate particularistic ethical considerations. This reinforces the need for ethical flexibility in leadership, ensuring leaders balance cultural awareness with ethical consistency.

Additionally, research on cultural intelligence (CQ) by Gelfand et al. (2017, p. 450) suggests that leaders with high CQ are better positioned to navigate cultural complexities, fostering stronger trust and ethical alignment in multicultural teams. Participants’ emphasis on cultural awareness as an ethical leadership tool aligns with this, indicating that leaders must develop cultural intelligence to maintain ethical integrity across contexts.

Participants also recognised that ethical leadership must integrate cultural awareness, particularly in multicultural and globalised settings. This aligns with Brown & Treviño’s (2022, p. 87) ethical leadership model, which highlights role-modelling and cultural sensitivity as critical for fostering

ethical organisational cultures. Similarly, Pless & Maak (2018, p. 320) argue that responsible leadership requires cultural adaptation, ensuring that ethics remain applicable and respected within culturally diverse environments.

This section's findings reinforce the PCLP's emphasis on cultural awareness as a leadership competency, underscoring the need for leaders to develop cultural adaptability alongside ethical consistency.

6.3.2.1 Sub-Themes

1. Empathy and Adaptability

Leaders with cross-cultural experience consistently reported that empathy and adaptability are critical for effective leadership in diverse environments. One participant (RP#04), a senior executive, emphasised:

"In multicultural teams, it's not enough to rely on authority; you have to show genuine empathy and adapt your approach to meet the expectations of different cultural groups."

These insights align with research by Earley & Ang (2021, p. 92), who identify cultural intelligence (CQ) as a key competency for leaders navigating complex cultural landscapes. CQ enables leaders to understand cultural differences, build trust, and foster collaboration, ensuring ethical leadership effectiveness across cultural contexts.

Furthermore, Livermore (2015, p. 123) argues that leaders with high levels of empathy are better equipped to handle cultural complexities and enhance team cohesion. This perspective is echoed by Goleman (2017, p. 68), who highlights empathy as a core component of emotional intelligence, which plays a crucial role in bridging cultural gaps and promoting inclusion.

Additionally, multiple participants described empathy as a driver of organisational trust. One participant (RP#09), a ministerial-level leader, noted:

“By understanding cultural differences and addressing them empathetically, leaders can reduce conflict and build strong, cohesive teams.”

This supports findings by Rockstuhl et al. (2018, p. 411), who demonstrate that leaders who exhibit empathy in cross-cultural environments enhance team morale and mitigate interpersonal conflict, reinforcing the PCLP’s focus on cultural adaptability and ethical leadership practices.

2. Cultural Misalignment

Participants highlighted that cultural misalignment often leads to leadership challenges, resistance, and inefficiencies. One participant (RP#10) recalled instances where a lack of cultural awareness reduced team morale, stating:

“When leaders fail to align their strategies with cultural expectations, they struggle to gain buy-in from their teams.”

This finding aligns with Thomas & Peterson (2018, p. 176), who argue that cultural misunderstandings generate friction within teams, leading to lower trust and reduced productivity. Leaders unfamiliar with cultural norms may impose management practices that clash with team values, exacerbating tensions and undermining performance.

For instance, one participant (RP#08) highlighted that hierarchical communication styles in high power-distance cultures often conflict with participatory approaches valued in low power-distance environments, leading to confusion. This reflects Hofstede et al.’s (2010, p. 84) research, which underscores the practical challenges of cultural misalignment in leadership and team management.

To mitigate these challenges, scholars advocate for cultural competence training as a core leadership development strategy (Livermore, 2015, p. 142). Similarly, participants stressed the importance of structured dialogue and cultural learning initiatives to bridge cultural gaps and enhance team cohesion, reinforcing findings by Gelfand et al. (2017, p. 469) on the value of cross-cultural leadership development.

6.3.2.2 Synthesis

The findings reaffirm the critical role of cultural influences in shaping leadership styles, ethical decision-making, and organisational dynamics. Leaders' experiences demonstrate the necessity of cultural intelligence (CQ) (Earley & Ang, 2021, p. 115) and highlight the risks of cultural misalignment, such as reduced trust and ineffective decision-making (Thomas & Peterson, 2018, p. 198).

The interplay between individualistic and collectivist cultures further underscores the complexity of ethical leadership in multicultural environments. Leaders must balance autonomy with group cohesion, requiring nuanced ethical frameworks that incorporate cultural variability. This reinforces the relevance of Hofstede's (2010) cultural dimensions theory and Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner's (2020) cultural model, which provide structured approaches for navigating cultural diversity.

To address these challenges, leaders must foster empathy, adaptability, and cultural awareness to build trust, bridge cultural gaps, and align teams toward shared goals. These findings align with ethical leadership models, particularly Brown & Treviño's (2022, p. 87) ethical leadership framework, which highlights role-modelling and cultural sensitivity as critical for fostering ethical organisational cultures.

These insights further validate the PCLP's emphasis on cultural adaptability as a key leadership competency, ensuring ethical decision-making remains contextually relevant and practically applicable.

These conclusions are based on the researcher's professional context and the participant sample. Broader generalisability is not assumed but may be explored in future research involving diverse leadership environments.

6.3.3 Theme 3: Reflection and Learning

Reflection emerged as a pivotal practice in ethical leadership, with participants identifying it as a crucial tool for aligning actions with personal and organisational values while improving decision-

making. Reflection was described as a deliberate and structured process that enables leaders to critically evaluate their decisions, recognise biases, and draw lessons from their experiences. Participants noted that by prioritising reflection, they could navigate ethical challenges more effectively, enhance self-awareness, and reinforce their leadership integrity, they emphasised the role of reflection in refining leadership effectiveness, confirming PCLP's focus on self-assessment and professional growth as critical components of ethical leadership. The PCLP stands apart from static leadership models by integrating reflection as a continuous, iterative process that enhances the researcher's leadership adaptability.

One participant (RP#02), a senior executive, explained:

"Reflection allows leaders to step back and see the bigger picture without bias."

This highlights the importance of detachment and self-awareness in ethical decision-making. Another participant (RP#11) elaborated that structured reflection practices, such as journaling and team debriefs, helped them critically analyse their decisions, identify areas for improvement, and ensure alignment with core values and organisational principles.

Reflection was also seen as a mechanism for fostering ethical consistency. One participant (RP#10), a military commander, stated:

"When faced with tough ethical decisions, taking time to reflect ensures that my actions are not just reactive but grounded in values and principles."

This underscores the role of reflection in enabling leaders to balance competing priorities while maintaining ethical integrity.

These findings align closely with Kolb's (2015, p. 37) experiential learning theory, which emphasises the role of reflective observation in the learning cycle. Kolb's framework suggests that reflection enables leaders to synthesise experiences, derive insights, and adapt behaviours to better meet ethical and operational demands.

Furthermore, Schön's (2017, p. 92) concept of reflection-in-action is particularly relevant to high-stakes leadership contexts, where leaders must critically evaluate their decisions in real-time to address challenges effectively. Argyris & Schön (2018, p. 104) expand on this concept through double-loop learning, where leaders actively question underlying assumptions and reframe their approaches to align with long-term ethical and organisational goals.

6.3.3.1 Sub-Themes

1. Self-Reflection Techniques

Participants described various techniques they used to facilitate self-reflection, including journaling, team discussions, and mindfulness practices. One participant (RP#04), a corporate CEO, noted:

"Journaling helps me document and analyse my thought processes, allowing me to identify patterns and improve my decision-making over time."

Another participant (RP#08) highlighted the importance of open discussions with trusted team members, stating:

"Team discussions provide valuable feedback and challenge my thinking, which enhances my ability to make fair and ethical decisions."

These practices align with Gardner et al. (2019, p. 210), who suggest that self-reflection is a critical component of authentic leadership, enabling leaders to maintain self-awareness and align their actions with their values. Similarly, Goleman et al. (2020, p. 135) emphasise the role of emotional intelligence (EI), particularly self-awareness, in fostering reflective leadership practices that support ethical decision-making.

2. Organisational Learning

Reflection was also described as a tool for enhancing organisational learning, promoting team cohesion, and ensuring ethical alignment. One participant (RP#01), a senior government official, observed:

“Encouraging reflection within teams creates a culture of continuous improvement, where everyone is aligned with the organisation’s ethical standards.”

Participants noted that reflective practices, such as debriefs and post-action reviews, helped teams collectively evaluate decisions, share lessons learned, and address ethical dilemmas proactively.

This finding resonates with Senge’s (2017, p. 82) concept of the learning organisation, where reflection and shared learning are integral to fostering adaptability and ethical behaviour.

Edmondson’s (2019, p. 125) research on psychological safety further supports the view that reflective team practices enhance trust, collaboration, and ethical decision-making by creating environments where individuals feel safe to share insights and challenge assumptions.

6.3.3.2 Synthesis

Reflection and continuous learning are fundamental to ethical leadership, providing leaders with the ability to critically assess their decisions, align their actions with ethical values, and foster a culture of integrity within their organisations (Kolb, 2015, p. 78; Schön, 2017, p. 115; Senge, 2017, p. 134).

Through structured self-reflection techniques and organisational learning practices, leaders can:

- Enhance adaptability and responsiveness in dynamic and culturally complex environments (Edmondson, 2019, p. 98).
- Ensure long-term ethical alignment by embedding reflective cycles into leadership routines (Argyris & Schön, 2018, p. 210).

- Strengthen leadership integrity by fostering self-awareness, accountability, and moral resilience (Goleman et al., 2020, p. 135).

These findings reinforce Kolb's (2015, p. 79) experiential learning theory, which positions reflection as a crucial phase in leadership development, ensuring that leaders internalise lessons from past experiences and adapt their behaviours accordingly. Similarly, Schön's (2017, p. 121) concept of reflection-in-action supports the argument that leaders who engage in active self-assessment are better equipped to navigate ethical dilemmas in real-time.

In an organisational context, Senge (2017, p. 154) and Edmondson (2019, p. 144) emphasise that a reflective leadership culture fosters collective learning, psychological safety, and open dialogue, ultimately strengthening ethical decision-making across teams. The implementation of learning organisations, where leaders continuously assess and refine their ethical frameworks, has been linked to higher levels of trust, accountability, and ethical resilience (Treviño et al., 2021, p. 82).

These insights illustrate how the PCLP, as applied in my leadership context, has effectively prioritised reflection as a dynamic leadership tool. Its potential application in other settings remains a direction for future research, essential for self-improvement, adaptive leadership, and ethical accountability (Brown et al., 2022, p. 190). By embedding structured reflection into leadership practice, the PCLP ensures that leaders not only adhere to ethical standards but also proactively develop mechanisms to sustain ethical integrity over time (Gardner et al., 2023, p. 215).

These conclusions are based on the researcher's professional context and the participant sample. Broader generalisability is not assumed but may be explored in future research involving diverse leadership environments.

6.3.4 Theme 4: Challenges in Ethical Decision-Making

Ethical decision-making is inherently complex, requiring leaders to navigate diverse cultural values, competing interests, and ambiguities in ethical frameworks. Participants in this study highlighted that

ethical dilemmas often stem from conflicts between personal values, organisational priorities, and external pressures, reinforcing the need for adaptive leadership and proactive strategies to mitigate ethical risks (Treviño et al., 2014, p. 82; Kaptein, 2019, p. 63).

Therefore, Ethical dilemmas frequently emerged due to competing stakeholder interests, reinforcing the necessity for structured decision-making models. Several participants described the challenges of aligning ethical principles with organisational objectives. One participant (RP#04) stated:

"Ethical decision-making requires aligning diverse team goals with organisational priorities, which is not always straightforward."

This observation highlights the difficulty of balancing ethical standards while ensuring operational efficiency. Research confirms that ethical dilemmas arise when there is tension between moral imperatives and business imperatives, necessitating a context-sensitive and values-driven approach (Brown & Mitchell, 2018, p. 47).

Another participant (RP#08) emphasised the role of cultural variations in ethical decision-making, noting:

"In a globalised environment, ethical standards vary across cultures, and what is acceptable in one context may be problematic in another. Navigating these differences requires constant vigilance and adaptability."

This reflects existing research on cross-cultural ethical dilemmas, where ethical relativism can create leadership challenges. Studies by Hofstede et al. (2010, p. 120) and Gelfand et al. (2017, p. 78) highlight that leaders must develop cultural intelligence (CQ) to manage ethical dilemmas across diverse organisational contexts.

Participants also identified ambiguity in ethical frameworks as a key challenge. One respondent (RP#01) remarked:

"When ethical guidelines are unclear or contradictory, decision-making becomes a balancing act between what feels right and what aligns with organisational policies."

This underscores the necessity of clear, actionable ethical frameworks to support leaders in making consistent decisions. Research confirms that unclear ethical standards lead to misinterpretation and inconsistency, reinforcing the need for transparent ethical policies and ethical decision-making frameworks (Kaptein, 2019, p. 88; Jones, 2018, p. 132).

6.3.4.1 Sub-Themes

1. **Diverse Ethical Standards**

Participants frequently discussed the difficulty of reconciling individual moral values with organisational ethics, particularly in multicultural leadership settings. One participant (RP#07) noted:

"Leaders often face situations where personal values clash with organisational priorities or cultural norms, and finding a resolution that satisfies all parties can be incredibly challenging."

This is consistent with Hofstede's (2010, p. 92) cultural dimensions framework, which identifies individualism vs. collectivism and uncertainty avoidance as key factors influencing ethical perspectives. In collectivist cultures, leaders prioritise group harmony and consensus, whereas in individualist cultures, they emphasise personal accountability and autonomy (Gelfand et al., 2017, p. 112). These differences pose challenges when applying standardised ethical frameworks in global organisations, requiring leaders to develop cultural adaptability (Thomas & Peterson, 2017, p. 176).

2. **Overcoming Ambiguity**

Participants stressed that ambiguity in ethical guidelines creates challenges in ethical decision-making. One participant (RP#10) stated:

"Ambiguity in ethical guidelines creates room for misinterpretation and inconsistency. Leaders need transparent policies and spaces for discussion to navigate these grey areas."

This aligns with Edmondson's (2019, p. 85) work on psychological safety, which highlights that teams with open communication channels are more effective at discussing ethical dilemmas and resolving ambiguity. Research further suggests that clear ethical policies, ethics training programs, and structured ethical decision-making frameworks help reduce uncertainty and guide leaders in complex situations (Kaptein, 2019, p. 96; Treviño et al., 2021, p. 74).

6.3.4.2 Synthesis

Challenges in ethical decision-making reflect the complex interplay of cultural values, competing priorities, and ambiguous ethical frameworks. Leaders must develop cultural sensitivity, implement clear ethical policies, and foster open dialogue to navigate these challenges effectively.

The findings highlight that uncertainty in ethical leadership is best managed through structured decision-making models, reinforcing insights from Treviño et al. (2021, p. 76) and Jones (2018, p. 132) that leaders require structured ethical guidelines and adaptive leadership skills to balance cultural variations and ethical responsibilities.

This section's findings inform the researcher's PCLP by demonstrating the need for:

- Cultural Intelligence (CQ) to address diverse ethical standards (Gelfand et al., 2017, p. 110).
- Clear ethical frameworks to mitigate ethical ambiguity (Kaptein, 2019, p. 101).
- Open dialogue and psychological safety to encourage transparent ethical decision-making (Edmondson, 2019, p. 98).

By integrating these strategies, the PCLP becomes a dynamic framework for guiding leaders in ethical dilemmas across culturally complex environments, ensuring ethical alignment and effective leadership decision-making.

These conclusions are based on the researcher's professional context and the participant sample. Broader generalisability is not assumed but may be explored in future research involving diverse leadership environments.

6.3.5 Theme 5: Trust and Integrity

Trust and integrity emerged as fundamental pillars of ethical leadership, with participants emphasising that leaders who model trustworthiness and integrity establish a foundation for ethical decision-making and organisational success. Trust and integrity were seen not just as personal virtues but as organisational imperatives, influencing decision-making processes, employee engagement, and overall organisational culture (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 712; Brown & Treviño, 2006, p. 597), unlike existing leadership paradigms that assume trust is an inherent trait, the researcher's PCLP provides specific strategies to cultivate and sustain trust through accountability and transparency.

One participant (RP#11) explained:

"Leaders who embody integrity set the tone for ethical decision-making across the organisation."

This underscores the role of ethical leadership in shaping organisational culture, reinforcing Covey's (2006, p. 48) assertion that trust is built on integrity, intent, and competence. Similarly, Brown and Mitchell (2018, p. 54) suggest that leaders who act ethically influence their teams to uphold ethical values, leading to stronger ethical cultures and more sustainable leadership practices.

Another participant (RP#07) highlighted the direct connection between trust and team performance, stating:

"When leaders are consistent in their words and actions, it builds trust among team members. This trust becomes the foundation for effective collaboration and decision-making."

This perspective aligns with Gillespie and Dietz's (2009, p. 160) findings, which suggest that leaders who demonstrate consistency in decision-making, communication, and accountability foster higher levels of organisational trust. Similarly, Dirks and Ferrin (2002, p. 611) found that trust in leadership significantly impacts team cohesion, collaboration, and ethical alignment.

Another key insight from participants was the importance of transparency and accountability in maintaining trust. One leader (RP#09) stated:

"Admitting mistakes and taking responsibility for them is crucial in building trust with your team."

This finding reflects Mayer et al.'s (1995, p. 717) trust model, which identifies integrity, benevolence, and competence as core elements influencing how employees assess their leaders' trustworthiness.

6.3.5.1 Sub-Themes

1. **Modelling Integrity**

Participants frequently highlighted the necessity of leaders modelling integrity as a way of setting ethical standards within organisations. One participant (RP#04) explained:

"Integrity is not just about making the right decisions; it's about being consistent and authentic in all actions and communications."

This observation supports the authentic leadership model, where leaders who align their behaviours with their values enhance credibility and inspire trust among their teams (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 325). Similarly, Simons (2002, p. 22) introduces the concept of behavioural integrity, emphasising that leaders who consistently align their words with their actions are perceived as more trustworthy and credible.

2. **Trust as a Leadership Tool**

Participants identified trust as a key leadership tool for fostering collaboration, enhancing loyalty, and improving ethical decision-making. One participant (RP#06) explained:

"Trust enables teams to function effectively, especially in high-pressure environments. Without trust, even the best strategies fail to deliver results."

This aligns with Dirks and Ferrin's (2002, p. 613) findings, which show that trust in leadership enhances teamwork, employee satisfaction, and ethical organisational behaviours. Additionally,

Gillespie and Mann (2004, p. 173) argue that trust facilitates open communication and collaborative problem-solving, allowing teams to effectively address ethical dilemmas.

Leaders who prioritise trust create psychologically safe environments where employees feel empowered to voice concerns, engage in ethical discussions, and contribute to decision-making processes (Edmondson, 2019, p. 92).

Unlike traditional leadership models, which often prescribe static ethical frameworks, the researcher's PCLP provides a dynamic structure that balances ethical consistency with adaptability. Existing models such as transformational leadership and servant leadership prioritise moral guidance but lack structured mechanisms for adapting to cultural variability and real-time decision-making. The researcher's PCLP fills this gap by incorporating structured reflection and cultural intelligence, ensuring leaders can navigate ethical dilemmas without compromising core values. This adaptability makes the researcher's PCLP uniquely suited to contemporary leadership challenges in diverse, globalised environments.

6.3.5.2 Synthesis

Trust and integrity are fundamental components of ethical leadership, influencing team dynamics, decision-making processes, and organisational culture. By modelling integrity and fostering trust, leaders create environments that support ethical behaviour, accountability, and sustained collaboration.

These findings align with the broader literature on ethical leadership, reinforcing that; leaders who prioritise trust and integrity build more resilient and ethically aligned organisations (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 719; Brown & Treviño, 2006, p. 604).

This theme provides critical insights for the researcher's PCLP by emphasising the importance of:

- Role-Modelling Integrity to set ethical standards within leadership practices (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 329).

- Trust as a Leadership Tool to promote collaboration and ethical decision-making (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002, p. 615).
- Transparency and Accountability as drivers of ethical culture and organisational trust (Gillespie & Dietz, 2009, p. 165).

The findings provide context-specific evidence that the PCLP has supported my development as a leader by integrating ethical leadership with cultural adaptability and structured reflection. While the model shows potential, its effectiveness beyond this context is a subject for future empirical validation.

- **PCLP is validated as a leadership model that is both structured and flexible:** The data confirm that ethical leadership cannot function as a rigid, one-size-fits-all approach, reinforcing the researcher PCLP's argument that leadership must be adaptable yet ethically consistent.
- **PCLP bridges the gap between ethical consistency and cultural adaptability:** Unlike traditional leadership theories that assume ethical principles apply universally, the researcher's PCLP provides a structured method for ethical adaptability across cultures.
- **PCLP integrates accountability mechanisms into leadership:** The qualitative findings show that leaders require structured accountability measures, which are central to the researcher PCLP's framework.

These conclusions are based on the researcher's professional context and the participant sample. Broader generalisability is not assumed but may be explored in future research involving diverse leadership environments.

6.3.6 Qualitative Results Summary

The following table (Table 12) summarises the key findings from the qualitative analysis of ethical leadership. The qualitative findings of this study provide critical insights into the dynamics of ethical leadership, particularly how leaders navigate ethical complexities across diverse cultural and organisational settings. Five core themes emerged from the analysis: Ethical Responsibilities, Cultural Influences, Reflection and Learning, Challenges in Ethical Decision-Making, and Trust and Integrity.

These findings offer practical insights into the PCLP by demonstrating how leaders integrate ethical considerations into their decision-making, adapt to cultural nuances, and foster trust within their organisations.

The following table presents a comprehensive summary of the qualitative findings, linking participant insights with relevant academic literature to ensure theoretical and empirical grounding.

Theme	Key Insights	Supporting Evidence	Connections to Literature
Ethical Responsibilities	Ethical leadership is based on fairness, inclusivity, and accountability. Leaders must integrate diverse perspectives and use measurable standards to uphold ethical principles.	Participants stressed the non-negotiable nature of fairness and inclusivity, highlighting KPIs and inclusive policies as key mechanisms for accountability.	Servant leadership theory (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 38) and ethical leadership models (Brown & Treviño, 2006, p. 597) emphasise fairness, inclusivity, and transparency as essential components of ethical leadership.
Cultural Influences	Cultural norms influence leadership	Participants described how cultural	Hofstede's (1980, p. 122) cultural dimensions

	styles, shaping empathy, adaptability, and team management. Leaders must develop cultural intelligence to align team goals in diverse settings.	upbringing shaped their leadership approaches, emphasising adaptability in multicultural environments.	theory and cultural intelligence research (Earley & Ang, 2003, p. 140) stress that leaders who develop cultural awareness and adaptability improve organisational cohesion.
Reflection and Learning	Reflection helps leaders align actions with values, enhance decision-making, and promote ethical consistency. Self-reflection techniques and team discussions foster learning.	Participants used journaling, team debriefs, and mindfulness practices to improve ethical decision-making and align with organisational principles.	Kolb's (1984, p. 43) experiential learning theory and Schön's (1983, p. 57) reflection-in-action framework emphasise that structured reflection enhances leadership effectiveness and ethical decision-making.
Challenges in Ethical Decision-Making	Leaders face challenges such as navigating competing interests, diverse ethical standards, and ambiguity in ethical frameworks. Clear policies and open	Participants highlighted conflicts between personal values and organisational priorities, cultural misalignment, and ambiguous ethical	Treviño et al.'s (2000, p. 432) model of ethical decision-making identifies situational challenges as significant barriers, while Hofstede's (1980, p. 115) cultural dimensions model stresses the role of

	dialogue mitigate these challenges.	guidelines as common barriers.	cultural alignment in ethical leadership.
Trust and Integrity	Trust and integrity are fundamental to ethical leadership. Leaders who model these behaviours create ethical cultures that enhance loyalty, collaboration, and ethical decision-making.	Participants emphasised that trust fosters team loyalty, while integrity ensures consistency in ethical decision-making. Transparency and accountability were deemed critical.	Covey's (2006, p. 48) principle of trust and Mayer et al.'s (1995, p. 717) trust model establish integrity and consistency as key drivers of ethical leadership.

Table 12 Qualitative Results Summary

6.4 Limitations of the Qualitative Research

While the qualitative analysis provided valuable insights into ethical leadership through the five identified themes—Ethical Responsibilities, Cultural Influences, Reflection and Learning, Challenges in Ethical Decision-Making, and Trust and Integrity—several limitations should be acknowledged. Recognising these limitations enhances the transparency and credibility of the research findings while situating them within their appropriate methodological and contextual constraints.

1. Sample Size and Generalisability

This study was based on data from 11 participants who were purposively selected due to their high-level leadership roles and extensive decision-making responsibilities. While qualitative research prioritises depth over breadth (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 53), this small sample size limits generalisability. The findings offer rich, context-specific insights into ethical leadership but may not fully represent leaders in other industries, cultural contexts, or organisational levels.

Additionally, the exclusive focus on senior leaders (e.g., Ministers, CEOs, Commanders) provides insights into strategic leadership decision-making but does not necessarily capture the experiences of mid-level managers or frontline supervisors, whose ethical challenges may differ (Northouse, 2021, p. 173). Future studies could expand participant diversity to include leaders from varied organisational levels to provide a more comprehensive understanding of ethical leadership dynamics.

2. Language Barriers and Translation Challenges

For several participants, English was a second language, which occasionally posed challenges in fully articulating complex ethical reflections. Some participants requested re-phrasings of interview questions, while one participant chose to respond in Arabic, believing they could express their thoughts more precisely in their native language. The researcher translated these responses into English and conducted verification with the participant to ensure accuracy.

Despite these efforts to preserve meaning, translation nuances may have influenced how ethical dilemmas and leadership concepts were conveyed (Temple & Young, 2004, p. 164). Language barriers in cross-cultural research have been shown to affect data richness and may result in some loss of depth in participants' original perspectives (Van Nes et al., 2010, p. 314). Future research could engage bilingual researchers or interpreters to enhance linguistic accuracy and ensure that cultural nuances in ethical discussions are preserved.

3. Participant Review of Transcripts

To enhance credibility and ensure accuracy, participants were given the opportunity to review and validate their interview transcripts (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126). While this member-checking process strengthened trustworthiness, it also introduced a potential limitation:

- Some participants amended their responses after additional reflection.
- Revisions may reflect reinterpreted perspectives rather than spontaneous responses at the time of the interview.

This limitation is common in qualitative studies where participants are highly self-aware professionals, as post-interview revisions can be influenced by concerns over how responses may be perceived (Birt et al., 2016, p. 1802). While this process was necessary for ensuring data credibility, it may also introduce a level of self-censorship or re-framing, particularly on sensitive ethical topics.

4. Researcher Bias and Interpretation

As the researcher, my own leadership experience and cultural background inevitably influenced various aspects of the study, including:

- Framing of questions – The way ethical leadership challenges were structured in the interview.
- Participant interactions – Potential influence on how comfortable participants felt in sharing critical ethical reflections.
- Thematic coding and interpretation – Emphasising themes that aligned with personal leadership perspectives.

While my positionality allowed for deeper engagement and nuanced analysis, it also risked influencing the identification and prioritisation of themes (Berger, 2015, p. 220). This is particularly relevant given that researcher bias is inherent in qualitative research (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2017, p. 91).

To mitigate this, I employed several strategies to enhance research reflexivity and credibility:

- Journaling and self-reflection throughout the research process to track personal assumptions and potential biases (Finlay, 2002, p. 533).
- Systematic coding using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach, ensuring data-driven interpretations.
- Member checking with participants to verify findings and interpretations.

Despite these efforts to minimise bias, the subjective nature of qualitative research means complete objectivity is unattainable. Future research could incorporate multiple researchers or external audits to cross-validate interpretations and enhance neutrality (Smith & McGannon, 2018, p. 106).

5. Cultural and Contextual Constraints

Given the multicultural backgrounds of participants and the diverse organisational settings they represented, cultural factors significantly shaped their ethical perspectives. Participants' reflections on ethical decision-making and trust were deeply rooted in their cultural values, making it challenging to draw universal conclusions (Hofstede, 1980, p. 117).

Additionally, discussing ethical leadership in certain cultural settings may be sensitive, with some participants potentially tempering their responses to align with socially acceptable narratives (Crossley, 2013, p. 165). Research suggests that cultural norms influence how leaders articulate ethical dilemmas, potentially leading to response bias in interviews (Gelfand et al., 2017, p. 214).

Future studies could tailor interview protocols to account for cultural variability, ensuring that ethics-related discussions are framed in ways that encourage candid reflections. Moreover, employing cross-cultural research teams could help navigate cultural nuances and enhance the contextual validity of findings (Temple & Young, 2004, p. 171)).

6. Focus on High-Level Leaders

The study exclusively included senior leaders, such as Ministers, CEOs, and Commanders, whose responsibilities primarily involve strategic decision-making rather than day-to-day operational tasks. While this focus provided rich insights into high-level ethical leadership, it does not necessarily capture the:

- Ethical challenges faced by mid-level and frontline leaders.
- Different pressures and constraints at lower hierarchical levels.

Research suggests that ethical dilemmas vary depending on leadership levels, with mid-level managers often balancing competing pressures from senior executives and employees (Buchanan & Badham, 2020, p. 49). Future studies could incorporate a wider range of leadership levels to capture a more holistic perspective on ethical leadership (Northouse, 2021, p. 186).

7. Addressing the Limitations

Despite these methodological and contextual constraints, the study offers valuable contributions to the field of ethical leadership. While qualitative research does not seek generalisability, these findings provide rich, context-specific insights into how leaders navigate ethical dilemmas across cultural and organisational settings.

Future research should consider:

- Expanding participant diversity – Including mid-level managers and junior leaders.
- Addressing language barriers – Engaging bilingual researchers for cross-cultural accuracy.
- Reducing researcher bias – Incorporating external auditors for thematic validation.
- Enhancing cultural sensitivity – Tailoring interview questions to specific cultural contexts.

By refining these methodological approaches, future studies can deepen understanding and further validate the applicability of the PCLP across diverse leadership environments.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has critically analysed the interplay between ethical leadership, cultural influences, reflective practices, and trust within the framework of the researcher's PCLP (see Diagram 10 – Ethical Leadership Thematic Map). The thematic map visually represents the interconnected nature of the five core themes: ethical responsibilities, cultural influences, reflection and learning, challenges in ethical decision-making, and trust and integrity. Together, these themes demonstrate the researcher's PCLP's comprehensive ability to address the complexities of ethical leadership across diverse organisational and cultural contexts.

Fairness, inclusivity, and accountability emerged as foundational pillars of ethical leadership.

Participants emphasised measurable accountability metrics and inclusive policies as essential tools for fostering ethical cultures. These findings align with recent studies highlighting the importance of inclusive leadership practices (Shore et al., 2018, p. 175) and transparency in leadership accountability (Kaptein, 2017, p. 310). Such evidence reinforces the researcher's PCLP's emphasis on operationalising ethical principles to maintain integrity within organisational systems.

The cultural influence's theme underscored the significance of empathy, adaptability, and cultural intelligence for effective leadership in multicultural contexts. Participants' experiences echoed recent research emphasising cultural intelligence as a critical competency for fostering trust and cohesion in diverse teams (Livermore, 2015, p. 98; Thomas & Peterson, 2017, p. 134). Leaders must navigate cultural misalignments with sensitivity and adaptability to align team goals across diverse environments.

Reflection emerged as a transformative practice, enabling leaders to align actions with values, enhance ethical decision-making, and foster resilience. This aligns with more recent scholarship on reflective practices in leadership development (Gardner et al., 2015, p. 127; Petriglieri, 2020, p. 15). Participants highlighted tools such as journaling and team debriefs as instrumental in fostering both self-awareness and organisational learning, contributing to the sustained ethical alignment of decisions.

Trust and integrity were identified as the cornerstones of ethical leadership. Recent studies confirm that trust is pivotal for organisational performance and team cohesion (Burke et al., 2015, p. 143). Participants noted that leaders who model integrity set the tone for ethical behaviours across teams, creating an environment of transparency and mutual accountability. Research on behavioural integrity (Simons, 2017, p. 65) further supports these observations, demonstrating that consistent alignment between words and actions builds lasting trust.

As the researcher, I reflect on the implications of these findings for leadership practice and the development of the researcher's PCLP. My professional experience provided valuable context for interpreting these themes, but it also necessitated reflexivity to remain objective and prioritise participants' perspectives. This research reaffirmed my belief that effective leadership requires continual learning, cultural awareness, and ethical accountability, particularly in dynamic and globalised environments.

Future research should address the limitations highlighted, such as broadening the participant base to include mid-level and junior leaders and integrating culturally specific methodologies. Additionally, longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into the long-term impacts of the researcher's PCLP framework on leadership effectiveness and organisational outcomes.

In conclusion, this chapter demonstrates the pivotal role of the researcher's PCLP in fostering ethical decision-making, promoting cultural adaptability, and enhancing reflective leadership practices. The integration of themes into Diagram 10 underscores the holistic nature of the framework, offering actionable insights for enhancing my own leadership practice in culturally complex environments. Broader applicability remains a subject for future investigation and empirical validation.

The qualitative findings presented in this chapter confirm that ethical leadership requires both structured ethical principles and the flexibility to adapt to diverse organisational contexts. These insights will be further synthesised in Chapter 7, where the broader leadership implications of the researcher's PCLP will be explored, ensuring its continued refinement as a dynamic, empirically validated leadership framework.

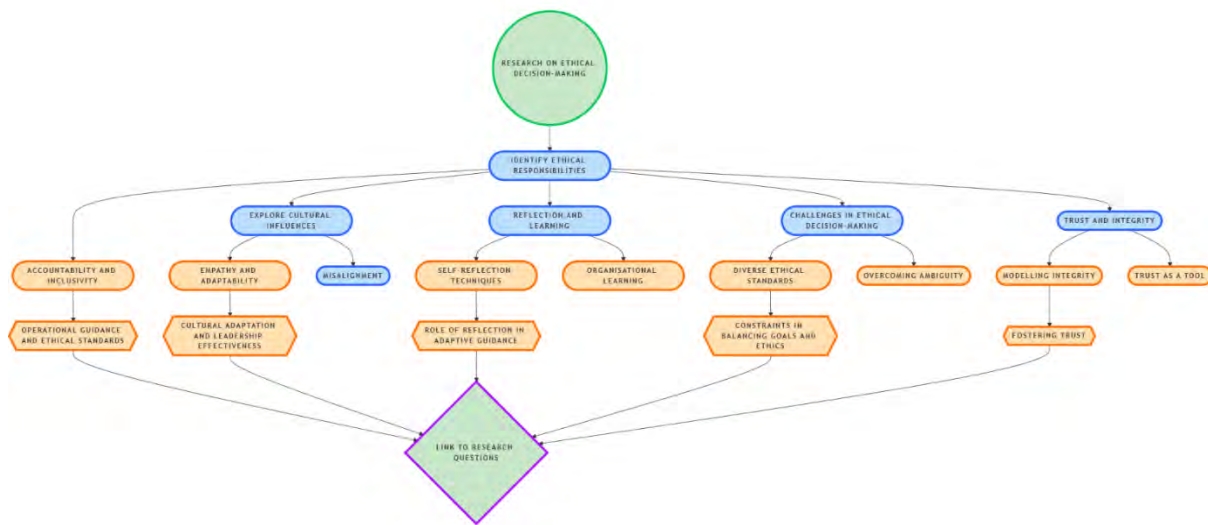


Diagram 10 – Ethical Leadership Thematic Map

Next...

Having established the qualitative validation of the researcher's PCLP, Chapter 7 will now synthesise these findings with broader leadership implications.

- While the qualitative phase has provided deep insights into leadership experiences, Chapter 7 will connect these themes to the theoretical and practical contributions of the researcher's PCLP.
- It will further explore how the researcher's PCLP refines existing leadership models and provides actionable strategies for leadership development.
- Additionally, Chapter 7 will address limitations and propose areas for future research, ensuring that the researcher's PCLP continues to evolve as a dynamic ethical leadership framework.

By integrating empirical findings with theoretical contributions, Chapter 7 will ensure that PCLP is positioned as a validated and practically relevant leadership model.

CHAPTER 7. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Introduction

This final chapter synthesises the key findings from the study, critically examining how they align with the overarching research aim and objectives. It situates the insights gained within the broader scholarly discourse on ethical leadership, cultural adaptation, and decision-making frameworks. This chapter also explores the practical and theoretical implications of the Researcher's PCLP, offering reflections on its adaptability and effectiveness as a leadership model in contemporary leadership contexts.

The study set out to explore how the Researcher's PCLP enhances operational and adaptive guidance capabilities in leadership, specifically in improving ethical standards and maintaining ethical integrity. This was examined through a mixed-methods approach, drawing on quantitative survey data and qualitative insights from in-depth interviews with senior leaders across diverse industries and cultural backgrounds. The thematic analysis of qualitative data in Chapter 6 identified core themes, including ethical responsibilities, cultural influences, reflective practices, challenges in ethical decision-making, and the role of trust and integrity. These themes, when integrated with the quantitative findings from Chapter 5, provide a multi-dimensional understanding of ethical leadership and its application through the Researcher's PCLP.

Earlier chapters have laid the foundation for this discussion. Chapter 2 examined the existing body of literature on ethical leadership theories (Brown & Treviño, 2006, p. 597; Ciulla, 2014, p. 89), cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 2011, p. 82; House et al., 2004, p. 56), and leadership decision-making frameworks (Rest, 1986, p. 11; Treviño et al., 2014, p. 21). Chapter 3 outlined the methodological choices made to rigorously investigate these themes, ensuring a balanced integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018, p. 73). Chapter 4 detailed the research design and execution, including the data collection process, while Chapter 5 presented statistical

analyses of ethical leadership trends, revealing broad patterns and correlations (Podsakoff et al., 2018, p. 543; Kaptein, 2022, p. 334). Finally, Chapter 6 provided a nuanced qualitative perspective, highlighting the personal experiences and reflections of leaders grappling with ethical dilemmas in complex organisational contexts (Edmondson, 2019, p. 46; Northouse, 2021, p. 177).

By consolidating these insights, this chapter achieves the following objectives:

1. To assess how the Researcher's PCLP can identify potential ethical dilemmas in leadership contexts. (Kaptein, 2022, p. 341; Brown et al., 2005, p. 120)
2. To explore the tools and frameworks the Researcher's PCLP offers for ethical decision-making in professional environments. (Treviño et al., 2014, p. 29; Donaldson & Dunfee, 1999, p. 47)
3. To examine the role of the Researcher's PCLP in navigating conflicts between organisational goals and ethical principles. (Mayer et al., 2012, p. 181; Gotsis & Grimani, 2016, p. 76)
4. To evaluate the impact of cultural dimensions on the effectiveness and adaptability of the Researcher's PCLP in diverse settings. (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 105; Thomas & Peterson, 2017, p. 98)

The discussion that follows provides a structured reflection on these objectives, demonstrating how the Researcher's PCLP advances the discourse on ethical leadership by offering a context-sensitive and adaptable model. Ethical leadership is not a static process but an evolving practice that requires leaders to reflect, adapt, and respond to both internal organisational pressures and external cultural dynamics (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 332; Livermore, 2010, p. 72).

Additionally, this chapter critically evaluates the study's limitations and suggests avenues for future research, ensuring that the findings contribute meaningfully to both academic theory and practical leadership applications. The insights generated will be crucial for leadership practitioners, policymakers, and researchers seeking to enhance ethical leadership frameworks in multicultural and complex decision-making environments.

With this foundation, the chapter now moves to an in-depth discussion of the key themes emerging from the research findings, linking them to the broader theoretical landscape.

7.2 Discussion of Findings

7.2.1 Ethical Responsibilities

The findings of this research reinforce the indispensable role of fairness, inclusivity, and accountability as foundational pillars of ethical leadership. Participants emphasised that ethical responsibilities transcend individual decision-making, extending to the cultivation of an organisational culture rooted in equity, respect for diversity, and transparency. These principles are not only moral imperatives but also strategic enablers that enhance trust, strengthen organisational performance, and uphold ethical integrity (Brown & Treviño, 2006, p. 604; Eisenbeiß, 2012, p. 791).

From the perspective of the researcher's PCLP, ethical leadership necessitates a systemic approach in which ethical principles are embedded within decision-making frameworks, policies, and cultural practices. In the researcher's organisational context, ethical responsibilities were most effectively addressed when operationalised through structured mechanisms. While this approach may align with other studies, it remains context-specific and requires further empirical validation beyond this setting.

7.2.1.1 Fairness

Fairness emerged as a critical theme, with participants linking it to impartial decision-making, equitable treatment of all stakeholders, and the consistent application of policies and procedures. These findings align with extensive research suggesting that fairness is a core dimension of ethical leadership, directly influencing perceptions of legitimacy, trust, and organisational justice (Brown & Treviño, 2006, p. 604; Caldwell et al., 2012, p. 178; Yukl et al., 2013, p. 40). Leaders who consistently demonstrate fairness mitigate perceptions of bias, reinforce procedural integrity, and cultivate a culture of mutual respect (Mayer et al., 2012, p. 163).

However, fairness is not merely an abstract principle; its implementation requires structured and transparent mechanisms, including:

- **Objective Performance Metrics** – Ensuring that evaluations and promotions are based on transparent, data-driven criteria rather than subjective biases.
- **Equitable Access to Development Opportunities** – Providing all employees with equal access to training, mentorship, and career progression initiatives to address systemic disparities.
- **Clear and Consistent Communication of Policies** – Reinforcing procedural justice by ensuring that organisational rules and expectations are uniformly applied and well-understood.

Empirical research suggests that the integration of unbiased algorithms in recruitment and promotion enhances fairness, reducing unconscious biases and promoting meritocracy (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 328). Furthermore, studies indicate that leaders who institutionalise fairness within decision-making processes witness greater employee engagement, stronger organisational commitment, and higher levels of discretionary effort (Treviño et al., 2014, p. 641).

From the researcher's PCLP perspective, fairness is not only a leadership value but an operational priority that must be institutionalised within ethical leadership frameworks. In this study's leadership context, the iterative assessment of decision-making processes was essential to aligning with principles of justice. However, broader claims should be cautiously applied and warrant further investigation in diverse contexts. This approach enhances organisational trust, fosters a cohesive work environment, and solidifies ethical leadership as a sustainable organisational practice.

7.2.1.2 Inclusivity

Inclusivity emerged as another dominant theme, with participants underscoring its significance in ensuring that diverse perspectives are valued and actively integrated into decision-making processes. Inclusivity is not only an ethical obligation but also a strategic advantage, driving:

- Innovation – By incorporating diverse viewpoints, organisations enhance problem-solving and creative thinking (Duguid & Thomas-Hunt, 2015, p. 1025).
- Adaptability – Inclusive leadership strengthens an organisation's ability to navigate complex and evolving business landscapes (Eagly & Chin, 2010, p. 216).
- Resilience – A culture of inclusivity fosters a sense of belonging, psychological safety, and long-term employee commitment (Shore et al., 2018, p. 177).

However, inclusivity does not occur organically; it requires deliberate leadership efforts to dismantle barriers and create environments where all employees feel empowered to contribute. This necessitates:

- Diversity-Focused Recruitment and Representation – Ensuring balanced representation across gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic backgrounds.
- Mentorship and Sponsorship Programs – Supporting the career development of underrepresented groups through structured mentorship initiatives (Ferdman & Deane, 2014, p. 142).
- Bias-Awareness Training – Equipping leadership teams with the tools to identify and counteract unconscious biases in decision-making.

Participants particularly highlighted the transformative role of mentorship, citing first-hand experiences where structured leadership mentorship programs contributed to a more inclusive and empowering organisational culture. Research confirms that leaders who actively champion inclusivity signal a firm commitment to ethical governance, fostering a climate of equity and trust (Shore et al., 2018, p. 186).

From the researcher's PCLP perspective, inclusivity necessitates adaptability to cultural diversity and situational leadership considerations. Within the multicultural environments studied, effective

leadership required adaptability to cross-cultural variations. This insight, while instructive, is rooted in a specific operational context and not intended as a universal leadership prescription:

- Individualism vs. Collectivism – Understanding how cultural norms shape team dynamics, collaboration, and decision-making approaches (Hofstede, 2001, p. 72).
- Power Distance – Recognising the influence of hierarchical structures on leadership authority and communication effectiveness (House et al., 2004, p. 73).

The findings suggest that ethical leadership in multicultural or multinational contexts requires an ongoing commitment to self-reflection, cultural intelligence, and adaptive leadership strategies. Ensuring inclusive leadership is not a static achievement but a continuous process of evaluation, learning, and intentional policy reinforcement—all of which align with the core tenets of the researcher's PCLP.

7.2.1.3 Accountability

Accountability is identified as a cornerstone of ethical leadership, essential for fostering trust, transparency, and ethical stewardship within organisations. Participants consistently emphasised that accountability is not only a personal attribute but also an organisational imperative, reinforcing ethical standards across all levels of leadership. Leaders who model accountability by acknowledging mistakes and taking corrective actions set a powerful example, fostering a culture of openness and ethical responsibility. This aligns with research by Caldwell et al. (2012, p. 11) and Eisenbeiß (2012, p. 793), who recognise accountability as pivotal in building trust and maintaining organisational legitimacy.

From a practical perspective, accountability can be institutionalised through various mechanisms, including:

- Ethical Audits – Systematically reviewing organisational practices to ensure alignment with ethical principles.

- Transparent Reporting – Providing stakeholders with open access to decisions and outcomes to maintain trust.
- Performance Reviews – Conducting regular and unbiased assessments of leadership and organisational performance.

Participants highlighted the role of accountability in navigating ethical dilemmas, particularly in balancing competing priorities such as profitability and corporate social responsibility. Leaders who consistently practice accountability enhance their credibility, ensuring that organisational decisions align with short-term objectives and long-term ethical principles. Kaptein (2008, p. 930) supports this view, suggesting that embedding ethical metrics into organisational processes minimises ethical breaches and reinforces trust.

Diagram 3, p 77 illustrates how ethical leadership encompasses fairness, inclusivity, and accountability, demonstrating their interconnectedness in promoting trust, transparency, and ethical integrity. This dynamic relationship ensures that accountability not only reinforces fairness but also supports inclusivity, creating a holistic framework for ethical decision-making.

In the context of the researcher's PCLP, accountability serves as a dynamic element of adaptive guidance. Leaders are encouraged to engage in a continuous cycle of evaluation, alignment, and refinement to balance organisational objectives with ethical imperatives. For instance, during a financial crisis, in the context examined, leaders were required to assess the ethical implications of cost-cutting measures. This reflective process may inform leadership practice in similar environments, though its broader applicability remains to be tested.

The integration of accountability metrics, as depicted in Diagram 11 and 12 (evolution of the researcher's PCLP framework), represents a significant advancement in the framework's adaptability. This addition enables the researcher and potentially leaders to monitor and evaluate ethical performance against measurable standards, fostering transparency and trust.

In volatile and multicultural environments, accountability gains added significance, as ethical challenges often arise from situational and cultural nuances. Cultural sensitivity proved essential to effective leadership within the researcher's organisational context. Its significance may differ in other environments and should be further examined across varied sectors, an element newly incorporated into the researcher's revised PCLP framework, to navigate ethical challenges effectively in diverse organisational contexts.

7.2.1.4 Practical Implications

The findings related to fairness, inclusivity, and accountability offer actionable insights into how organisations can operationalise ethical leadership. These principles are not merely aspirational but require structured integration into organisational practices to drive meaningful change. Research underscores that embedding ethical leadership into operational frameworks enhances organisational trust, performance, and resilience (Brown & Treviño, 2006, p. 596; Caldwell et al., 2012, p. 178; Mayer et al., 2012, p. 163).

Organisations must prioritise the development of systems and processes that institutionalise these principles. Evidence-based strategies include:

- **Leadership Training Programs** – Developing leaders' competencies in ethical decision-making with an emphasis on fairness, inclusivity, and accountability. Empirical studies suggest that training programs designed to address ethical dilemmas enhance leaders' ability to navigate complex challenges (Treviño et al., 2014, p. 641).
- **Ethical Audits** – Systematic reviews of organisational practices to identify and mitigate ethical risks. Ethical audits have been found to increase organisational transparency and ensure adherence to ethical standards (Kaptein, 2008, p. 931).
- **Diversity Recruitment Practices** – Promoting inclusivity through targeted recruitment efforts to ensure representation across gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic backgrounds.

Research indicates that diverse teams drive innovation and improve organisational adaptability (Eagly & Chin, 2010, p. 216; Shore et al., 2018, p. 178).

- **Performance Metrics** – Establishing measurable criteria to evaluate leadership accountability and ethical behaviour. Measurable accountability fosters a culture of transparency and ensures alignment with ethical objectives (Kaptein, 2008, p. 928).

Leaders and the researcher included must adopt reflective and proactive approaches to navigate ethical dilemmas effectively. Research highlights the importance of leaders engaging in continuous self-assessment and adapting strategies to align with evolving organisational contexts (Kolb, 1984, p. 45; Edmondson, 2019, p. 67). The researcher's PCLP provides a comprehensive framework that potentially guides leaders through:

1. **Identifying Ethical Challenges** – Recognising potential dilemmas early and understanding their root causes (Brown & Treviño, 2006, p. 604).
2. **Assessing Cultural and Situational Contexts** – Adapting leadership strategies to align with organisational values while addressing diverse stakeholder expectations (Hofstede, 2011, p. 14; House et al., 2004, p. 73).
3. **Implementing Solutions** – Leveraging adaptive guidance to resolve ethical challenges in a manner consistent with organisational objectives and long-term values.

Diagram 11 illustrates the evolution of the researcher's PCLP framework, showcasing its refinement based on study findings. The revised framework integrates critical elements to address the dynamic and complex nature of ethical leadership in today's globalised environments:

- **Cultural Sensitivity** – Acknowledging diverse norms and values in ethical decision-making. In the study's setting, effective leadership involved navigating varying cultural dimensions, including power distance and collectivism. While supported by theory (Hofstede, 2011, p. 14), this finding is specific to the research context.

- **Continuous Learning** – Drawing from Kolb's (1984, p. 41) experiential learning theory, reflective leadership practice was a key insight from this study. While aligned with Kolb's experiential learning model (1984, p. 41), this finding is rooted in the context of the researcher's leadership experience.
- **Accountability Metrics** – Embedding measurable standards to evaluate ethical behaviour fosters transparency and trust across organisational levels (Kaptein, 2008, p. 928).

The shift from a static to a dynamic model enhances the PCLP's applicability, equipping leaders to address the ethical complexities of volatile, multicultural, and globalised environments. This evolution ensures that leaders can balance short-term organisational objectives with long-term ethical imperatives, fostering resilience, adaptability, and integrity.

Research affirms that organisations that prioritise fairness, inclusivity, and accountability benefit from improved employee engagement, stronger organisational commitment, and enhanced reputation among stakeholders (Treviño et al., 2014, p. 643; Mayer et al., 2012, p. 164). By integrating these principles into their operational frameworks, organisations can not only mitigate ethical risks but also position themselves as leaders in ethical governance.

7.2.2 Cultural Influences

The findings of this research highlight the profound influence of cultural dimensions on leadership practices, particularly in shaping ethical responsibilities and decision-making processes. Participants emphasised that cultural values and norms significantly affect how fairness, inclusivity, and accountability are perceived and enacted within organisations. These findings underscore the necessity for culturally sensitive and situationally appropriate leadership practices, especially in diverse and globalised environments.

Cultural dimensions, as described by Hofstede's (2011) updated cultural dimensions theory, provide a robust framework for understanding how leadership behaviours are influenced by societal values.

This research aligns with Hofstede's work and extends it by exploring its application to ethical leadership principles.

1. **Power Distance**

Leaders operating in high power distance cultures reported challenges in promoting inclusivity and accountability, as hierarchical norms often discouraged open communication and critical feedback (Hofstede, 2011, p. 50). Participants noted that rigid hierarchies limited participatory decision-making, creating barriers to ethical leadership. In contrast, low power distance cultures facilitated collaboration and trust, enabling leaders to align more easily with fairness and inclusivity (Gelfand et al., 2017, p. 478).

2. **Individualism versus Collectivism**

Individualism and collectivism emerged as pivotal cultural dimensions influencing leadership. Collectivist cultures emphasise group harmony and consensus, which participants noted often facilitated inclusive decision-making. However, this emphasis occasionally diluted individual accountability, complicating ethical practices (Triandis, 2018, p. 159). Conversely, leaders in individualist cultures prioritised personal accountability but faced challenges in fostering team cohesion and collective goals.

3. **Uncertainty Avoidance**

High uncertainty avoidance cultures displayed a preference for structured processes and clear ethical guidelines, enhancing accountability but limiting adaptability in dynamic situations. Leaders in these contexts reported that rigid structures often reduced opportunities for innovative decision-making (Minkov & Hofstede, 2013, p. 60). In contrast, low uncertainty avoidance cultures allowed leaders to take calculated risks and make ethical decisions in ambiguous scenarios, aligning with the adaptive principles of the PCLP framework (Ang et al., 2020, p. 14).

4. Performance Orientation

The GLOBE study highlights performance orientation as a cultural dimension influencing leadership behaviour (Chhokar et al., 2013, p. 253). Leaders in high performance-oriented cultures often experienced tension between achieving organisational targets and prioritising ethical considerations. In contrast, those in low performance-oriented cultures found it easier to integrate ethical principles into their decision-making processes, reflecting the importance of balancing short-term goals with long-term ethical imperatives.

These findings illustrate the complex interplay between cultural dimensions and ethical leadership practices, necessitating a flexible and contextually aware approach.

Beyond Hofstede's dimensions, this research draws on Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's (2012) updated work, particularly their dimension of universalism versus particularism. Leaders in universalist cultures prioritised consistent application of ethical principles across situations, while leaders in particularist cultures emphasised the importance of relational and situational flexibility in decision-making. These findings also align with the updated GLOBE study, which highlights cultural nuances in ethical leadership, particularly in terms of humane orientation and societal collectivism (Chhokar et al., 2013, p. 272).

The Researcher's PCLP provides structured adaptability, enabling leaders to navigate contemporary challenges effectively. Globalisation has increased the complexity of ethical decision-making, requiring leaders to balance cultural awareness with ethical consistency. Additionally, advancements in artificial intelligence and automation present new ethical dilemmas that traditional leadership models fail to address. The findings confirm that the Researcher's PCLP offers a leadership framework that integrates ethical reflection, adaptability, and stakeholder accountability, making it highly relevant in modern leadership contexts, this said, the Researcher's PCLP may offer transferable insights for other leaders operating in similar culturally complex environments, but its broader application would require further empirical validation.

7.2.2.1 Practical Implications

The findings from this research underscore the need for culturally adaptive leadership practices to address the impact of cultural dimensions on ethical leadership. These implications are especially pertinent for leaders operating in multicultural and globalised environments, where fairness, inclusivity, and accountability are often interpreted through diverse cultural lenses. Cultural Intelligence (CQ) is essential for leaders managing cultural diversity. CQ enables leaders to interpret and respond to cultural differences effectively, ensuring ethical practices are contextually relevant while remaining aligned with organisational values. Leaders with higher CQ demonstrate greater adaptability in maintaining fairness, inclusivity, and accountability across diverse cultural settings (Van Dyne et al., 2017, p. 85).

Organisations must integrate CQ training into their leadership development programs. These programs should equip leaders with the ability to recognise and mitigate cultural biases in decision-making processes. For example, experiential learning approaches such as cross-cultural simulations, case studies, and role-playing scenarios have been shown to improve leaders' ability to adapt (Ang et al., 2020, p. 15). The researcher can now adapt their PCLP framework to address cultural biases explicitly. By doing so, the PCLP can guide leaders in ensuring fairness, inclusivity, and accountability across various cultural contexts. Moreover, while the PCLP may have broader applications for other leaders, its generalisability requires further research beyond the scope of this thesis.

In this research, alignment between organisational policies and local cultural context was shown to enhance trust and ethical clarity. However, these findings are context-bound and further testing in broader sectors is recommended. Research highlights that cultural misalignment can lead to misinterpretation of ethical principles, loss of trust, and reduced organisational effectiveness (Gelfand et al., 2017, p. 480). Multinational corporations should design leadership programs that incorporate cultural insights from Hofstede's cultural dimensions, the GLOBE study, and Trompenaars' frameworks. For instance, leaders in high power distance cultures may benefit from

strategies to encourage respectful dialogue without undermining authority (Hofstede, 2011, p. 56). Ethical policies should be adapted to align with local cultural norms. For example, structured reporting processes can enhance accountability in high uncertainty avoidance cultures (Minkov & Hofstede, 2013, p. 47). Organisations should implement recruitment and retention strategies that reflect the cultural diversity of their operational regions. Mentoring and sponsorship programs can further support underrepresented groups, promoting fairness and inclusivity (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012, p. 61). While these findings draw on Hofstede and Trompenaars, they remain specific to the research context. In this study's settings, it was evident that culturally responsive leadership required adapting recruitment and retention strategies to reflect local norms. Further research would be necessary to determine if such approaches are appropriate in other sectors or regions.

In the cultural settings analysed in this study, leadership success depended on balancing cultural sensitivity with core organisational values. This principle is consistent with leadership theory but remains context-dependent. This requires contextually aware leadership practices that adapt to cultural differences while upholding fairness, inclusivity, and accountability. In high uncertainty avoidance cultures, leaders can enhance accountability by introducing structured processes, such as ethical audits and transparent decision-making protocols, to reduce ambiguity (Kaptein, 2008, p. 933). In low power distance cultures, participatory leadership practices, such as team-based decision-making and open feedback channels, can foster inclusivity (House et al., 2004, p. 72). In collectivist cultures, leaders should ensure that group harmony does not overshadow individual accountability by implementing transparent role definitions and shared responsibility models (Triandis, 2018, p. 160).

7.2.2.2 Expanding the PCLP Framework

The findings of this research provide an opportunity to refine and expand the researcher's PCLP framework by integrating cultural sensitivity as a central component. This integration equips leaders

to navigate ethical dilemmas effectively in multicultural environments. Diagram 11 illustrates the evolution of the PCLP framework, which now incorporates cultural sensitivity by acknowledging and adapting to diverse cultural norms and values in ethical decision-making (Hofstede, 2011, p. 60). Continuous learning encourages leaders to reflect on cultural challenges and adapt their practices in response to evolving organisational contexts (Kolb, 1984, p. 41). Culturally informed accountability metrics provide a measurable basis for evaluating ethical behaviour while reflecting cultural nuances (Kaptein, 2008, p. 928). While the expanded PCLP framework has immediate relevance for the researcher's leadership practice, its application to other leaders would require additional empirical validation. This could involve longitudinal studies across multinational organisations to test the framework's effectiveness in diverse cultural settings.

Organisations that prioritise cultural awareness and adaptability see improvements in employee engagement, trust, and ethical behaviour. Research confirms that culturally informed practices enhance collaboration, innovation, and stakeholder relationships (Ang et al., 2020, p. 22; Gelfand et al., 2017, p. 482). For instance, the researcher can now adapt their PCLP framework to identify and address cultural biases in decision-making processes, ensuring that leadership practices remain fair, inclusive, and accountable across different cultural contexts. Additionally, the PCLP framework may have broader applications for other leaders. However, testing this would require further research beyond the scope of this thesis.

Leaders operating in multicultural contexts must develop CQ to navigate diverse ethical expectations effectively. As demonstrated in Table 13, different cultural dimensions present unique challenges and opportunities for ethical leadership. By integrating culturally adaptive strategies—such as fostering collaboration in high power distance environments, balancing teamwork and accountability in collectivist cultures, and embedding ethical considerations into performance-driven contexts—leaders can enhance ethical governance while maintaining cultural alignment.

Aspect	Findings	Comparison with Models	Practical Implications
Power Distance	High: Challenges with inclusivity and accountability due to rigid hierarchies. Low: Promotes collaboration and participatory leadership.	Matches Hofstede's (2011, p. 56) power distance dimension. Leaders in high power distance cultures struggle with participatory decision-making (House et al., 2004, p. 72).	Adapt leadership approaches to encourage participation in high power distance cultures by fostering structured but respectful feedback channels (Gelfand et al., 2017, p. 478).
Individualism vs. Collectivism	Collectivist: Emphasis on group harmony, which may obscure individual accountability. Individualist: Prioritisation of personal accountability but challenges in fostering teamwork.	Reflects Hofstede's (2011, p. 225) individualism-collectivism dimension. Group harmony vs. personal responsibility affects ethical leadership (Triandis, 2018, p. 160).	Balance teamwork and accountability by setting clear role expectations in collectivist cultures while reinforcing shared responsibility in individualist cultures.
Uncertainty Avoidance	High: Preference for structured processes and clear ethical guidelines. Low: Greater adaptability and flexibility in ethical decision-making.	Consistent with Hofstede's (2011, p. 148) uncertainty avoidance dimension. High uncertainty avoidance fosters rigid ethical frameworks (Minkov & Hofstede, 2013, p. 47).	Provide structured ethical guidelines in high uncertainty avoidance cultures while fostering adaptability and innovation in low uncertainty avoidance cultures (Kaptein, 2008, p. 933).
Universalism vs. Particularism	Universalist: Ethical decisions are based on standardised rules and policies. Particularist: Ethical decisions depend on relational and situational factors.	Matches Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner's (2012, p. 61) framework. Universalist cultures rely on fairness through consistency, while particularist cultures prioritise flexibility.	Adjust decision-making processes by balancing global ethical policies with situational flexibility. Promote fairness while considering relational dynamics in particularist cultures.
Performance Orientation	High: Ethical considerations often take a backseat to achieving organisational targets. Low: Ethical principles are prioritised over short-term performance pressures.	Aligns with the GLOBE study's performance orientation dimension (Chhokar et al., 2013, p. 253). Performance-driven cultures may deprioritise ethics to meet targets (Eisenbeiß, 2012, p. 797).	Develop leadership strategies that integrate ethical considerations into performance metrics to ensure organisational targets align with long-term ethical commitments.
Cultural Intelligence	Critical for navigating diverse ethical expectations and adapting leadership behaviour accordingly.	Extends cultural dimensions theories by providing a dynamic framework for leader adaptability (Van Dyne et al., 2017, p. 85). CQ is	Train leaders in cultural intelligence through targeted programs, ensuring they assess and adapt to cultural variations in fairness,

		linked to higher ethical leadership effectiveness (Ang et al., 2020, p. 15).	inclusivity, and accountability.
Integration into PCLP	PCLP should incorporate structured tools for cultural assessment to enhance ethical leadership adaptability.	Enhances the adaptability of the PCLP framework by embedding cultural sensitivity as a leadership imperative (Hofstede, 2011, p. 60).	Embed cultural assessment tools within leadership practices, allowing leaders to make ethical decisions that align with diverse cultural expectations.

Table 13 Summary of Cultural Influences & Theoretical Connections

7.2.3 Reflection and Learning

Reflection and learning are fundamental to ethical leadership as they enable leaders to critically assess their decisions, behaviours, and the broader implications of their actions. Ethical leadership is not a static skill but a dynamic process that requires continuous evaluation and adaptation. Leaders who engage in structured reflective practices and commit to lifelong learning develop greater ethical awareness and decision-making capabilities, allowing them to navigate complex moral dilemmas with confidence. Research indicates that ethical leaders who engage in ongoing reflection are more likely to uphold transparency, accountability, and fairness in their leadership practices (Treviño & Nelson, 2016, p. 204).

The role of reflection and learning in ethical leadership can be understood through established theoretical frameworks. Schön (1983, p. 49) introduced the concept of reflection-in-action, which describes how individuals critically evaluate and modify their actions while actively engaged in a task. Kolb's experiential learning theory (1984, p. 41) further elaborates on this process, emphasising that learning occurs through a cyclical process involving concrete experiences, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation. These models provide a structured understanding of how ethical leaders continuously evolve by analysing past actions and integrating new insights into their leadership practices.

7.2.3.1 Reflection

Reflection enables leaders to critically assess their past experiences, examine personal biases, and identify areas for ethical improvement. Schön's (1983, p. 49) framework of reflection-in-action describes how professionals, including leaders, reassess their strategies and modify their approach in real-time to align with ethical principles. This ability to engage in immediate critical reflection is particularly relevant in high-stakes ethical dilemmas, where leaders must balance competing interests while ensuring fairness and accountability.

Kolb's experiential learning theory (1984, p. 41) complements Schön's model by presenting reflection as part of a continuous learning cycle. The process involves direct engagement with ethical challenges, evaluating the outcomes, conceptualising broader ethical lessons, and applying these insights to future decisions. Research suggests that ethical leaders who actively engage in reflective learning develop stronger moral reasoning and demonstrate increased sensitivity to ethical nuances in decision-making (Brown & Treviño, 2014, p. 588).

In practice, reflection allows leaders to assess ethical dilemmas and develop adaptive strategies for navigating complex situations. For instance, a leader faced with a conflict between financial performance and employee well-being may use reflection-in-action to adjust their leadership approach, ensuring that ethical considerations are not compromised. Studies indicate that leaders who incorporate structured reflection—such as journaling, peer discussions, and ethical debriefing sessions—enhance their capacity for ethical reasoning and accountability (Neal, Finlay, & Tansey, 2015, p. 77). This research supports the view that reflection is an essential component of ethical leadership, reinforcing a leader's ability to evaluate past actions and refine their ethical judgment over time.

7.2.3.2 Ethical Growth Foundation: Learning

Lifelong learning is essential for ethical leadership, as it equips leaders with the knowledge and skills needed to adapt to evolving ethical challenges and cultural expectations. Ethical leadership requires continuous education, not only in fundamental ethical principles but also in emerging issues such as diversity, sustainability, and digital ethics. Research highlights that leaders committed to ongoing learning are better equipped to anticipate ethical risks and implement proactive strategies that align with organisational values (Ciulla, 2020, p. 63).

Kolb's (1984, p. 45) experiential learning cycle reinforces the idea that learning is an iterative process in which leaders refine their ethical perspectives through repeated engagement with real-world challenges. Leaders who actively integrate learning into their leadership development demonstrate enhanced ethical reasoning and decision-making capabilities. A study by Pless and Maak (2017, p. 137) found that ethical leaders who engage in structured learning—through executive training, mentorship, and peer dialogue—develop a stronger ethical identity and a greater capacity for ethical resilience.

Exposure to diverse perspectives is a critical component of ethical learning. Research suggests that leaders who engage with multiple viewpoints develop a more nuanced understanding of ethical leadership, allowing them to address complex dilemmas with greater confidence (Ang, Van Dyne, & Koh, 2020, p. 94). Learning from ethical failures is equally important, as leaders who reflect on past ethical missteps are more likely to make informed adjustments to their leadership approach. For instance, a leader who encounters a workplace discrimination issue and undergoes training on unconscious bias may subsequently implement policies that promote diversity and inclusion. This iterative learning process ensures that ethical leadership remains adaptive, contextually relevant, and aligned with best practices in governance.

The role of reflection and learning in ethical leadership is best understood as a structured and iterative process, where leaders critically engage with past experiences, refine their ethical

frameworks, and apply new insights to evolving challenges. Table 14 provides a comprehensive overview of the key aspects of reflection and learning, their theoretical foundations, and the practical strategies that support ethical leadership development.

Aspect	Key Points	Theoretical Connection	Practical Implications
Role of Reflection	Enables leaders to critically assess past actions and real-time decisions to enhance ethical leadership.	Schön's reflection-in-action framework (1983, p. 49); Kolb's experiential learning theory (1984, p. 41).	Use reflective journals, structured debriefs, and peer feedback mechanisms to enhance self-awareness and ethical decision-making (Neal et al., 2015, p. 77).
Role of Learning	Allows leaders to adapt to evolving ethical challenges and refine decision-making processes.	Kolb's experiential learning cycle (1984, p. 45); Continuous learning as an ethical leadership competency (Ciulla, 2020, p. 63).	Implement structured ethics training, leadership mentoring programs, and professional development initiatives to promote lifelong ethical learning (Pless & Maak, 2017, p. 137).
Reflection Cycle	Leaders engage in an iterative process of reflecting on experiences, conceptualising insights, and testing new ethical approaches.	Kolb's experiential learning stages (1984, p. 41); Ethical learning as an adaptive process (Treviño et al., 2014, p. 635).	Encourage iterative learning cycles through scenario-based training, ethical dilemma workshops, and applied leadership simulations.
Integration into my PCLP	Structured reflection and learning reinforce adaptive guidance capabilities, making the PCLP more responsive to ethical complexities.	Adaptive leadership models in situational ethics (Maak & Pless, 2016, p. 32); PCLP's focus on contextual responsiveness.	Embed tools like structured reflection sessions, feedback loops, and continuous leadership evaluation within my PCLP framework to enhance ethical adaptability.
Organisational Support	Organisations play a crucial role in fostering a culture of reflection and learning by institutionalising ethical development.	Organisational learning enhances ethical leadership and accountability (Treviño & Nelson, 2016, p. 204).	Establish regular ethics workshops, peer-led reflective discussions, and leadership coaching to develop ethically reflective leaders.

Table 14 Reflective Guidance

7.2.3.3 My PCLP Framework

My PCLP aligns with the principles of reflection and learning by advocating for an adaptive leadership approach that evolves based on situational and cultural factors. The findings of this research indicate

that integrating structured reflection and learning mechanisms into my PCLP enhances its effectiveness in promoting ethical leadership. Table 14 illustrates how reflection and learning are embedded within my PCLP framework, reinforcing its adaptability to dynamic ethical challenges.

A key component of my PCLP is its emphasis on adaptive guidance capabilities. Adaptive guidance refers to a leader's ability to assess ethical complexities, reflect on past experiences, and modify their leadership strategies accordingly. The concept is further explored in Chapter 7 (see Section 7.2, p. 203-215), where it is identified as a core element of my PCLP. Leaders with strong adaptive guidance capabilities exhibit higher levels of ethical responsiveness and cultural intelligence, allowing them to address ethical dilemmas with situational awareness and strategic foresight (Maak & Pless, 2016, p. 32).

By embedding reflection and learning into my PCLP framework, I am able to utilise structured tools such as reflective journals, peer feedback mechanisms, and ethical audits to systematically assess and refine my leadership practices. This iterative process ensures that ethical leadership remains dynamic and responsive to evolving ethical landscapes. Furthermore, the evolved PCLP supported my own leadership development in culturally complex environments. While its structure may offer insights for similar contexts, any application beyond the research setting requires further empirical validation. Future research could explore its relevance in other sectors or leadership domains.

Within my research context, this model enabled me to engage in situationally responsive ethical decision-making. Although it presents a structured method for refining leadership practice, its effectiveness outside this specific environment remains untested.

7.2.3.4 Practical Implications

The findings of this research indicate that structured opportunities for reflection and learning significantly contribute to ethical leadership development. In my leadership journey, integrating reflection and learning into my PCLP framework has been instrumental in refining my ethical

decision-making capabilities. The process of engaging in regular debrief sessions, participating in ethics training programs, and seeking mentorship has strengthened my ability to critically assess ethical challenges and develop more nuanced leadership strategies.

This research supports the argument that reflection and learning enhance ethical leadership by fostering moral reasoning, promoting accountability, and reinforcing an ethical leadership identity (Treviño, den Nieuwenboer, & Kish-Gephart, 2014, p. 635). Leaders who integrate structured reflection into their practices develop higher levels of ethical awareness, allowing them to build ethical cultures within their organisations. Future research could explore how my PCLP's reflective and learning mechanisms apply to leaders beyond my context. This could involve longitudinal studies examining the long-term impact of structured reflection on ethical leadership effectiveness across various industries.

7.2.4 Ethical Decision-Making Challenges

Ethical decision-making is inherently complex, particularly in leadership roles that require balancing competing interests, navigating diverse cultural and ethical standards, and addressing ambiguities in ethical frameworks. Leaders frequently encounter dilemmas where ethical principles appear to conflict, requiring them to make judgments that uphold integrity while also ensuring organisational sustainability. Research indicates that ethical dilemmas often arise in situationally ambiguous contexts, where universal ethical principles may not provide clear-cut solutions (Eisenbeiß, 2012, p. 794). This reinforces the necessity of adaptive ethical leadership models, such as my PCLP, which provides structured guidance for navigating ethical complexities in diverse and evolving environments (Maak & Pless, 2016, p. 31) (See below Table 14).

7.2.4.1 Barriers in Ethical Decision-Making

1. Diverse Ethical Standards

One of the most significant barriers in ethical decision-making is the diversity of ethical standards across cultures and organisations. Ethical expectations regarding fairness, accountability, and inclusivity vary significantly depending on cultural, legal, and institutional contexts (Hofstede, 2011, p. 225). Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory highlights how individualism versus collectivism and power distance shape ethical norms. In collectivist cultures, prioritising group harmony is considered ethical, while in individualist cultures, ethical leadership is often framed around personal accountability and autonomy (Gelfand et al., 2017, p. 476). This divergence presents challenges for leaders operating in multinational environments, where actions deemed ethical in one cultural setting may be viewed as inappropriate in another (Treviño et al., 2014, p. 641).

The complexity of culturally divergent ethical standards is further reflected in organisational settings, where corporate norms influence ethical expectations. Studies indicate that even within the same industry, organisations may uphold different ethical priorities based on corporate values, regulatory requirements, and stakeholder expectations (Brown & Mitchell, 2010, p. 589). Leaders navigating these inconsistencies must make ethical trade-offs, balancing organisational interests with broader ethical considerations. Without a structured decision-making framework, leaders risk ethical drift, where small compromises accumulate over time, leading to significant ethical deviations (Kaptein, 2017, p. 1062).

2. Ambiguity in Ethical Frameworks

Another major challenge is the ambiguity of ethical frameworks, where broad ethical principles such as fairness, accountability, and respect are subject to interpretation. Ethical dilemmas often fall into moral grey areas, where leaders must make decisions despite competing ethical priorities (Neubert et al., 2013, p. 285). For example, a leader deciding to implement workforce reductions to maintain

financial stability may face ethical tensions regarding the well-being of affected employees and their families (Ciulla, 2020, p. 71).

This ambiguity is compounded in industries undergoing rapid technological and regulatory shifts, where traditional ethical frameworks may not fully address emerging ethical concerns. The increasing role of artificial intelligence and automation raises ethical questions about job displacement, privacy rights, and algorithmic bias (Martin et al., 2019, p. 315). Research suggests that leaders often struggle to apply rigid ethical models to novel technological challenges, leading to uncertainty and inconsistency in ethical decision-making (Kaptein, 2017, p. 1065).

My PCLP framework addresses these challenges by offering a structured yet flexible approach to ethical decision-making. Unlike static ethical frameworks, which assume universal applicability, my PCLP recognises the contingent nature of ethical dilemmas, allowing leaders to adapt ethical strategies based on cultural, situational, and organisational factors (Maak & Pless, 2016, p. 35). This research suggests that my PCLP bridges the gap between ethical principles and real-world leadership complexities, offering a practical framework that potentially benefits other leaders in similar contexts.

7.2.4.2 Proposed Solutions

Addressing the challenges of ethical decision-making requires structured and evidence-based approaches that enable leaders to navigate ethical complexity while maintaining integrity, accountability, and adaptability. Research has consistently shown that leaders equipped with ethical frameworks and culturally responsive strategies demonstrate higher ethical consistency, organisational trust, and decision-making effectiveness (Treviño et al., 2014, p. 641; Ciulla, 2020, p. 72). Ethical dilemmas are often situationally complex, requiring leaders to apply flexible yet principled approaches to ethical reasoning (Eisenbeiß, 2012, p. 792). This research highlights three primary strategies for addressing ethical decision-making challenges: fostering cultural intelligence (CQ), enhancing ethical clarity, and leveraging adaptive leadership models. These approaches are

rooted in both theoretical foundations and empirical evidence, reinforcing their effectiveness in guiding ethical leadership in diverse and evolving contexts.

1. Fostering Cultural Intelligence (CQ)

Developing CQ is crucial for leaders operating in globalised and multicultural environments, where ethical norms and expectations vary significantly across cultures and organisations. CQ enables leaders to understand, interpret, and integrate diverse ethical perspectives, reducing ethical misunderstandings and biases (Earley & Ang, 2003, p. 59). Research indicates that leaders with higher CQ demonstrate stronger ethical adaptability and greater ability to balance competing ethical expectations (Van Dyne et al., 2020, p. 88). This is particularly relevant in cross-border leadership roles, where ethical decision-making is influenced by cultural norms surrounding power distance, individualism versus collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 2011, p. 226).

Empirical studies support practical strategies for fostering cultural intelligence in ethical leadership. Cross-cultural leadership training has been found to significantly improve leaders' ability to navigate ethical dilemmas in diverse settings (Gelfand et al., 2017, p. 479). Encouraging structured dialogue within teams helps to identify cultural biases and integrate ethical perspectives, fostering inclusive decision-making processes (Pless & Maak, 2017, p. 140). Furthermore, leveraging cultural frameworks such as Hofstede's dimensions enables leaders to anticipate and manage ethical conflicts arising from cultural differences, reinforcing ethically sound leadership practices (Kaptein, 2017, p. 1068). Research confirms that leaders who develop strong CQ are better equipped to make ethical decisions that are both contextually appropriate and aligned with core ethical principles (Brown & Treviño, 2014, p. 592).

2. Enhancing Ethical Clarity

Enhancing ethical clarity is essential for reducing ambiguity in ethical decision-making. Studies indicate that leaders are more likely to engage in consistent ethical reasoning when provided with

clear ethical frameworks, decision-making models, and structured ethical training (Treviño & Nelson, 2016, p. 213). Research suggests that organisational ambiguity regarding ethical expectations often leads to ethical drift, where decisions become inconsistent over time (Kaptein, 2017, p. 1072). Establishing comprehensive codes of ethics that explicitly outline organisational values and behavioural expectations is a key strategy for addressing ethical uncertainty (Neubert et al., 2013, p. 288).

Scholars highlight the importance of ethical decision-making models in guiding leaders through complex moral reasoning processes. Rest's (1986) four-component model of ethical decision-making, which includes moral awareness, moral judgment, moral intent, and moral action, has been widely applied to enhance leaders' ability to navigate ethical dilemmas (Ciulla, 2020, p. 75). Studies have found that organisations that incorporate structured decision-making frameworks experience higher levels of ethical consistency among leaders, reducing subjectivity and uncertainty in ethical judgment (Pless & Maak, 2017, p. 143). Additionally, continuous ethics training and workshops ensure that leaders remain equipped with evolving best practices and regulatory standards, reinforcing ethical clarity in decision-making (Brown & Treviño, 2014, p. 594).

3. Leveraging Adaptive Leadership Models

Leveraging adaptive leadership models is critical for addressing the dynamic nature of ethical decision-making. Research supports adaptive ethical frameworks that encourage leaders to assess and respond to situational, cultural, and organisational factors in real time (Maak & Pless, 2016, p. 39). Reflection-based leadership models, such as post-decision ethical reviews and ethical audits, have been shown to increase ethical consistency by allowing leaders to evaluate and refine their ethical decision-making processes (Treviño et al., 2014, p. 644). Furthermore, engaging in continuous learning ensures that leaders remain updated on emerging ethical challenges, allowing them to navigate novel ethical dilemmas effectively (Ang et al., 2020, p. 98).

The findings of this research reinforce that my PCLP provides a structured yet adaptable framework for ethical decision-making, allowing for situationally responsive ethical reasoning while ensuring alignment with fundamental ethical principles. Studies on adaptive ethical leadership suggest that flexible, reflection-driven models improve leaders' ability to handle ethical ambiguity, making them more effective in complex decision-making environments (Kaptein, 2017, p. 1074). While my PCLP has been developed based on my leadership journey, it potentially provides a valuable model for other leaders seeking a structured approach to ethical reasoning in dynamic and multicultural environments.

7.2.4.3 Practical Implications

The findings of this research underscore the critical role of organisational support in enhancing leaders' ability to navigate ethical decision-making challenges. Studies indicate that leaders operating within ethically supportive organisational environments demonstrate higher levels of ethical consistency and resilience (Ciulla, 2020, p. 78). Research suggests that ethical decision-making should not be viewed solely as an individual responsibility but as an integrated organisational priority that is reinforced through policies, training, and institutional norms (Treviño et al., 2014, p. 647).

Promoting a culture of ethical transparency and open communication has been found to significantly improve ethical decision-making among leaders (Brown & Treviño, 2014, p. 596). Organisational cultures that encourage open dialogue on ethical dilemmas provide leaders with the confidence and institutional backing needed to make ethical decisions without fear of retribution (Kaptein, 2017, p. 1075). Providing access to ethical resources, such as structured decision-making frameworks, legal guidance, and ethics consultation services, ensures that leaders are well-equipped to address ethical dilemmas effectively (Neubert et al., 2013, p. 290).

Recognising and reinforcing ethical leadership through rewards and organisational incentives plays a vital role in institutionalising ethical norms. Studies indicate that leaders who receive recognition for ethical decision-making are more likely to consistently uphold ethical principles, as ethical behaviour

is actively encouraged rather than merely expected (Pless & Maak, 2017, p. 146). Research further suggests that organisations that embed ethical decision-making into performance evaluations and leadership development programs experience stronger organisational commitment to ethical values (Treviño & Nelson, 2016, p. 215).

By implementing these strategies, organisations can strengthen leaders' ethical decision-making capacity, ensuring that they are equipped with the tools, frameworks, and institutional support necessary to navigate ethical dilemmas confidently and effectively. The research confirms that ethical leadership is a product of both individual capability and systemic reinforcement, highlighting the need for integrated approaches to fostering ethical decision-making at both leadership and organisational levels (Ciulla, 2020, p. 80).

The findings highlight that effective ethical decision-making requires a combination of cultural intelligence, ethical clarity, adaptive leadership, and strong organisational support. Table 15 summarises the key challenges identified in this research, along with their proposed solutions and theoretical foundations.

Aspect	Key Challenges	Proposed Solutions	Theoretical Basis
Diverse Ethical Standards	Conflicting ethical expectations across cultures and organisations, leading to ethical inconsistencies.	Foster cultural intelligence (CQ) through cross-cultural training, structured dialogue, and frameworks like Hofstede's cultural dimensions.	Hofstede's cultural dimensions (2011, p. 225); Earley & Ang's CQ model (2003, p. 59); Van Dyne et al. (2020, p. 88).
Ambiguity in Ethical Frameworks	Lack of clarity in applying ethical principles, especially in grey areas, novel ethical dilemmas, and industry-specific ethics.	Enhance ethical clarity by implementing codes of ethics, structured ethical decision-making models (e.g., Rest's model), and regular ethics training.	Rest's four-component model (1986, p. 14); Neubert et al. (2013, p. 288); Treviño & Nelson (2016, p. 213).
Navigating Complexity	Ethical dilemmas in rapidly changing environments require balancing competing priorities while maintaining integrity.	Leverage adaptive leadership models, such as my PCLP, to ensure situational awareness, ethical adaptability, and strategic decision-making.	Adaptive leadership theory (Maak & Pless, 2016, p. 39); My PCLP framework.

Organisational Support	Lack of institutional reinforcement, inadequate ethical guidance, and limited access to ethical decision-making resources.	Foster a culture of transparency, provide structured ethical resources, and implement recognition and reward systems for ethical leadership.	Organisational ethics models (Kaptein, 2017, p. 1071); Ethical culture reinforcement (Treviño et al., 2014, p. 647).
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Table 15 Summary of Ethical Decision-Making Challenges

The ethical decision-making challenges and leadership learnings outlined in Table 15 informed the structural refinement of the Researcher's PCLP. These findings directly shaped the inclusion of components such as structured ethical decision-making, cultural intelligence, and reflective practice within the evolved framework (see **Diagram 11**, p. 257). Furthermore, these insights have been operationalised into practical strategies for leadership development, as outlined in Appendix vi: Strategic Guidelines for Ethical Leadership Practice.

7.2.5 Trust and Integrity

Trust and integrity are fundamental to leadership effectiveness, shaping the foundation of ethical leadership and fostering sustainable organisational success. Leaders who demonstrate trustworthiness and act with integrity inspire confidence, strengthen team cohesion, and build long-term relationships with stakeholders. Research consistently highlights trust and integrity as essential attributes that influence how leaders are perceived and how effectively they can guide their organisations (Brown & Treviño, 2006, p. 604; Ciulla, 2020, p. 73). This section explores the significance of trust and integrity in leadership, linking these concepts to theoretical models such as Covey's (2006) Speed of Trust framework and Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman's (1995) integrative model of trust, while also highlighting practical strategies for embedding these values into leadership practices.

Trust is a cornerstone of effective leadership, influencing how followers respond to their leaders' guidance. According to Covey's (2006, p. 21) Speed of Trust framework, trust accelerates

organisational performance by reducing relational friction, enhancing communication, and fostering collaboration. Covey conceptualises trust as a measurable competency that can be intentionally developed through consistent behaviours such as delivering on commitments, demonstrating transparency, and respecting others. The findings of this research align with Covey's principles, reinforcing that trust is built through consistent actions that signal credibility, reliability, and ethical leadership. Participants frequently emphasised that trust enhances psychological safety, creating an environment where employees feel valued and empowered to share ideas, raise concerns, and collaborate effectively. This psychological safety is a critical enabler of innovation, ethical decision-making, and organisational commitment, as it mitigates fear of retaliation and encourages open dialogue (Edmondson, 1999, p. 355).

Integrity, in turn, refers to the alignment between a leader's values, words, and actions. It embodies a commitment to ethical principles and a willingness to prioritise the collective good over personal gain. Leaders who consistently act with integrity earn the trust of their teams while also setting the ethical tone for their organisations. Research indicates that integrity not only reinforces credibility but also enhances a leader's ability to influence and inspire (Brown & Treviño, 2006, p. 607). Integrity also strengthens accountability, as leaders who demonstrate honesty and transparency are more likely to accept responsibility for their actions and foster a culture of ethical accountability within their teams.

The correlation between integrity and leadership effectiveness is well-documented in ethical leadership literature. For instance, Brown and Treviño (2006, p. 608) describe integrity as a core component of ethical leadership, highlighting that it fosters trust by demonstrating authenticity and moral courage. Similarly, Ciulla (2020, p. 78) asserts that leaders who lack integrity ultimately erode trust, leading to decreased team morale, weakened stakeholder relationships, and reputational damage. The findings of this research reinforce these perspectives, as participants consistently indicated that integrity underpins credibility, influencing how leaders are perceived internally and

externally. This suggests that trust and integrity are mutually reinforcing attributes, and their presence enhances leadership effectiveness, while their absence can undermine organisational cohesion and ethical standing.

Covey's (2006, p. 25) Speed of Trust framework provides a practical approach to developing and sustaining trust in leadership. The framework distinguishes between two key dimensions of trust:

1. Character Trust – Built on integrity, authenticity, and intent. This form of trust is foundational and determines whether followers believe a leader is ethically guided and acting in good faith.
2. Competence Trust – Based on a leader's capabilities, performance, and results. While character trust establishes the moral foundation, competence trust ensures that leaders can deliver on commitments and maintain credibility.

The findings of this research confirm the importance of balancing character and competence trust. Participants highlighted that leaders who demonstrate ethical integrity but lack competence may struggle to inspire confidence in their decision-making, whereas leaders with strong technical competence but weak moral integrity may be perceived as untrustworthy or self-serving. This dual requirement suggests that ethical leadership must be both principled and effective, ensuring that leaders align their values-driven leadership with tangible performance outcomes.

Further reinforcing these insights, Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman's (1995, p. 711) integrative model of organisational trust identifies three interrelated factors that influence trust in leadership:

1. Ability – A leader's competence, knowledge, and expertise in their field.
2. Benevolence – A leader's genuine care and concern for others, ensuring that they act in the best interests of their team.
3. Integrity – A leader's commitment to ethical values and consistency between words and actions.

The findings suggest that addressing all three factors is essential for building trust in complex and diverse organisational contexts. Leaders who demonstrate high ability but lack benevolence or integrity may be seen as highly capable but untrustworthy, while those who exhibit integrity and benevolence without demonstrated ability may struggle to maintain long-term influence and credibility. This underscores the holistic nature of trust in leadership, where ethical principles must be reinforced by competence and genuine concern for others to sustain leadership effectiveness.

These insights have practical implications for leadership development and organisational governance.

In the research context, trust and integrity were effectively strengthened through structured leadership practices and ethical training. While these findings suggest positive implications, further investigation is needed to confirm whether similar strategies are equally effective across different organisational types. Nevertheless, organisations should prioritise:

- Embedding ethical leadership principles into leadership development frameworks.
- Encouraging transparency, accountability, and ethical decision-making at all levels.
- Measuring and reinforcing trust-building behaviours through performance evaluation and feedback mechanisms.

The research findings suggest that leaders who consciously integrate trust and integrity into their leadership approach not only strengthen their personal credibility but also contribute to a more ethical and high-performing organisational culture.

The below table 16 clarifies the dual dimensions of trust (Character Trust and Competence Trust) while also incorporating broader organisational factors that influence trust-building in leadership.

Trust Dimension	Definition	Key Components	Leadership Implications	Theoretical Basis
Character Trust	Trust built on a leader's integrity, authenticity, and ethical intent.	- Integrity (acting consistently with ethical values)	- Establishes moral credibility	Covey's (2006) <i>Speed of Trust framework</i> ; Brown & Treviño (2006)
		- Authenticity (being genuine and transparent)	- Enhances team loyalty and ethical culture	
		- Ethical Intent (prioritising fairness and accountability)	- Reduces employee resistance to leadership decisions	
Competence Trust	Trust derived from a leader's skills, knowledge, and ability to achieve results.	- Technical proficiency and decision-making ability	- Builds confidence in leadership effectiveness	Covey's (2006) <i>Speed of Trust framework</i> ; Mayer et al. (1995)
		- Effective communication and strategic vision	- Strengthens organisational performance and stakeholder trust	
		- Consistency in delivering results	- Reinforces ethical credibility when combined with Character Trust	
Organisational Trust Factors	Broader organisational conditions that reinforce trust in leadership.	- Transparency in decision-making	- Encourages ethical behaviour at all levels	Edmondson (1999); Mayer et al. (1995)
		- Fair policies and accountability structures	- Reduces organisational risks associated with distrust	
		- Psychological safety in teams	- Strengthens engagement and long-term success	

Table 16 Dimensions of Trust in Ethical Leadership

7.2.5.1 Practical Strategies for Leaders

To strengthen trust and integrity, The data suggest that, in my leadership context, deliberate strategies were essential to reinforcing ethical leadership. Generalising this finding to all leaders would require further sector-specific inquiry. Research indicates that leaders who consistently demonstrate ethical behaviour foster greater team cohesion, enhanced employee engagement, and

long-term organisational success (Brown & Treviño, 2006, p. 610; Ciulla, 2020, p. 81). These findings demonstrate that, in this study's setting, trust and integrity emerged as competencies that could be intentionally developed through structured leadership. This suggests potential value for similar environments but should not be assumed applicable across all organisational settings.

A fundamental strategy is demonstrating consistency in words and actions. Trust is compromised when leaders are perceived as inconsistent or contradictory, whereas leaders who align their decisions and behaviours with their stated values establish long-term credibility (Covey, 2006, p. 29). The research findings emphasise that consistent ethical decision-making fosters confidence among employees, ensuring that leadership is seen as authentic and principled.

Another key factor in building trust is transparent communication. Leaders who share information openly, including the rationale behind their decisions, foster a culture of trust and reduce uncertainty within teams (Edmondson, 1999, p. 360). Transparency also prevents misinformation, mitigates resistance, and ensures that employees feel informed and valued (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 713). Participants in this study noted that leaders who provide honest and clear communication—particularly during periods of organisational change—enhance trust and reinforce stability.

Integrity is further reinforced when leaders consistently deliver on commitments. Keeping promises, meeting deadlines, and fulfilling obligations establishes reliability and reinforces a leader's professional competence (Covey, 2006, p. 31). This research aligns with existing literature, demonstrating that when leaders fail to follow through on commitments, trust diminishes, and employee engagement declines (Brown & Treviño, 2006, p. 612). Trust-building is not about making ethical declarations but about demonstrating reliability through sustained actions.

Another vital strategy in reinforcing trust and integrity is cultivating empathy. Leaders who demonstrate genuine care and concern for their teams reinforce the benevolence dimension of trust, a factor that research identifies as essential for fostering long-term loyalty and engagement (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 714). Empathy signals that leaders prioritise the well-being of their teams, creating a

culture where employees feel valued and respected. The findings of this research highlight that leaders who actively listen, provide support, and acknowledge employees' challenges cultivate stronger and more resilient organisational relationships.

While leadership behaviours are crucial in building trust and integrity, organisations must also institutionalise these values through policies, structures, and cultural reinforcement mechanisms.

These strategies have been further formalised into a structured leadership guide included as Appendix vi: *Strategic Guidelines for Ethical Leadership Practice*, offering practical steps aligned with the evolved PCLP.

Research highlights that trust-building is not solely the responsibility of individual leaders but must be embedded within organisational frameworks (Kaptein, 2017, p. 1080). Participants in this study identified several institutional strategies that organisations should implement to reinforce trust and integrity:

- Ethical Reward Systems: Recognising and incentivising ethical behaviour strengthens moral accountability within leadership teams (Treviño et al., 2014, p. 648).
- Leadership Development Programs: Structured training on ethical decision-making, transparency, and empathy enhances leaders' competencies in fostering trust (Brown & Treviño, 2006, p. 615).
- Accountability Mechanisms: Organisational policies that hold leaders accountable for ethical conduct ensure consistency in leadership integrity (Kaptein, 2017, p. 1083).

These findings reinforce that trust and integrity must be embedded at both individual and organisational levels. Leaders who consistently demonstrate ethical behaviour, transparency, and empathy will foster higher levels of trust and engagement, but organisational policies and systems must support and sustain these behaviours for long-term success.

As illustrated earlier in Diagram 5, p. 100 (Chapter 3), the Researcher's initial PCLP was based on a relatively straightforward structure comprising ethical intent, leadership adaptability, situational awareness, cultural intelligence, and integrity. Although foundational, this early framework lacked mechanisms for structured ethical decision-making, strategic responsiveness, and reflective practice.

Following the DBL process, the PCLP evolved significantly, as shown in Diagram 11 (Final Evolved PCLP - Post-DBL). The revised framework integrates strategic responsiveness, trust and integrity, structured ethical decision-making, and a central, embedded system of continuous improvement—reflecting the Researcher's development through practice and evidence-based inquiry. At the core of this evolved framework is continuous improvement, directly influencing key leadership capacities such as ethical intent, adaptability, reflective practice, and structured decision-making. These capacities, in turn, influence broader organisational strategies, including policy, training, and systems-level responsiveness.

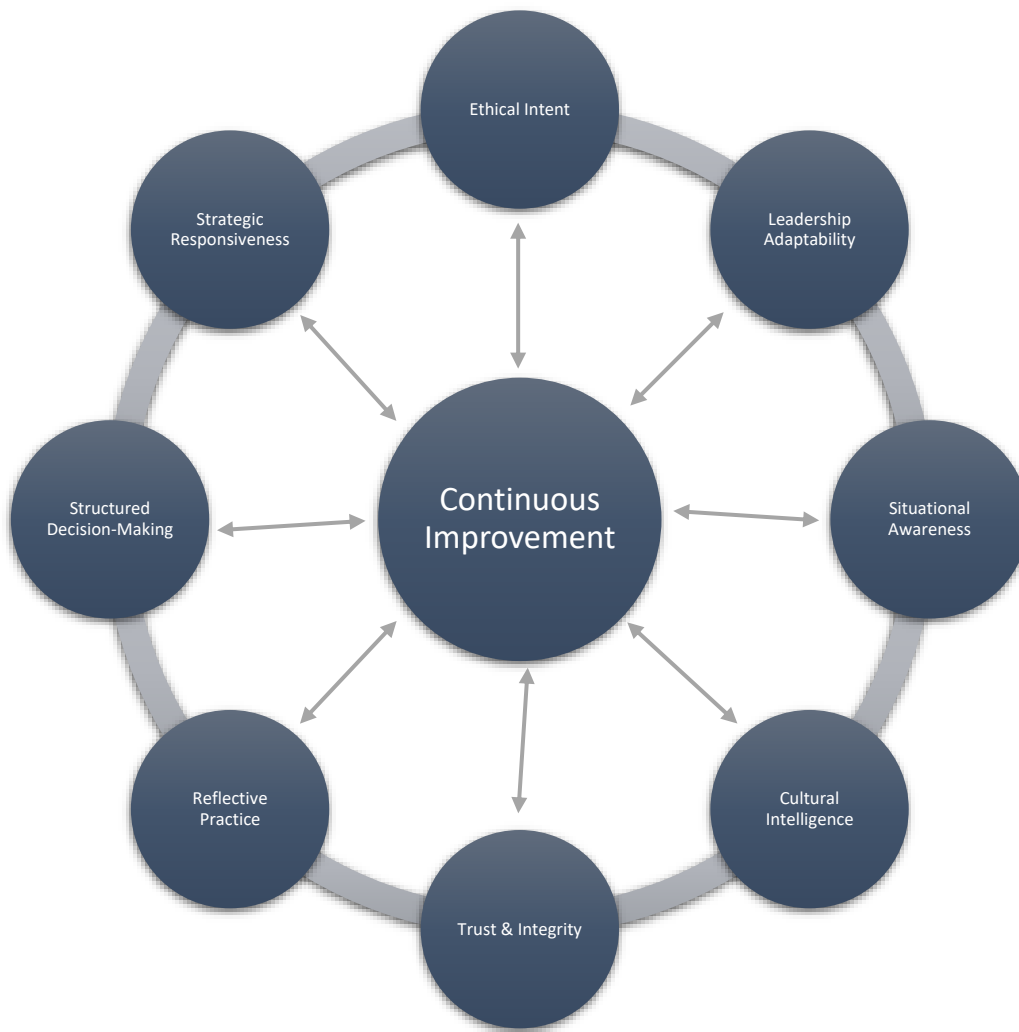


Diagram 11: Final Evolved PCLP - Post-DBL

While Diagram 11 presents the final structured form of the PCLP post-DBL, Diagram 12 visually captures its initial state, highlighting key transformations made throughout the DBL journey. These transformations include refining ethical leadership principles, integrating structured decision-making frameworks, and embedding continuous improvement practices. Collectively, these diagrams validate the iterative development of the PCLP and emphasise the critical role the DBL process played in shaping its final conceptualisation.

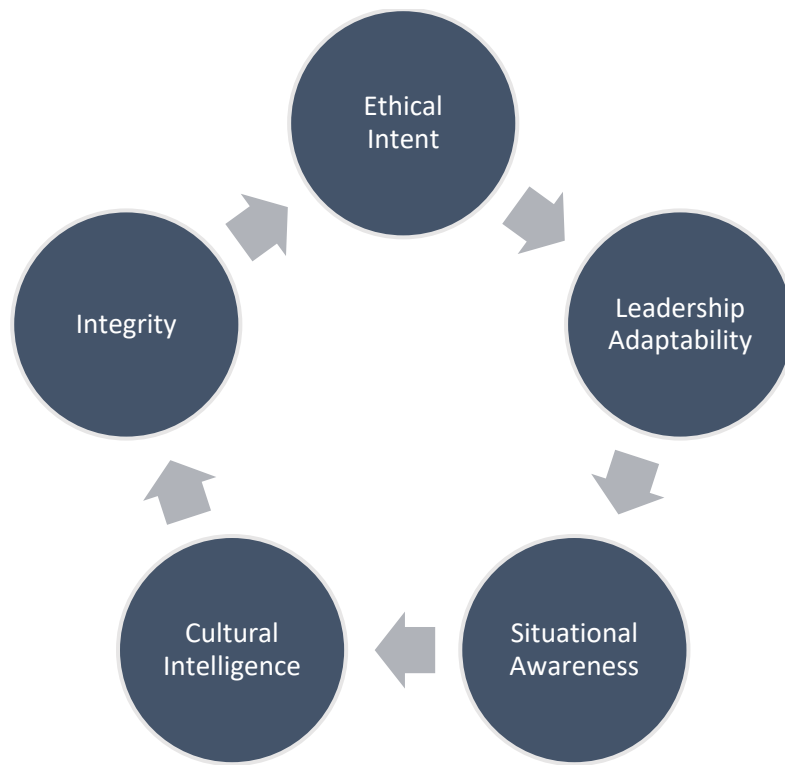


Diagram 12: Before the DBL Process

7.2.5.2 Practical Implications

Trust and integrity are not merely abstract values but operational imperatives that significantly influence organisational performance, leadership effectiveness, and long-term sustainability. Leaders who cultivate trust and demonstrate integrity foster high-functioning teams, mitigate organisational risks, and strengthen stakeholder confidence. The findings of this research align with prior literature, affirming that trust and integrity enhance ethical cultures, improve employee engagement, and drive sustainable innovation (Brown & Treviño, 2006, p. 611; Ciulla, 2020, p. 83).

A key practical implication is that trust and integrity directly impact organisational effectiveness by reinforcing psychological safety. When leaders prioritise ethical transparency, fairness, and accountability, employees are more likely to voice concerns, engage in collaborative problem-solving, and contribute innovative ideas (Edmondson, 1999, p. 362). This research highlights that teams

operating in environments of high trust are more resilient, adaptable, and capable of sustaining ethical decision-making under pressure.

Furthermore, trust and integrity play a crucial role in organisational risk management. Research suggests that a lack of ethical leadership often results in reputational damage, regulatory penalties, and employee disengagement (Kaptein, 2017, p. 1085). Leaders who fail to demonstrate integrity may erode stakeholder confidence, increase compliance risks, and undermine the organisation's ethical foundations. The findings of this study reinforce that proactive trust-building strategies—such as transparent communication, ethical accountability, and fair decision-making—help mitigate these risks and promote ethical resilience.

From a strategic leadership perspective, embedding trust and integrity into leadership frameworks is essential for sustaining long-term success. The research findings suggest that my PCLP provides a structured, adaptable model for leaders to evaluate their ethical decision-making, strengthen trust-based relationships, and foster an ethical organisational culture. By integrating continuous reflection, learning, and adaptability, the researcher's PCLP offers a practical mechanism for reinforcing ethical leadership in diverse and dynamic organisational contexts.

Organisations must institutionalise trust and integrity through policies, training, and structural reinforcement, for detailed practices and leadership strategies derived from the PCLP, see Appendix vi: Strategic Guidelines for Ethical Leadership Practice.

This research aligns with existing literature in highlighting three key organisational mechanisms for embedding trust and integrity:

1. Ethical Leadership Development – Providing structured training on ethical leadership competencies, trust-building, and integrity-driven decision-making (Treviño et al., 2014, p. 650).

2. Accountability and Governance Mechanisms – Establishing transparent performance evaluation systems that ensure leaders are held accountable for ethical behaviour (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 718).
3. Cultural Reinforcement Strategies – Embedding trust-based leadership principles into organisational policies, ethical guidelines, and reward systems (Kaptein, 2017, p. 1087).

The findings of this research reinforce that leaders who commit to ethical decision-making and proactively foster trust are more effective in navigating complex organisational challenges. By aligning trust and integrity with strategic leadership objectives, organisations can enhance long-term stability, build ethical resilience, and drive sustained success.

7.3 Contributions to Theory and Practice

This section outlines the study's contributions to both the theoretical understanding and practical application of ethical leadership. The findings enhance existing leadership theories and provide insights applicable to the researcher's leadership journey, potentially offering a foundation for further exploration into adaptive ethical leadership within multicultural and dynamic organisational contexts. For a comprehensive overview of practical applications derived from this research, see Appendix vi, which translates PCLP principles into real-world leadership strategies.

7.3.1 Theoretical Contributions

This research contributes to the growing body of ethical leadership literature by integrating fairness, inclusivity, accountability, trust, integrity, cultural intelligence, and reflective learning into a cohesive framework relevant to the Researcher's leadership context. The findings align with established theories, including Brown and Treviño (2006, p. 610), while highlighting underexplored intersections between ethics, culture, and adaptive leadership strategies in culturally complex environments.

A key insight emerging from this study is that ethical leadership is highly context-sensitive and cannot be generalised across all cultures or organisations. This reflects Hofstede's (2001, p. 225) assertion

that ethical perceptions and leadership behaviours are shaped by cultural dimensions such as power distance and individualism–collectivism. The study reinforces the value of adapting ethical leadership models to suit localised cultural expectations, offering insights for leadership in similar multicultural environments.

The evolution of the Researcher's PCLP enhances existing contingency-based leadership models by embedding ethical reflection and cultural responsiveness. While traditional contingency theories (e.g., Fiedler, 1967) respond to situational variables, the PCLP explicitly integrates moral reasoning and continuous learning, providing a context-informed leadership model that is both ethically grounded and practically adaptive.

The following theoretical advancements were shaped by this study:

1. **Ethical Adaptability in Dynamic Contexts** – The PCLP bridges adaptive leadership principles with ethics, providing context-specific strategies for culturally diverse leadership (Maak & Pless, 2006, p. 104).
2. **Reflective Practice Integration** – Based on Schön's (1983, p. 58) and Kolb's (1984, p. 41) theories, the PCLP emphasises continuous ethical self-assessment and reflective learning.
3. **Cultural Sensitivity as Core Design** – Drawing on Hofstede (2001) and the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004), the model positions cultural responsiveness as central to ethical leadership effectiveness.

While the researcher's PCLP has been refined through this study, its use beyond this context requires further empirical testing. Its current form represents a synthesis of existing models tailored to the Researcher's leadership journey and may provide value for leaders operating in similarly complex multicultural environments.

7.3.2 Practical Contributions

This study contributes to leadership practice by developing and applying a structured, context-specific ethical decision-making framework tailored to culturally complex environments. Grounded in both empirical findings and theoretical foundations, the model supports leaders in navigating ethical dilemmas systematically while accounting for cultural sensitivity, reflection, trust, and institutional support mechanisms. The resulting framework evolved from the Researcher's direct leadership experiences and has been formalised in the form of the Ethical Leadership Decision-Making Process (see Diagram 13).

This process emerged as a response to real-world leadership challenges encountered during the DBL, particularly in multicultural and ethically sensitive organisational settings. It provides a phased approach to ethical leadership, guiding decision-making through a series of deliberate, reflective, and culturally attuned stages. Each stage aligns with values embedded in the Researcher's PCLP and is designed for iterative application in high-stakes leadership scenarios.

The process begins with the recognition of ethical responsibilities, which includes promoting fairness, inclusivity, and accountability. These foundational values serve as a moral compass, reinforcing the need for decisions to align with organisational principles and stakeholder expectations (Brown & Treviño, 2006, p. 610). Recognising such responsibilities at the outset ensures leaders act with awareness of both internal and external ethical pressures.

The second stage involves assessing the cultural context, acknowledging that perceptions of fairness and appropriate leadership behaviour vary across cultures. This aligns with Hofstede's (2001, p. 225) and House et al.'s (2004, p. 73) research on cultural dimensions, which demonstrate how variables like power distance and collectivism shape ethical norms. Within the Researcher's leadership setting, this stage proved essential in avoiding cultural missteps and fostering team cohesion. Leaders are encouraged to apply frameworks such as Earley and Ang's (2003, p. 14) model of cultural intelligence to evaluate interpersonal and group-level dynamics.

The third stage, reflective practice, integrates Schön's (1983, p. 58) concept of reflection-in-action and Kolb's (1984, p. 41) experiential learning cycle. This aspect of the process underscores the need for leaders to continually evaluate their reasoning, acknowledge bias, and adapt strategies. During the DBL, structured reflection—through journaling, post-decision reviews, and feedback loops—enabled the Researcher to recalibrate decisions and strengthen ethical accountability.

Central to the process is trust-building and integrity reinforcement, elements highlighted by Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman's (1995, p. 714) integrative trust model. Within the research context, transparent communication, consistency between values and actions, and ethical modelling were vital for creating psychologically safe environments (Edmondson, 1999, p. 362). These practices facilitated team openness, reduced fear of speaking up, and fostered collaborative problem-solving—critical in ethically ambiguous situations.

The fifth component, organisational support, involves aligning institutional infrastructure—policies, training programs, and ethical resources—with ethical leadership goals. Kaptein's (2017, p. 1087) work supports this alignment, emphasising that institutional reinforcement plays a pivotal role in embedding ethics into daily decision-making. In the Researcher's context, leadership strategies were only sustainable when supported by system-wide commitments to ethical culture and accountability.

These five stages culminate in a holistic decision-making process, ensuring leaders address complex dilemmas by synthesising ethical intent, cultural understanding, reflective insight, and organisational capacity. Diagram 13 illustrates this framework and its interconnected stages, offering a visual reference for leadership application.



Diagram 13 – Proposed Ethical Leadership Decision-Making Process

In practice, this process supports the operationalisation of the evolved PCLP, translating its conceptual pillars into actionable leadership behaviours. It reinforces the iterative nature of ethical leadership and encourages adaptation based on ongoing feedback and learning.

The practical contributions of this process, as tested within the Researcher’s own leadership environment, include:

- Context-sensitive ethical reflection protocols (see Appendix VI)
- Cultural assessment strategies for ethical leadership teams
- Trust-building interventions aligned with values and behaviours
- Integration of feedback into ethical adaptation cycles
- Organisational alignment tools to institutionalise ethics

These contributions are not claimed to be universally applicable. Rather, they reflect tested strategies within the specific context of this study, with potential replicability in similarly complex, multicultural, and ethically challenging environments. Future research is needed to validate these tools in other sectors, geographic regions, and leadership levels.

Finally, these contributions are supported by the Strategic Guidelines for Ethical Leadership Practice in Appendix VI. This appendix translates each stage of the Ethical Leadership Decision-Making Process into detailed actions, enabling other leaders to adopt, adapt, and evaluate their own ethical strategies in comparable contexts.

7.3.3 Limitations and Future Research

This study offers insights into ethical leadership and the application of the Researcher's PCLP. While the findings contribute to practice within a defined organisational and cultural context, several limitations must be acknowledged to guide interpretation and identify avenues for future research. These limitations reflect both methodological boundaries and the emergent nature of the PCLP as a leadership development tool, rather than a generalisable framework at this stage.

A key limitation is the relatively small and context-specific sample, comprising predominantly senior leaders from select industries. While this allowed for in-depth exploration of leadership dynamics at the upper levels of organisational structures, it restricts the transferability of findings to other leadership tiers and sectors. Prior research indicates that ethical challenges and leadership demands often vary significantly across hierarchies (Brown & Treviño, 2006, p. 607). Future studies could expand sample diversity to include junior and mid-level leaders, thereby refining the framework's applicability across the leadership spectrum.

Language barriers also presented a challenge. Despite careful design of interviews and ethical protocols, the potential for linguistic misinterpretation—especially concerning abstract concepts such as “integrity” and “fairness”—may have limited the depth of certain responses (Earley & Ang, 2003, p. 22). To ensure cross-cultural rigour, future research might involve bilingual researchers or interpreters when exploring ethical leadership across diverse linguistic communities.

Cultural variability introduces further complexity. While the Researcher's findings align with Hofstede's (2001, p. 234) cultural dimensions and were explored through a multicultural lens, there

remains a possibility that some participant responses were shaped by social desirability or unspoken cultural norms. Further studies could apply frameworks such as GLOBE (House et al., 2004) or Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) to deepen the understanding of how specific cultural variables influence ethical leadership practices, and by extension, the applicability of the PCLP.

The application of the PCLP beyond this study's context remains an open question. While the model demonstrated practical value for the Researcher's leadership development, its use in different industries (e.g., healthcare, education, technology) requires validation. For example, ethical challenges in healthcare often relate to patient safety and consent, while technology leaders face dilemmas around data privacy and algorithmic bias (Kaptein, 2017, p. 1083). Testing the framework across diverse organisational environments would allow for greater insight into its flexibility and relevance.

Furthermore, the PCLP's utility during crisis leadership scenarios—such as pandemics or geopolitical instability—warrants further investigation. High-stakes environments often expose ethical tensions not present in more stable conditions. Longitudinal studies could be particularly valuable in this regard, tracking how leaders use ethical frameworks like the PCLP over time and across evolving challenges.

Another area for development lies in quantifying ethical leadership outcomes. While this study adopted a qualitative approach to gain depth of understanding, quantitative research could offer complementary insights. Variables such as employee trust, organisational performance, and stakeholder satisfaction could be measured using instruments aligned with Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman's (1995, p. 717) trust model, helping to validate the PCLP's effects.

In its current form, the Researcher's PCLP represents a contextually grounded, practitioner-developed leadership model. It integrates ethical reflection, cultural intelligence, and adaptive strategies, but should not be assumed to be universally applicable. Instead, its value lies in providing

a basis for further research and refinement. Appendix VI offers practical strategies emerging from this model, which may be explored in future studies focused on practice transferability.

Finally, testing the PCLP in non-Western contexts remains a critical avenue for inquiry. Given the cultural assumptions embedded in many Western leadership theories, applying this framework in collectivist or high-power distance societies may yield different leadership outcomes. By expanding the scope of future research to include emerging markets and culturally distinct settings, scholars and practitioners alike can assess whether the PCLP offers a flexible yet ethically anchored tool for leadership development in global environments.

7.4 Conclusion

This study contributes to advancing the understanding of ethical leadership by integrating empirical findings with theoretical models to explore the complexities of ethical decision-making, cultural influences, and leadership adaptability. The findings emphasise that fairness, inclusivity, accountability, trust, and integrity are not only fundamental to effective leadership but also critical for fostering resilient organisational cultures. Leaders who embrace these values create environments that enhance trust, strengthen team cohesion, and encourage ethical behaviours. Ethical leadership, as demonstrated in this research, requires navigating cultural and contextual complexities while ensuring alignment with organisational goals and stakeholder expectations (Brown & Treviño, 2006, p. 611; Edmondson, 1999, p. 362).

One of the key insights of this study is its exploration of the interplay between ethical leadership and cultural dimensions. The findings reinforce Hofstede's (2001, p. 234) cultural dimensions theory, particularly the influence of power distance, individualism versus collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance on leadership practices. For instance, leaders in high power distance cultures often face challenges in fostering inclusivity and accountability due to entrenched hierarchical norms, while those in collectivist cultures must balance the focus on group harmony with individual responsibility. Additionally, the integration of the GLOBE study's cultural leadership dimensions (House et al., 2004,

p. 73) provides a deeper understanding of the adaptability required for leaders to succeed in diverse organisational contexts. These findings bridge theoretical constructs with empirical data, offering a nuanced perspective on how ethical leadership manifests in multicultural environments.

The development and refinement of the Researcher's PCLP framework throughout this study reflect a contribution to the researcher's own leadership theory-in-practice. While many leadership models—including transformational, authentic, and ethical leadership—address moral dimensions, the PCLP distinguishes itself by synthesising these dimensions into a context-responsive framework applied within a culturally complex leadership environment. Its originality lies in how it supported leadership development during the DBL process rather than in offering an entirely new theoretical model. By integrating adaptive capabilities, cultural intelligence, and trust-building strategies, the framework provides a structured approach for addressing complex ethical dilemmas (Kolb, 1984, p. 41; Schön, 1983, p. 58). Through reflective practices and experiential learning, leaders are equipped to critically evaluate their decisions, refine their strategies, and respond to emerging challenges.

The emphasis on trust-building in the researcher's PCLP framework draws on Covey's (2006, p. 25) *Speed of Trust*, which underscores the importance of transparency, credibility, and consistent behaviour in fostering organisational trust. Trust is reinforced through ethical decision-making, open communication, and accountability, all of which are key to maintaining credibility in leadership (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 714). These elements ensure that the researcher's PCLP is robust, adaptable, and applicable across a wide range of organisational, cultural, and situational contexts.

In addition to supporting the researcher's leadership practice, the evolved PCLP offers context-specific strategies for addressing ethical and cultural challenges encountered in this study. These actionable insights have been translated into practical tools and guidelines (see Appendix vi), which may serve as a foundation for leadership development in similar environments but require further validation before broader application. For instance, ethical audits and feedback loops allow leaders to assess their actions and identify opportunities for improvement, while the integration of Rest's

(1986, p. 11) ethical decision-making model offers a structured approach for navigating complex dilemmas. This research highlights the importance of organisational support in fostering ethical leadership, including the implementation of ethics training programs, cross-cultural initiatives, and leadership development frameworks that embed ethical principles at all levels (Kaptein, 2017, p. 1087; Treviño et al., 2014, p. 648).

The adaptability of the researcher's PCLP framework enhances its potential for application across different sectors and geographic regions. While this study focused on senior leaders in specific industries, applying the framework in contexts such as healthcare, education, or technology could uncover unique ethical challenges and inform further refinements. Similarly, exploring its use in geographically diverse regions, such as emerging markets or collectivist societies, could provide insights into its cross-cultural relevance and effectiveness (Hofstede, 2001, p. 238; House et al., 2004, p. 80).

Looking forward, the challenges of ethical leadership are expected to evolve as organisations face rapid technological advancements, globalisation, and shifting societal expectations. Issues such as artificial intelligence, data privacy, sustainability, and workforce automation present new ethical dilemmas for leaders. The researcher's PCLP framework offers a strong foundation for addressing these emerging challenges, but its continuous evolution through further research and practical application will be essential to maintaining its relevance.

This research underscores the importance of equipping leaders—whether in senior roles or aspiring to them—with tools to navigate ethical complexities. By embracing reflection, cultural intelligence, and trust, leaders can foster organisational resilience and innovation while maintaining ethical integrity. The researcher's PCLP, though grounded in the findings of this study, holds significant potential for further development and application in diverse contexts. As ethical leadership continues to gain prominence, this study lays a foundation for future exploration, ensuring that organisations

and leaders are better prepared to navigate the challenges of an increasingly interconnected and complex world.

While the refined PCLP is specific to the researcher's leadership context, its structure and strategic application—as outlined in Diagram 11, p. 257 and detailed in Appendix VI—may offer guidance to leaders operating in similarly complex, multicultural environments.

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Appendices

i. Consent Form

Research Respondent Consent Form

- This form is to be signed by each individual respondent
- The information and anything else you may provide is required in connection with research that is being undertaken as a component of a professional doctorate. It is your right to withdraw your participation in the research at any stage. Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the research are confidential and neither your name nor any identifying information will be used or published without your permission. However, such information may be provided in confidence to appointed examiners.
- The information and anything else you may provide will be held in a safe, secure location whilst being utilised and after use would be destroyed or disposed of in a manner that would not jeopardise its confidentiality.
- You will be informed whether interviews are being recorded and your signature below implies your consent to this recording.

Please select ONE of the options below; indicate your selection by signing your initials in the space provided:

	I give permission for information provided by me in the course of the research to be published
	I give permission for information provided by me in the course of the research to be published provided no identifying information is included
	I do not give permission for information provided by me in the course of the research to be published

If you have any concerns or complaints about the research please contact:

Professor Lisa J. Griffiths

Phone: 0439116510

Email: lgriffiths@imia.edu.au

I agree to participate, given the above conditions.

Signed: _____

Name: _____ Date: _____

ii. Invitation to Participate in Research on Ethical Leadership

Invitation to Participate in Research on Ethical Leadership

Dear,

I hope this message finds you well.

I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study on Ethical Leadership. This study is part of my doctoral degree within the Australian Graduate School of Leadership at Torrens University, under the supervision of Dr Lisa Griffiths.

The purpose of my doctorate is to advance my own learning and apply it within future organisations or my current organisation. I am particularly interested in understanding the significance of ethics for successful leaders in organisations that are culturally and diversity rich, as well as for leaders who are decision-makers within organisations with a presence outside of Australia, whether currently or in their past careers.

You have been selected to participate in this study because I believe you are a successful leader with extensive senior and executive expertise. Your wealth of experience would be invaluable to my research.

The interview should take no more than one hour; however, it is always safe to allocate two hours. The interview can be conducted over the phone, via Zoom, or in person, depending on what suits you best. The interview will consist of ten open-ended questions in a relaxed format.

A consent form is included with this letter, detailing your rights and protections as a research participant. You have the right to decline to answer any questions, withdraw from the study at any time, receive a copy of the interview transcript, and have your identity kept confidential, among other protections.

Thank you dearly for taking the time to read this letter. I look forward to speaking with you soon to arrange an interview time and method that suits you. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at +61 410 461 976 or malotaibi@ubngroup.com.au

Warm regards,

Mohammad Al-Otaibi

Doctoral Candidate

Australian Graduate School of Leadership

Torrens University

iii. Interview Questions (Qualitative Analysis)

1. What do you believe are the ethical responsibilities of leaders in ensuring a fair and inclusive workplace culture? How can these responsibilities be upheld in diverse environments?
2. How does a leader's cultural background shape their leadership style and approach to decision-making? Can you provide any examples?
3. Have you ever witnessed a leader struggle to adapt their leadership style to a different cultural context? How did it impact the team?
4. What are the key challenges in applying ethical decision-making frameworks across different cultural contexts? How can these challenges be addressed?
5. Can you think of an example where a leader's use of reflection prompts led to a more ethical decision?
6. Can you describe a situation where clear organisational policies on ethical conduct helped you make an ethical decision?
7. In your experience, what specific behaviours from leaders have fostered trust and encouraged ethical decision-making within a team?
8. Describe a situation where a leader's actions did not align with ethical principles. What were the consequences, and why did you deem it unethical? Please explain your reasoning and the basis for your judgment.
9. Please describe a situation in your professional experience where ethical leadership made a significant impact.

iv. Survey Questions (Quantitative Analysis)

Introduction:

Thank you for participating in this survey on ethical leadership. Your responses, which are confidential and anonymous, will help to understand how ethical leadership is perceived and practised in different organisational contexts. Ethical leadership involves guiding and influencing others through a commitment to ethical principles and values, and this survey aims to gather valuable insights into these perceptions and practices.

Demographic Information:

1. What is your age range?

- ☐ (a) 18-24 years old
- ☐ (b) 25-34 years old
- ☐ (c) 35-44 years old
- ☐ (d) 45-54 years old
- ☐ (e) 55+ years old

2. What is your gender identity? (Please select all that apply)

- ☐ (a) Male
- ☐ (b) Female
- ☐ (c) Non-binary/Other
- ☐ (d) Prefer not to answer
- ☐ (e) Prefer to self-describe: _____

3. What is your highest level of education?

- ☐ (a) High school diploma or equivalent
- ☐ (b) Bachelor's degree
- ☐ (c) Master's degree
- ☐ (d) Doctoral degree or professional degree
- ☐ (e) Other: _____

4. In your current or previous role, what is the size of your organisation (number of employees)?

- ☐ (a) Less than 50
- ☐ (b) 50-249
- ☐ (c) 250-999
- ☐ (d) 1,000 or more

Ethical Leadership Questions:

5. **Which of the following best describes a key characteristic of ethical leadership?**
- (a) Balancing profit with ethical considerations
 - (b) Setting clear performance targets
 - (c) Encouraging open communication and transparency
 - (d) Focusing solely on individual achievements
 - (e) Emphasising strict adherence to rules
6. **When faced with an ethical dilemma, ethical leaders are most likely to:**
- (a) Avoid making a decision and delegate the responsibility
 - (b) Make a quick decision based on personal gain
 - (c) Encourage reflection and consider potential consequences
 - (d) Follow orders from superiors without question
 - (e) Prioritise expediency over ethical considerations
7. **Leaders who promote ethical decision-making within their teams:**
- (a) Provide a step-by-step decision-making process
 - (b) Encourage ongoing self-reflection and critical thinking
 - (c) Offer specific rewards for ethical behaviour
 - (d) Implement a system of punishments for unethical actions
 - (e) Avoid discussing ethical considerations altogether
8. **Ethical leadership practices can help organisations:**
- (a) Reduce ethical violations and misconduct
 - (b) Achieve short-term financial goals at any cost
 - (c) Suppress employee concerns and dissent
 - (d) Discourage open communication within teams
 - (e) Prioritise personal agendas over organisational ethics
9. **Cultural awareness is important for ethical leadership because:**
- (a) It allows leaders to impose their own cultural values
 - (b) It promotes understanding of diverse perspectives and ethical frameworks
 - (c) It encourages leaders to ignore cultural differences in communication styles
 - (d) It emphasises the superiority of one culture over another
 - (e) It discourages leaders from adapting their leadership style to different contexts

10. How do cultural dimensions influence leadership?

- (a) By determining communication styles
- (b) By affecting decision-making processes
- (c) By shaping expectations and power dynamics
- (d) All of the above
- (e) None of the above

11. How is cultural understanding promoted within teams?

- (a) Through cultural sensitivity training
- (b) By maintaining open communication channels
- (c) By adapting leadership styles
- (d) By encouraging team-building activities
- (e) None of the above

12. How can potential ethical dilemmas in cross-cultural contexts be addressed?

- (a) By applying ethical decision-making models
- (b) By understanding cultural norms and values
- (c) By engaging in continuous dialogue
- (d) By implementing strict rules and regulations
- (e) All of the above

13. How do cultural dimensions such as power distance and individualism affect leadership?

- (a) By shaping communication styles
- (b) By influencing decision-making processes
- (c) By affecting leader-follower dynamics
- (d) By setting performance targets
- (e) All of the above

14. What evidence supports improved ethical decision-making?

- (a) Fewer ethical breaches
- (b) Positive team feedback
- (c) Enhanced organisational trust
- (d) Achieving financial targets
- (e) All of the above

15. How is cultural respect within teams promoted?

- (a) By understanding cultural differences
- (b) By encouraging open dialogue
- (c) By adapting leadership styles
- (d) By hosting cultural festivals
- (e) All of the above

16. How are ethical dilemmas in cross-cultural contexts addressed?

- (a) By applying ethical decision frameworks
- (b) By understanding cultural norms and values
- (c) By engaging in continuous dialogue
- (d) By relying on legal advice
- (e) All of the above

17. To what extent do you agree that structured reflection prompts help in considering the ethical implications of decisions?

- (a) Strongly disagree
- (b) Disagree
- (c) Neutral
- (d) Agree
- (e) Strongly agree

18. In your opinion, how effective are the researcher's leadership tools (e.g., reflection prompts, decision-making frameworks) in promoting ethical decision-making?

- (a) Not effective at all
- (b) Somewhat ineffective
- (c) Neutral
- (d) Somewhat effective
- (e) Very effective

19. How confident are you in your ability to identify and address ethical dilemmas in your workplace?

- (a) Not confident at all
- (b) Somewhat unconfident
- (c) Neutral
- (d) Somewhat confident
- (e) Very confident

20. What resources or support systems would be most helpful for you in making ethical decisions at work? (Select all that apply)

- (a) Clear organisational policies on ethical conduct
- (b) Training on ethical decision-making frameworks
- (c) Access to an ethics hotline or ombudsperson
- (d) Encouragement from leadership to discuss ethical concerns
- (e) Opportunities for open and honest communication within teams

21. In your organisation, how comfortable are employees in speaking up about ethical concerns without fear of retaliation?

- (a) Not comfortable at all
- (b) Somewhat uncomfortable
- (c) Neutral
- (d) Somewhat comfortable
- (e) Very comfortable

22. Leaders can build trust with their teams by: (Select all that apply)

- (a) Promoting transparency and honesty in communication
- (b) Demonstrating ethical behaviour and leading by example
- (c) Encouraging open and honest communication within the team
- (d) Prioritising personal gain over team success
- (e) Taking credit for the achievements of others

23. What is the most important factor for leaders to consider when making ethical decisions?

- (a) The potential impact on company profits
- (b) Personal consequences of the decision
- (c) Alignment with organisational goals
- (d) Balancing ethical principles with potential outcomes
- (e) Avoiding any potential conflict or discomfort

24. Ethical decision-making frameworks can be helpful for leaders by:

- (a) Providing a rigid, step-by-step process
- (b) Offering a structured approach to consider various aspects of the situation
- (c) Dictating the "right" decision in every scenario
- (d) Encouraging leaders to rely solely on their intuition
- (e) Prioritising speed over careful consideration

25. When faced with an ethical dilemma, what is the most appropriate course of action for an employee? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ (a) Ignoring the dilemma and hoping it goes away
- ☐ (b) Discussing the concerns with a trusted colleague or supervisor
- ☐ (c) Reporting the dilemma to an ethics hotline or ombudsperson (if available)
- ☐ (d) Following orders from superiors, even if they seem unethical
- ☐ (e) Prioritising personal gain over ethical considerations

26. Cultural differences within teams can affect: (Select all that apply)

- ☐ (a) Communication styles
- ☐ (b) Decision-making processes
- ☐ (c) Expectations of leadership behaviour
- ☐ (d) Team dynamics and collaboration
- ☐ (e) All of the above

27. Which of the following is the LEAST helpful approach for leaders working in culturally diverse teams?

- ☐ (a) Encouraging open communication and dialogue
- ☐ (b) Implementing a one-size-fits-all leadership style
- ☐ (c) Demonstrating cultural sensitivity and awareness
- ☐ (d) Providing opportunities for cultural exchange and learning
- ☐ (e) Adapting leadership strategies to accommodate different cultural norms

28. How can cultural misunderstandings be minimised when working in diverse teams? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ (a) By promoting clear and respectful communication
- ☐ (b) By assuming everyone understands the leader's cultural norms
- ☐ (c) By avoiding discussions of cultural differences
- ☐ (d) By focusing solely on task completion and efficiency
- ☐ (e) By encouraging team members to learn about each other's cultures

v. [Ethics Statement Form](#)

Ethics Statement Form

This form is to be signed by the candidate when submitting work that involved research on human subjects.

Each respondent was:

- Provided with a clear explanation as to why the particular information, documentation and/or artefacts were being sought;
- Informed that it was their right to withdraw their participation in the research at any stage;
- Assured that any information or personal details gathered in the course of the research are confidential and that neither their name nor any identifying information will be used or published;
- Assured that the information, material(s) and/or instruction(s) provided would be held in a safe, secure location whilst being utilised and after use would be destroyed or disposed of in a manner that would not jeopardise its confidentiality;
- Advised that a recording device was to be used whenever this was necessary and their permission was obtained prior to this use; and
- Advised that if they had any concerns or complaints about the research to contact:
 - Professor Ramzi Fayed
 - Phone: 0412600959

Email: rfayed@imia.edu.au

DBL Subject Code: _____

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

vi. [Strategic Guidelines for Ethical Leadership Practice Based on the Researcher's PCLP](#)

This appendix outlines strategic, actionable leadership practices informed by the evolved Personal Contingent Leadership Paradigm (PCLP) developed through the researcher's doctoral inquiry. These guidelines are derived from real-world leadership challenges and critical reflection, and are intended to enhance ethical leadership within complex, multicultural organisational environments. The guidance reflects values embedded in the PCLP: ethical intent, adaptability, reflective practice, cultural intelligence, and strategic responsiveness.

1. Embed Ethical Intent in Organisational Culture

- Integrate ethical values into recruitment, onboarding, and performance evaluation processes.
- Communicate core ethical principles across all levels of the organisation.
- Encourage open dialogue about ethical challenges and foster psychological safety.

2. Foster Trust and Integrity Through Structure and Practice

- Institutionalise ethical behaviour via transparent policies, reporting channels, and accountability systems.
- Implement leadership training focused on trust-building and consistency between values and actions.
- Model integrity through decision-making that balances personal, organisational, and stakeholder interests.

3. Apply Cultural Intelligence to Leadership Decisions

- Use cultural mapping tools to assess team norms and dynamics.
- Adapt communication styles, motivation techniques, and conflict resolution strategies to fit cultural contexts.
- Engage in continuous learning around intercultural leadership challenges.

4. Promote Reflective Practice and Ethical Learning

- Implement structured debriefing sessions after major decisions or crises.
- Maintain leadership journals or logs to capture ethical reflections.
- Build communities of practice that promote shared learning around ethical leadership dilemmas.

5. Establish Structured Ethical Decision-Making Processes

- Employ ethical decision matrices to analyse dilemmas (e.g. stakeholder impact, cultural factors, long-term consequences).
- Train teams in structured ethical reasoning frameworks (e.g. Rest's Four-Component Model).
- Include ethical checkpoints in project management or strategic planning stages.

6. Ensure Strategic Responsiveness to Complex Environments

- Scan for emerging ethical risks in volatile or multicultural operating contexts.
- Design adaptive leadership strategies that are context-sensitive yet principled.
- Align ethical leadership with long-term organisational resilience and performance outcomes.

7. Evaluate and Iterate the PCLP in Practice

- Use feedback loops from leadership reviews, employee feedback, and performance data to assess the PCLP in practice.
- Regularly revisit and refine ethical leadership strategies based on new challenges and stakeholder expectations.
- Encourage multi-level leadership reflection (individual, team, and organisational levels).

These strategic guidelines are intended to support the ongoing application and evolution of the Researcher's PCLP. They provide a starting point for other leaders to contextualise and adapt ethical leadership practices within their own organisational settings, while reinforcing the importance of reflective, adaptive, and culturally responsive leadership.