A Behavioural Leadership Framework for Senior Management Service in the Public Service

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Marisa Jacoba Labuschagne (Student number: 22513329), herewith declare that the thesis entitled:

“A Behavioural Leadership Framework for the Senior Management Service in the Public Service”

submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Philosophy in Public Management and Governance at the North-West University is my own work and has never been submitted by me to any other university. I also declare that all the sources used have been acknowledged by means of complete referencing.

I understand that copies of this thesis submitted for examination will remain the property of the North-West University.

Signed on this 17th day of November 2024.

_____

MJ Labuschagne

Student Number: 22513329

Time is essence;

essence living.

Many taking.

no one giving.

always moving,

never slowing-

one direction,

no returning.

countless mountains,

countless pathways,

countless valleys,

countless highways

***

Live your life

not without knowing-

be aware

of what you're showing.

Marisa Labuschagne 2008

DEDICATION

Lord, to You be all the glory, the praise the honour and worship. I am nothing without you!

Thank you, Lord for your love and undeserved favour in my life. So many times, I stumble, and each time, one more time, You pick me up again. You are truly my Shepherd, and I will never want!

Psalm 40 -God Sustains His Servant.

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

I waited patiently and expectantly for the LORD;
And He inclined to me and heard my cry.
2 He brought me up out of a horrible pit [of tumult and of destruction],
out of the miry clay, and He set my feet upon a rock, steadying my footsteps and establishing my path.
3 He put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise to our God;
Many will see and fear [with great reverence]
And will trust confidently in the LORD…
16 Let all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You;
Let those who love Your salvation say continually,
"The LORD be magnified!"
17 Even though I am afflicted and needy,
Still the Lord takes thought and is mindful of me.
You are my help and my rescuer.
O my God, do not delay.

My liefste Jan, dankie vir jou ondersteuning en liefde. Jy het in my geglo al kon ek nie altyd nie. Ek sou nooit so ver gevorder het sonder jou ondersteuning, liefde en omgee nie! Ek het jou oneindig lief.

My liefste kinders, julle kosbare liefde en omgee is 'n voorreg. Onthou, as ek hierdie kon doen, kan julle enigiets doen wat julle ooit kan droom of dink. Love you forever!

My liefste, liefdevolle, biddende Moeder. Waar sal ek ooit wees sonder Mammie se geduld, geloof en gebede. Dankie dat Mammie soveel keer op Mammie se knieë is om my arms omhoog te hou wanneer ek nie verder kan nie. Eendag as ek groot is wil ek net soos Mammie wees! 😊

Janice, Amber, Kyle…. You are always in my heart.

Kina, jy is altyd net daar in die agtergrond, gereed om te gee, te dra en om te gee. Dankie vir jou.

My liefste Ous. Ek wens jy was nog hier om hierdie oomblik met my te deel. Ek het nie woorde nie…

Ouboet, ek weet jy sou trots gewees het op my!

Pappie, ai, wat kan ek sê…

Ouma en Oupa, julle het my op die regte pad gehou en my die sekuriteit gegee om te wees wie ek vandag is. Ek is so dankbaar vir die genade van julle in ‘n deurmekaar grootword lewe. Ek sou hierdie oomblik ook so graag met julle wou deel.

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Maskervrou
Wat maak jy agter die masker?
Wie het jou geleer om weg te kruip?
Jy het baie om te se
Wie kan lag of die vinger wys
As jy die vrae laat uitborrel?
Hulle wil almal self ook weet.

Hulle nodig net een wat die masker afruk
Sodat almal die littekens sien
Vir elkeen om te leer en vrede te vind

Haal af jou masker en voel vry
Wys jou siel sodat jy rus kan kry
Jou littekens maak jou mooi
©*Rillette Haycock*

"Hope is both the earliest and the most indispensable virtue inherent in the state of being alive. If life is to be sustained, hope must remain, even where confidence is wounded, trust impaired." (Erikson, 1966).

ABSTRACT

In an era marked by disruptive global challenges such as pandemics, financial crises, resource scarcity, and climate change, effective governance becomes paramount. This thesis draws upon the concept of the "Age of Disruption," as coined by Scharmer and Kaufer (2013), highlighting the necessity for responsive and capable leadership. In the African context, the shift from cultural ethnocentrism to a more inclusive and pluralistic approach highlights the potential of indigenous value systems to support sustainable economic and social development. Leadership's role in shaping the destiny of nations, particularly in Africa, is emphasised, given the region's challenges and opportunities.

The study argues that the Public Service of the Republic of South Africa (RSA), as a critical element of the democratic developmental state, needs strong and capable leadership to deliver on its objectives. It also discusses the need for leadership to address 21st-century challenges, including global influences, economic disparities, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Drawing from successful developmental state experiences, the thesis suggests that visionary leadership, coupled with strong technical skills, is key to realising the socio-economic and political transformation of a country.

The study posits that administrative leadership must evolve in the context of a changing public service sector in the Republic of South Africa and emphasises the importance of understanding the complexity of human behaviour in leadership. The thesis advocates for a behavioural leadership framework in the recruitment and development of SMS members in the Public Service of the Republic of South Africa. By focusing on leadership behaviour and style, the framework aims to align leaders with the goals of the democratic developmental state, thereby influencing the behaviour of public servants and contributing to the state's success. The research offers critical insights into enhancing leadership within the Public Service of the Republic of South Africa to achieve developmental state objectives.

Key terms:

Behaviour; Behavioural Leadership Framework; Behavioural Public Administration; Leadership, Public Service; Senior Management Service.

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CHAPTER 1
CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study aims to enhance leadership within the Public Service by delineating the essential behavioural attributes required of senior managers in the SMS of the Republic of South Africa (RSA). Given the pivotal role of the SMS in implementing policy and ensuring effective service delivery, understanding and defining ideal leadership behaviours is paramount.

The focus of this research is the SMS, a vital leadership tier responsible for implementing government policy and overseeing public service delivery. Effective leadership at this level is crucial for aligning administrative functions with the broader objectives of government.

Chapter 1 sets the foundation for this study by introducing the context and significance of the SMS within the South African Public Service. It provides an overview of existing leadership frameworks, identifies gaps and shortcomings, and highlights the challenges that necessitate this research, thereby establishing the Problem Statement. This section will critically examine deficiencies in leadership behaviour, ethical practices, and decision-making capabilities, ultimately articulating the need for a new behavioural leadership profile.

Following the background and introduction are the research objectives and questions clarifying what the study intends to achieve and the specific inquiries it seeks to address. This framework will guide the research methodology, ensuring that the study effectively tackles key aspects of leadership development within the SMS.

Following the identification of the problem, objectives, and research questions, the chapter will engage the reader with key concepts and terminological issues that are essential for understanding the evolution of leadership in the 21st century, particularly in a post-COVID-19 context. The global pandemic has fundamentally

transformed governance structures, service delivery models, and leadership styles, necessitating a re-evaluation of the competencies required for effective leadership in the complex public service environment. A brief overview of contemporary leadership models will be presented, highlighting how leadership must adapt to the dynamic challenges of the 21st century.

Finally, the chapter will introduce key terminological issues and legal frameworks that will be explored in greater depth in Chapters 2 and 3. These concepts are integral to comprehending leadership within the Public Service and will provide the theoretical foundation for the thesis. The chapter concludes with an outline of the subsequent chapters, offering a roadmap for the structure of the thesis, and a concise summary of Chapter 1, emphasising its main points and setting the stage for the detailed discussions to follow.

1.2 BACKGROUND

In an era characterised by rapid change, including pandemics, financial crises, resource shortages, and climate change, the need for responsive and capable governments has never been more critical. This period, referred to as the "Age of Disruption" by Scharmer and Kaufer (2013:31-32), called for leaders to shift from self-centred "ego-system" awareness to a broader "eco-system" perspective that considers collective well-being. In the African context, this shift is marked by a transition from cultural ethnocentrism to a mutual respect that has spurred economic growth (Kuada, 2020:15-17; Van Zyl, 2009:31-32).

Political leadership that fosters effective, context-specific institutions is vital for the success of any developmental state (Shumuye, 2017:217). Unfortunately, the African region continues to grapple with challenges arising from ineffective leadership (World Bank, 2015:12). Despite these challenges, there is an opportunity to cultivate leadership that can guide Sub-Saharan Africa towards achieving its developmental goals (Fourie, van der Merwe & van der Merwe, 2015:5). In South Africa, strong leadership is essential for realising the country's potential as a regional leader, particularly through a capable Public Service that can fulfil its democratic developmental objectives (National Planning Commission, 2011:416, 454; Department of Public Service and Administration, 2016:37-120).

The National Framework toward the Professionalisation of the Public Sector, 2023 (Professionalisation Framework) emphasises the importance of professionalism and effective governance in South Africa. The Public Service must address challenges such as globalisation, social inequality, and the need for ethical behaviour to enhance service delivery (Jarbandhan, 2016:221). The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the necessity for innovation and a swift response from public leaders (Mchunu, 2021:6).

Successful developmental states demonstrate the ability to manage corruption and foster competent administrations that can leverage both local and foreign economic interests (Leftwich, 1996:405). The establishment of a developmental state requires a specific social character and historical context (Evans, 1995:29). In South Africa, a robust, capable Public Service is essential for upholding a developmental policy agenda (Evans, 1998:66-86).

Chapter 10 of the Constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996) mandates administrative leadership that is capable, committed, and development oriented. Issues such as recruitment, retention, and competency in the SMS continue to hinder effective public administration (Public Service Commission, 2024:9). Vermeulen (2017:1) raised concerns regarding public leadership's commitment to achieving the goals outlined in the National Development Plan (NDP) and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Transformation of the Public Service has led to a focus on policy and procedural matters, often neglecting the individual needs and career development of public servants. This oversight results in public servants being overlooked for promotions and recognition, as the transformational requirements prioritise systemic changes over individual career progression (Vermeulen, 2015:482-506). Leadership styles within the SMS tend to be task-oriented, which can impede the emotional engagement and ethical considerations essential for effective leadership (Labuschagne & Van Dijk, 2016:1-18). This study posits that a holistic approach, incorporating both rational and emotional leadership traits, is necessary for inspiring public servants and fulfilling the responsibilities of the Public Service.

Katz (1964:132) stated that an organisation reliant solely on prescribed behaviours is fragile. Similarly, the Public Service's success hinges on the behaviour of its leaders. An in-depth analysis of the leadership behaviours required by SMS members is essential for achieving state objectives.

Contributing to improved leadership in the Public Service and given the critical role of the SMS in ensuring efficient public administration and public service delivery, this study aimed to provide guidance on what the ideal behavioural leadership attributes of senior managers in the South African Public Service should be.

The locus of the study is the SMS in the Public Service of the Republic of South Africa, an essential leadership tier responsible for driving government policy and managing public service delivery. As of the latest data from the Public Service Commission (PSC), there are a total of 9 461 SMS members in the national and provincial departments of the Republic of South Africa (Public Service Commission, 2024:11), making up the total human resource capacity of SMS leaders for a Public Service comprising of more than 1.1 million employees (Public Service Commission, 2024:11). Leadership at this level is vital in ensuring the alignment of administrative functions with the broader goals of the government. Figure 1.1 depicts a high-level overview of the locus within which the study is situated:

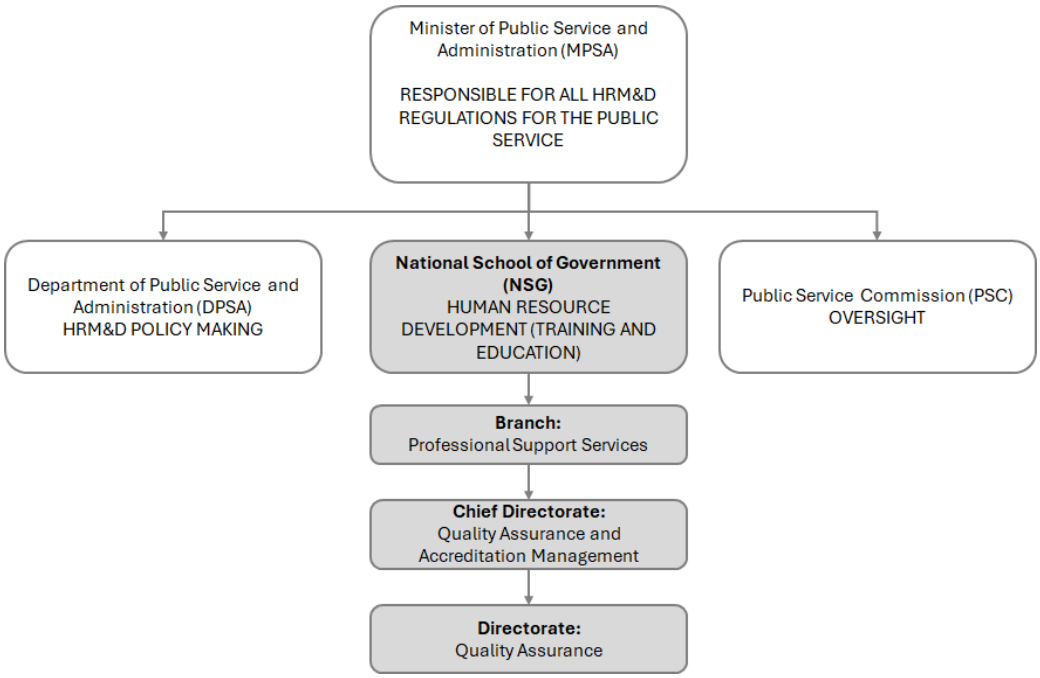

Figure 1.1 High level structure of the locus of this study
(**Source:** Researcher's construct, 2025)

The researcher brings a comprehensive 29-year long career as a public servant, alongside four years of consulting for government and 15 years of senior management experience within the NSG. The extensive experience held by the researcher in managerial and leadership development and transformation is highly relevant to this study, especially considering her role as the Director of Quality Assurance (QA) at the NSG, with over 18 years of experience at the NSG, an institution that is central to the education and training of public servants in South Africa. The researcher has been deeply involved in shaping leadership development in the public service. The NSG's curriculum is specifically designed to promote, develop, and support public servants and Public Service institutions, with the goal of enhancing their capacity to deliver quality services to residents and citizens of the country. This has directly contributed to the researcher's extensive understanding of leadership transformation, as it pertains to Public Service leadership, governance, and accountability.

Since 2022, the researcher has played a key role in the review and finalisation of the draft Professionalisation Framework (Professionalisation Framework), of which the final version was approved by Cabinet in 2019 and published in 2023 (National School of Government, 2023). In this capacity, the researcher has contributed substantively to both the content and the advocacy of the framework, ensuring that the principles of effective and ethical leadership are embedded in the Public Service. This experience highlights the researcher's deep involvement in public service reforms, specifically regarding leadership and professionalisation.

As Director of QA, the researcher has also taken on a significant responsibility to ensure that the NSG's education, training, and development offerings contribute to the building of a capable and ethical state, as envisioned by the National Development Plan (NDP) (National Planning Commission, 2011:Chapter 13). In this role, the researcher has been pivotal in maintaining high standards for quality assurance, ensuring that leadership training aligns with the goals of the NDP, and advocating for the continuous development of public servants in line with evolving leadership standards. The researcher's extensive experience in managerial and leadership style transformation, coupled with her direct involvement in shaping key public service frameworks and standards, makes her contributions invaluable to

understanding and advancing leadership transformation in the South African public service.

The organisational and leadership culture within the Public Service has shifted significantly. In the past, the environment was defined by rigid hierarchies, with a top-down leadership style that stifled innovation and focused heavily on compliance. In 2024, the Public Service is more collaborative and flexible, with leadership that encourages inclusivity, performance-driven outcomes, and adaptability to changing socio-political demands. The current reality still falls short of what is ideal. The Public Service should aim towards fostering greater innovation, ethical leadership, and prioritising employee well-being to effectively address the complex challenges faced by the sector today.

For the purpose of this study, several foundational concepts require clarification to ensure conceptual precision. In this study, *c*apacity refers to the organisational and individual ability to perform effectively, encompassing structural, resource-based, and skills-related elements (Grindle & Hilderbrand, 1995:445-446). Commitment denotes the psychological and motivational alignment of senior managers with institutional goals and public values (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001:301), whereas expertise reflects the depth and relevance of specialised knowledge and experience applied in leadership contexts (Eraut, 2000:113). Recognising that these concepts are interconnected, it is important to note that they differ in meaning and operational focus and explaining the meaning of the concepts in the context of this study contributes to the refinement of a behavioural leadership framework for the South African Public Service, ensuring greater accuracy in the analysis of public leadership performance within the SMS.

This research proposes a Behavioural Leadership Framework for SMS leaders to guide recruitment, selection, and development. By establishing and implementing this framework, the aim is to cultivate leaders, whose behaviours positively impact their leadership styles and public servant engagement, ultimately advancing the goals of the democratic developmental state.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

A professional, merit-based, and non-partisan Public Service that places citizens at the centre is foundational to South Africa's vision of a capable and developmental state, which must be anchored in integrity, good governance, and accountable leadership (Department of Monitoring and Evaluation, 2024:22). Achieving this vision requires systemic reforms driven by coordinated and robust leadership located at the Centre of Government (COG), where institutional leadership, organisational alignment, and strategic direction are imperative (Department of Monitoring and Evaluation, 2024:94). The COG must ensure effective coordination and control mechanisms to steer the system towards its developmental goals, with high-level accountability and adherence to the rule of law serving as critical enablers for successful implementation (Department of Monitoring and Evaluation, 2024:99). In this context, the strategic importance of combining a professional public service with strong, ethical leadership is essential to catalyse reforms and advance South Africa's developmental agenda (Department of Monitoring and Evaluation, 2024:101).

The principles of respect, dignity, integrity, courtesy, equality, and non-racialism are integral to professional conduct, as articulated in the principles of *Batho Pele*. Rooted in the African philosophy of *Ubuntu*, which emphasises humanism, these principles contribute to the decolonisation and humanisation of public administration. Professionalism within the Public Service cannot be assumed to develop organically. To embed these values effectively, clear standards and structured approaches must be established. Additionally, public representatives and officials require targeted training and development to ensure that their decisions and actions consistently reflect professional and ethical conduct (National School of Government, 2023:10).

For a development-oriented public administration and a capable, professional Public Service to thrive as envisioned in the Constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996) the National Development Plan (National Planning Commission, 2011), and the Professionalisation Framework (National School of Government, 2023), and the National Development Plan (Department of Monitoring and Evaluation, 2024), the foundational values that underpin such an administration must be deeply embedded within the Public Service. It is insufficient to interpret constitutional values and

principles at a purely textual level; rather, public administration must actively engage with the aspirational and transformative intent of such legal frameworks and policies.

Providing public services of note and ensuring service delivery aligns with the fundamental rights and values enshrined in the Constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996), can only be truly established when constitutional imperatives become an inherent part of the ethos and practice of every public servant and representative. To achieve this, public service leadership must integrate the principles of transformative constitutionalism into decision-making processes. Leaders who inspire their teams to contribute to societal progress and enhance citizens' capabilities are essential for fostering active participation in democratic governance (National School of Government, 2023:11).

Establishing a capable and professional Public Service necessitates a leadership framework in which public officials and servants act as custodians of constitutional rights, values, and principles. This approach to public leadership should be rooted in a collective commitment, where senior managers shift their focus towards mobilising and empowering others. By doing so, they cultivate a governance system that is firmly grounded in the constitutional values and principles that define a democratic and responsive state (National School of Government, 2023:11).

The Senior Management Public Service Handbook (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003:Forward) acknowledges the critical role of management in ensuring the effective functioning of the Public Service in South Africa. Strengthening leadership is vital for enhancing public service delivery (National Planning Commission, 2011:28). Three decades into democracy, the Public Service faces significant challenges that require innovative solutions to achieve the outcomes outlined in the National Development Plan (NDP) (Republic of South Africa, 2011:408). A lack of capability within the South African government, marked by sections of under qualified senior management echelon, contributes to inadequate public services due to a senior management tier lacking adequate skills and professional expertise (Republic of South Africa, 2011:408).

The NDP emphasises the necessity of committed leadership to cultivate an effective Public Service (National Planning Commission, 2011:363-369). Continuous

improvement and adaptation are essential for optimal performance (Senge, 1990:14; Kotter, 2009:103-111; Hopkins, Meyer, Shera & Peters, 2014:419-422). Leaders must be professional, focused, and capable of energising their teams to meet developmental goals (National Planning Commission, 2011:419-425). A 2024 Public Service Commission report stressed that the expertise and skills of senior managers are crucial for sustaining a competent Public Service workforce (Public Service Commission, 2024:1).

The capacity of the state (Republic of South Africa) has deteriorated due to systemic corruption, skill shortages, and a lack of accountability (Gumede, 2017a). This is evident in unethical behaviour among Public Service leaders and the misuse of state funds (National School of Government, 2023:164). The effectiveness of the Public Service, with its workforce of over 1.1 million public servants, led by less than ten-thousand SMS members, is central to addressing South Africa's economic and social challenges (National School of Government, 2023:18; DPME, 2024:1).

The unique challenges of the 21st century demand relevant and capable leadership to navigate complex issues and ensure the successful implementation of government policies. Unfortunately, public leadership often lacks the commitment, transformational qualities, and ethical standards needed (Vermeulen, 2017:35-56; Jarbandhan, 2016:221; Labuschagne & van Dijk, 2016:1-18. National School of Government, 2023:3).

Sedibe (2021:9) highlighted that, due to the rapidly changing environment since the start of the century, the state has established departmental clusters, horizontal inter-sectoral groups, and intergovernmental structures to promote collaborative efforts in providing more integrated services. The Public Service Commission's 2016 discussion document on *Building a capable, career-orientated and professional public service to underpin a capable and developmental state in South Africa* also underscores this (Public Service Commission, 2016:14), stating that the state's macro-organisation should involve variations in the policy and implementation bodies within each sphere, the distribution of responsibilities across these spheres, efficient inter-governmental relations, and the stability of the management system.

Sedibe (2021:105) proposed that this new structural reality demands a leadership approach that transcends intra-organisational boundaries, moving towards inter-organisational leadership. This form of leadership is not based on formal hierarchical authority, but instead on structural conditions that extend beyond any one division or department, incorporating an inter-organisational systemic perspective. Such an approach necessitates value-based collaborative leadership, with diverse accountability mechanisms at both vertical and horizontal levels, the development of networks, collaboration with other organisations, and collective engagement with broader social, political, and economic forces and conditions (Sedibe, 2021:45).

De Clercq (2023:381) found that leaders and senior managers require an unclouded vision, a dedication to continuous learning, and a value-driven, ethical, disciplined, and adaptable management approach. Public Service leaders should be capable of managing the complexities they face and driving systemic change in an ever-evolving environment. Their competencies should extend beyond institutional- and sectoral boundaries, incorporating dynamic competencies.

The public policy of cadre deployment of party officials was employed to control the inherited administration, a practice not dissimilar to the apartheid era. This influences the behaviour of many public servants, who often prioritise serving their seniors and politicians over serving the public, thereby undermining democratic accountability, and focusing less on citizen service (Jarbandhan, 2022:33-34; 2012: De Clercq, 2023:368).

The recent push in the Republic of South Africa for inter-institutional leadership and competencies across departments arises from the perceived need for departments to collaborate beyond their silos, forging links and partnerships with other departments and non-state organisations (Sedibe, 2021:231, 242-243). At the state-wide level, institutions, and institutional competencies in the post-1994 administrative state vary as the state is not monolithic. It is heterogeneous, with distinct dominant systems and leadership styles. State processes and practices overlap or coexist across different departments, leading to varying trends at contrasting times in our political and economic dispensation (De Clercq, 2023:368).

The underlying causes of the inferior performance of the Public Service in a fragmented, rule-bound inherited bureaucratic system, the incorrect appointment of senior managers, and the problematic effects of New Public Management (NPM) reforms in certain departments (De Clercq, 2023:378).

Naidoo and Thani (2011:1-15) advocated for a comprehensive leadership strategy to tackle the specific challenges within the South African Public Service, suggesting that despite numerous leadership training initiatives, public service delivery outcomes remain inadequate due to a lack of cohesive approaches. Kumalo and Scheepers (2021:137-157) highlighted the essential leadership competencies required for successful institutional turnarounds in the Public Service, aligning with contemporary theories on transformational and authentic leadership.

The Professionalisation Framework (National School of Government, 2023:10-12) suggests that the character of public servants is vital for effective public administration and service delivery. Merit-based appointments and promotions, guided by the constitutional values and principles of public administration, form the foundation for creating an ethical, responsible, and accountable Public Service. As such, the framework proposes that professionalisation involves both the individual and the system. The result should be professionalism, which becomes an intrinsic quality and characteristic of employees, along with the systems and processes that make up public administration and public service delivery (National School of Government, 2023:4).

This study contended that the leadership behaviour of SMS members remains critical for facilitating institutional change and to overcoming service delivery challenges.

The Public Service needs leaders who can initiate contextual change and effectively implement public policies. Reports indicate that these necessary traits are often lacking in public service leadership, which impedes service delivery (National Planning Commission, 2011:408; Public Service Commission, 2017:9; Department of Public Service and Administration, 2016:37-120; National School of Government, 2023:4, 10-12).

This study aimed to examine the role of SMS leaders' cognitive profiles and behaviours, specifically personality, thinking style, and leadership style, in shaping the behaviour of public servants and successfully implementing government policies. Collectively referred to as human factors, these elements are essential for understanding the unique challenges of leadership within the Public Service.

The central problem addressed by this study is the absence of a behavioural leadership framework for SMS members in the South African Public Service that encompasses personality, thinking style, and leadership style. The goal of this framework is to establish behavioural guidelines for SMS members that would influence their leadership styles and positively impact public servant behaviour.

This study identified a critical gap in the alignment between the existing Senior Management Service (SMS) Competency Framework and the behavioural realities required for ethical, adaptive, and citizen-centred leadership in South Africa's public service. While the SMS Competency Framework (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2008) provided formal standards, it did not sufficiently address the nuanced behavioural attributes, such as emotional intelligence, cognitive flexibility, and ethical reasoning, that enable public service leaders to respond to complex governance challenges. Furthermore, there were limited integration of indigenous or context-specific leadership paradigms within current frameworks. This research addresses the gap by proposing a Behavioural Leadership Framework grounded in both theory and empirical insights, designed specifically for the SMS within the developmental agenda of the South African state.

The implementation of such a framework could, in conjunction with the implementation of the Professionalisation Framework (National School of Government, 2023) lay the foundation for the meritocratic and appropriate appointment of senior managers in the Public Service, potentially integrating these traits into the recruitment and selection process for the SMS.

To achieve this, relevant psychological theories were reviewed, ultimately leading to the development of a behavioural leadership framework tailored for SMS members in the Public Service of South Africa.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The primary level research objective of this study has been to determine what constitutes a Behavioural Leadership Framework for SMS leaders in the Public Service of the Republic of South Africa (See Chapter 6).

To investigate the research problem, the following secondary level research objectives were pursued:

(a) To present a critical analysis of the concepts and properties that substantiates a scholarly theoretical framework, which gives impetus to a preferred cognitive profile for leadership behaviour amongst SMS members in the Public Service of the Republic of South Africa. (See Section 2.4).

(b) To conduct and present an analysis of the theories and models of leadership and motivation, and the application and relevance of these theories and models to the context of senior management in the Public Service of the Republic of South Africa. (See Section 2.5).

(c) To present the statutory and regulatory framework that directs Public Service leadership in the context of South Africa as democratic developmental state. (See Chapter 3).

(d) To compare global perspectives on Public Service Leadership Frameworks. (See Chapter 4).

(e) To present a behavioural leadership framework for the SMS in the Public Service of Republic of South Africa that is validated by its concepts and properties. (See Chapter 6).

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In consideration of the need for relevant and effective SMS leaders, the study aims to respond to the following primary research question:

What constitutes a Behavioural Leadership Framework for SMS in the Public Service of the Republic of South Africa? (See Chapter 6).

In order to answer the general research question, the study aims to find answers to the following secondary level research questions:

(a) Research Question 1: What are the concepts and properties that substantiate a scholarly theoretical framework that gives impetus to a preferred cognitive profile for leadership behaviour amongst SMS members in the Public Service of the Republic of South Africa? (See Section 2.4).

(b) Research Question 2: What are the theories and models of leadership and motivation, and the application and relevance of these theories and models to the context of senior management in the Public Service of the Republic of South Africa? (See Section 2.5).

(c) Research Question 3: What is the nature of the statutory and regulatory framework for Public Service leadership in the context of South Africa as democratic developmental state? (See Chapter 3).

(d) Research Question 4: What are the global perspectives on Public Service Leadership Frameworks? (See Chapter 4)

(e) Research Question 5: What are the key elements and validation criteria of a behavioural leadership framework for the SMS in the Public Service of South Africa? (See Chapters 6 and 7).

1.6 CENTRAL THEORETICAL STATEMENTS

The paragraphs below provide the central theoretical foci and arguments of the study.

Public Administration has evolved from its early focus on legalistic and bureaucratic control to encompass more dynamic, interdisciplinary, and contextually responsive approaches. Contemporary scholars increasingly acknowledge the role of complexity, governance, and human behaviour in shaping administrative practice. Recent developments in South African Public Administration reflect a dual shift: first, toward addressing the country's historical inequalities through the decolonisation of knowledge, and second, toward integrating behavioural insights that account for how public officials think, decide, and act (Matsiliza, 2020:297; Makiva, Ile & Fagbadebo,

2022:480-482; Tummers *et al.*, 2020:online). The evolution of the subject-field underscores the need for leadership frameworks that are not only efficient and ethically grounded but also contextually relevant and psychologically informed, particularly in the post-apartheid and post-pandemic realities of the South African Public Service (Mantzaris & Pillay, 2023:262-269; Maserumule, 2020:1-4). Within this trajectory, Behavioural Public Administration emerges as a valuable sub-field, offering nuanced understandings of leadership behaviour and organisational effectiveness in a complex and transforming governance environment.

Behavioural Public Administration (BPA) has gained prominence in modern Public Administration literature due to its integration of psychological and behavioural insights into the analysis of administrative practice. While foundational scholars such as Dahl (1947) and Simon (1947) were early advocates for incorporating social psychology and human behaviour into administrative science, contemporary scholars have significantly expanded this approach. Tummers *et al.* (2016:1-3) and Grimmelikhuijsen *et al.* (2017:2) conceptualised Behavioural Public Administration as the intersection of Public Administration and behavioural sciences, aiming to understand how individual behaviours, attitudes, cognitive biases, and psychological traits influence public policy implementation, leadership, and administrative outcomes.

Behavioural Public Administration has emerged as a multidisciplinary refinement of Public Administration, providing a nuanced understanding of how public servants think, behave, and interact within the institutional context (Kasdan, 2020:605-621). Rather than focusing exclusively on structures or policies, Behavioural Public Administration considers interpersonal relationships, public decision-making dynamics, and emotional intelligence as critical components of effective public administration. Behavioural Public Administration moves beyond the rational-actor model traditionally associated with classical administration theory an recognises the influence of bounded rationality, heuristics, and behavioural biases on administrative conduct (Kasdan, 2020:606-609). This shift allows researchers and practitioners to address issues of motivation, leadership, and ethical decision-making at the micro-level of governance (Christensen & Wright, 2018:1-8).

Recent literature confirms that the behavioural characteristics of leadership play a pivotal role in the effectiveness of public institutions. Vermeulen (2017:35-36) asserted that public officials determine the performance of Public Service institutions, and that effective leadership must inspire, develop, and steer employees towards achieving public service goals. In line with this, Tummers (2019:5) advocated for expanding the methodological scope of Behavioural Public Administration to include research questions that go beyond causality that incorporate description and prediction to better understand complex behavioural dynamics in governance.

The Covid-19 pandemic has intensified the relevance of behavioural considerations in public service leadership. Maserumule (2020:1-4) criticised self-serving and disconnected leadership, calling for a more reflective, ethical, and citizen-centred approach and values that are aligned with the aims of a Behavioural Leadership Framework. These insights validate the need to explore leadership not only through traditional administrative lenses but also through psychological and behavioural dimensions that influence trust, commitment, and Public Service Motivation (PSM).

By engaging with the sub-field of Behavioural Public Administration, this study contributes to the evolving discourse on leadership within Public Administration, especially in the context of South Africa's post-apartheid Public Service reforms. The focus on psychological traits, thinking styles, and behavioural dynamics offers a deeper understanding of how SMS leaders can improve public service delivery through more responsive and human-centred leadership approaches.

This study aims to develop a theoretical foundation for a behavioural approach to leadership within the South African Public Service, proposing a novel behavioural leadership framework for ideal public service leaders (SMS members).

1.6.1 Human behaviour

The integration of psychological insights into Public Administration has given rise to Behavioural Public Administration, focusing on human interactions within the state context (Tummers *et al.*, 2016:3). SMS members play a vital role in leading by articulating a vision, fostering creativity, and emphasising individual contributions to inspire their teams (Hopkins *et al.*, 2014:419-422). They are also responsible for

creating adaptive systems and institutions to seize new opportunities (Kotter, 2009:3-11).

Understanding human behaviour is essential for grasping the dynamics of leadership within the SMS of the South African Public Service. Factors such as personality traits, emotional intelligence, and social contexts shape leadership styles and effectiveness (Goleman, 2011:40-60; Northouse, 2016:5-31). Hartung (2020:1-21) highlighted that effective leadership requires awareness of one's own behaviours and insight into those of others in the organisation. The interaction between individual behaviours and team dynamics significantly impacts organisational performance and service delivery (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:136).

Recent studies have further explored these dynamics. A study by Park and Kim (2024:15-17) demonstrated that transformational leadership positively influences innovative behaviour among public officials, highlighting the role of leadership in fostering adaptability and creativity within public institutions. Additionally, Andersen, Bjørnholt, Bro, and Holm-Petersen (2021:12-14) conducted a systematic analysis revealing that leaders who exhibit high public service motivation can effectively inspire similar motivations in their teams, thereby enhancing overall organisational performance.

This study aims to analyse human behaviour through thinking styles, personality traits, and leadership theories to cultivate a more effective leadership culture within the SMS, ultimately enhancing public service delivery in South Africa. A comprehensive discussion on the relevance of human behaviour to the development of a behavioural leadership framework for the SMS will be provided in Chapter 2.

1.6.2 Thinking styles and Thinking Style Preferences

Thinking involves the mental processes used to generate ideas, make decisions, and form memories (Merriam-Webster.com, 2018; Collins English Dictionary, 2018). For SMS members, thinking styles and preferences are significant drivers of their leadership behaviour. Understanding the interplay between thinking styles and leadership behaviour is crucial for developing a comprehensive behavioural leadership framework for the SMS.

Neethling (2005:5; 2023) highlighted the importance of cognitive diversity in enhancing leadership effectiveness, suggesting that different thinking styles can impact decision-making and collaboration. He categorised thinking preferences into four quadrants: analytical, organised, creative, and relational. By recognising and leveraging these styles, leaders can improve communication, foster innovation, and enhance overall team performance.

A deeper exploration of thinking styles and their influence on the behavioural leadership profile for SMS members will be presented in Chapter 2.

1.6.3 Personality styles and constructs

McDougall (1932:3-16) examined the concepts of character and personality, proposing a Five Factor Model consisting of intellect, character, temperament, disposition, and temper. Goldberg (1981:159) noted that any model addressing individual differences would incorporate these dimensions, forming a foundational framework for personality theories. While individuals share similarities, they also exhibit unique differences (Chaplin, 1997:873), and personality types classify individuals into specific categories (Cartwright, 1979:178).

In contrast to the individualistic orientation of Western personality models, African perspectives conceptualise personality as inherently relational, shaped by a connection to family, community, and society (Thabede, 2008:25; Mkhize & Nkosi, 2021:210). Central to this view is the philosophy of *Ubuntu*, which embodies shared humanity, mutual care, and collective well-being (Nussbaum, 2003:45-47; Mkhize & Nkosi, 2021:205-220). This collectivist orientation has significant implications for leadership within the Public Service. For SMS leaders in South Africa, *Ubuntu* offers an ethical framework that encourages empathy, collaboration, and responsiveness to community needs (Mantzaris & Pillay, 2023:262-269). Integrating these culturally rooted principles with contemporary leadership practices can enhance governance, promote social cohesion, and improve public service delivery in a diverse and complex society.

In the South African Public Service, public servants and SMS members are unique individuals shaped by both inherent and learned behaviours. These "human factors" include unconscious influences and personal cognitive constructs. Integrating

personality theories into Public Administration provides insights into the micro-level dynamics of leader and employee behaviour (Tummers *et al.*, 2016:1-2).

This study argues that personality differences among leaders and followers significantly impact workplace dynamics and performance. Understanding this variability is essential for developing a relevant behavioural leadership framework for the SMS, which is explored in Chapter 2. By contextualising the personality profiles and behavioural expectations of SMS members, the study investigated how SMS leaders can enhance leadership effectiveness and foster team collaboration within the Public Service sector of the Republic of South Africa.

1.6.4 Contemporary models of leadership and motivation

The significance of leadership in the workplace, particularly in influencing workforce behaviour was highlighted by Yukl (2017:16). Leadership is the practice of guiding others to agree on objectives and methods while fostering collective efforts (Hemphill & Coons, 1957:7). The role of leaders is essential for shaping employee performance, attitudes, and resolving conflicts confrontation (Madonsela, 2016:iv; Yahaya, Aslan, Taib, Ismail, Shariff, Boon & Hashim, 2011:9637-9640). As noted by Manning and Curtis (2003:10), effective leaders balance task commitment with genuine concern for their team.

This is reinforced by Al Khajeh (2018:2), who proposed that leadership styles significantly impact workforce behaviour and performance outcomes. Transformational and democratic leadership styles, in particular, align with Hemphill and Coons' (1957:7) that viewed leadership as a process of guiding collective action, as they promote alignment with organisational objectives (Al Khajeh, 2018:5). Furthermore, the study supports earlier positions by Madonsela (2016:iv) and Yahaya *et al.* (2011:9635-9648), showing that leadership plays a vital role in shaping employee attitudes and enhancing commitment, particularly when transformational and democratic styles are applied (Al Khajeh, 2018:6). Echoing Manning and Curtis (2003:10), Al Khajeh (2018:7) also found that leadership styles which balance organisational goals with concern for employee well-being tend to produce better performance outcomes and higher levels of engagement.

In support of a more integrative view, Vveinhardt and Gulbovaitė (2022:574-581) proposed a validated multidimensional model of leadership and organisational behaviour that underscores the interplay between various leadership styles including transformational, transactional, and ethical leadership and their impact on organisational outcomes. Vveinhardt and Gulbovaitė (2022:574-581) confirmed that leadership has a significant influence on employee motivation, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment. The empirically validated model presented by Vveinhardt and Gulbovaitė (2022:574-581) demonstrated its practical applicability and highlighted the need for a holistic perspective on leadership to improve organisational performance.

For SMS leadership, this underscores the importance of moving beyond narrow leadership constructs. By integrating multiple leadership dimensions, SMS leaders are better equipped to address diverse team dynamics and foster a more adaptable and effective organisational culture (Vveinhardt & Gulbovaitė, 2022:574-581).

Leaders are individuals who influence organisational dynamics and outcomes, making leadership an interactive process that yields flexible results (Uhl-Bien, Marion & McKelvey, 2007:299). Leadership can also be defined as a power relationship where one group-member prescribes behaviour patterns for others (Janda, 1960:358). Werner and Jacobs (2009:221-225) emphasised that effective leadership is dynamic, inspiring followers and requiring an understanding of individual differences to enhance organisational performance. Modern studies have shown that leadership grounded in behavioural understanding enhances public service outcomes by fostering adaptability, trust, and innovation (Park & Kim, 2024:310-314; Andersen, Bro & Holm-Petersen, 2021:12-14).

Several contemporary leadership models offer unique insights:

Transformational Leadership is a process that reshapes and develops individuals (Northouse, 2016:161) and inspires followers to prioritise collective goals over self-interest, fostering trust and innovation (Bass & Avolio, 1990:231-272, 1994; Northouse, 2016:161-194). Transformational Leadership has been found to positively influence public employees' motivation and organisational innovation,

especially in hybrid and post-pandemic contexts (Ravet-Brown, Furtner & Kallmuenzer, 2023:496-497).

Servant Leadership prioritises the needs of team members, encouraging collaboration and ethical behaviour while focusing on their development (Greenleaf, 1970:15; Northouse, 2016:226; Spears, 2002:1-16). Empirical findings confirm that servant leadership strengthens performance in the Public Service through its alignment with PSM (Gumede & Nzewi, 2022:146).

Authentic Leadership remains highly relevant in contemporary leadership literature, particularly for rebuilding trust in uncertain and rapidly changing governance environments (Sharma & Singh, 2023:812). Authentic Leadership emphasises self-awareness and ethical conduct, fostering open communication and trust (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005:343-372).

Situational Leadership suggests that effective leadership adapts to the context and maturity of team members, requiring leaders to modify their styles accordingly (Blanchard, Sigarmi & Nelson, 1993:22-36). This flexibility in leadership in rapidly shifting public service environments is an important vehicle to maximise success in Public Service intuitions (Arnold & Connelly, 2021:1603-1606).

Distributed Leadership views leadership as a shared responsibility across all organisational levels, promoting collaboration and collective decision-making (Northouse, 2016:365; Harris, 2008:31-34). Shared and transformational leadership approaches have been positively linked to increased innovation in public institutions (Ravangard *et al.,* 2023:5-7).

These models collectively stress the importance of interpersonal relationships, ethical practices, and intrinsic motivations. It is reasonable to suggest that effective leadership involves fostering an environment where individuals feel empowered and valued, contributing to collective goals. Integrating these approaches into a behavioural leadership framework for the SMS can cultivate a responsive organisational culture, enhancing service delivery amid a rapidly changing socio-political landscape.

Leadership is a key driver of PSM and job satisfaction (Kim & Vandenabeele, 2022:6-9). Understanding motivation is crucial for effective leadership. Motivated leaders inspire their teams and create environments where individuals feel valued, which enhances overall organisational performance (Ryan & Deci, 2017:130-132; Yukl, 2017:542-544). Within the SMS of the South African Public Service, intrinsic motivation fosters commitment to organisational goals, while extrinsic motivation, driven by external rewards, supports engagement when aligned with intrinsic values (Ryan & Deci, 2017:280-290).

Effective public service leadership involves recognising and leveraging motivational factors to improve team dynamics and service delivery (Northouse, 2016:372; Ryan & Deci, 2017:552-553; Yukl, 2017:273-275). This study aims to develop a behavioural leadership framework that incorporates both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, equipping leaders to cultivate a motivated workforce capable of addressing the challenges of the 21st-century developmental Republic of South Africa.

In the post-COVID context, leadership has evolved to meet unique challenges, with leaders needing to adapt to rapidly changing environments, manage remote teams, and prioritise employee well-being. Transformational leadership styles, characterised by empathy and adaptability, are essential for fostering resilience among employees (Avolio & Gardner, 2005:315-338; Bass & Avolio, 1990:231-272). Ravet-Brown *et al*. (2023:495-498) purported that leaders must enhance digital literacy and leverage technology to improve communication and efficiency. As institutions navigate hybrid work models, cultivating inclusivity and transparency is vital to ensure all team members feel valued and connected (Lin, 2024:1-2).

Leaders must enhance digital literacy and leverage technology to improve communication and efficiency. As institutions navigate hybrid work models, cultivating inclusivity and transparency is vital to ensure all team members feel valued and connected (Lin, 2024).

As discussed in Chapter 2, this thesis explored relevant theories of Public Administration, Thinking Styles and Preferences, Personality, and Leadership and

Motivation, identifying key leadership characteristics necessary for navigating modern governance complexities.

1.7 RESEARCH APPROACH AND DESIGN

This study employed a qualitative, normative, and conceptual research design, grounded in a constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology. The research was structured around two interrelated components: a conceptual phase and an empirical validation phase. Since the study is normative and conceptual in nature, it focused on the validation of a theoretical model rather than empirical generalisation of the findings.

Grounded in a constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology, this study acknowledges reality as socially constructed and shaped by the lived experiences and contextual interactions of individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018:24; Leavy, 2017:13; Lincoln & Guba, 2000:170). From this perspective, leadership is not seen as a fixed or universally measurable phenomenon, but rather as a dynamic, meaning-rich practice that evolves within organisational, social, and political environments (Creswell & Poth, 2018:24; Elkind, 2004:25; Lincoln & Guba, 2000:170). In this study, knowledge was constructed through reflective engagement with theoretical sources and co-created through dialogue with public service leaders whose experiences inform the evolving nature of ethical, cognitive, and behavioural leadership in the South African Public Service.

Adopting an interpretivist paradigm allowed the study to explore how SMS leaders interpret, enact, and assign meaning to leadership practices in a complex governance environment. This philosophical stance aligned with the qualitative, normative, and conceptual design by prioritising depth, subjectivity, and contextual insight over measurement or prediction (Leavy, 2017:13; Hammersley, 2012:27). The selected philosophy further supported the use of semi-structured interviews as a validation tool, framing these not merely as data collection instruments but as reflective spaces in which expert practitioners contributed to refining a behaviourally informed leadership framework grounded in public service values and institutional realities (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011:120; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012:22).

In the conceptual phase, the population consisted of academic literature, policy documents, and international leadership models, which were purposively selected to construct a theoretical foundation for behavioural leadership in the SMS. This included theories from behavioural public administration, cognitive and personality psychology, and ethical leadership.

For the empirical component, purposive sampling was used to select eight senior managers from the National School of Government (NSG), the institutional lead in the development and implementation of the Professionalisation Framework (National School of Government, 2023). These participants were chosen for their expert roles in leadership development, public service training, and the professionalisation agenda (Patton, 2015:264; Maxwell, 2012:89).

The combination of conceptual and empirical data ensured that the proposed framework was both normatively grounded and empirically validated, reflecting a strong alignment with South Africa's evolving public service leadership context (Van Wart, 2013b:560; De Clerq, 2023:381; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012:38). Secondary-data sources included a systematic literature review, document and policy analysis, and archival research on governance and leadership development. Importantly, the study also conducted a comparative case analysis of international leadership frameworks from countries such as Canada, Ireland, Australia, and multilateral institutions like the OECD and UNDP. These international case studies (Chapter 4) provided insight into global leadership trends and behavioural competencies, enabling the benchmarking of South Africa's SMS leadership against global standards and highlighting areas for contextual adaptation.

The data analysis combined thematic analysis of interviews, content analysis of policy documents, and conceptual synthesis to integrate theoretical, policy, and practical insights into a unified framework. Triangulation across these multiple sources enhanced the credibility, coherence, and normative validity of the proposed behavioural leadership model (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014:10; Flick, 2018:37; Leedy & Ormrod, 2020:111).

This multi-source, integrative design enabled the study to construct a context-sensitive, theoretically grounded, and ethically aligned behavioural leadership framework tailored to the evolving leadership demands of the SMS in South Africa.

1.8 RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Although leadership within the South African public service has been the subject of increasing scholarly attention, recent studies reveal a recurring limitation: the absence of focused inquiry into the behavioural dimensions of leadership at the senior management level. Existing literature tends to prioritise strategic capacities, ethical orientations, or system-level processes, often overlooking the observable behaviours through which leadership is enacted (Sections 2.7 and 2.9).

Recent South African studies have provided useful insights into public service leadership, particularly regarding relational governance, emotional intelligence, and ethical responsibility. Pooe and Munyanyi (2022:45-67) explored how senior managers enhance public value through information sharing, process innovation, and stakeholder engagement. Their findings confirmed the positive effects of these practices on service delivery and interdepartmental cooperation. While the study supported the relevance of leadership in public value creation, it does not explicitly detail the behavioural attributes of senior managers who lead these processes (Pooe & Munyanyi, 2022:61). Jonck (2024:78-90) advanced a conceptual understanding of responsible leadership in the public service, underscoring its ethical and values-based foundations. This study falls short of describing the observable behaviours that senior managers exhibit in fulfilling their leadership responsibilities. De Clerq and Sedibe (2022:112-130) examined the leadership capacity of public officials in managing community change and implementing policy programmes. Findings align with behavioural leadership theories, the focus remained on leadership traits and strategic capacity rather than the specific behaviours through which senior managers enact leadership (De Clerq & Sedibe, 2022:118-120).

The contributions by these scholars collectively highlight the strategic importance of information sharing, stakeholder responsiveness, ethical responsibility, and emotional intelligence. There remains limited detail of the actual behaviours that senior public managers enact in their leadership roles. This thesis addresses that

critical gap by constructing a behavioural leadership framework tailored to the SMS in the South African Public Service and offers a context-sensitive contribution to the professionalisation of public service leadership in South Africa.

This study further provides a significant theoretical, methodological and practical contribution to the field of Public Administration, particularly in the domain of leadership development within the South African Public Service. It addresses critical gaps in existing competency, governance, and leadership frameworks expounded upon in Chapter 3, Sections 3.7, 3.11, 3.12, 3.13 3.14, and 3.15) by proposing an integrated Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS in the South African Public Service (Chapter 7). The proposed framework (Chapter 7) foregrounds behavioural, cognitive, and ethical dimensions of leadership (Republic of South Africa, 2023a; Van Wart, 2013a:537; De Clerq, 2023:381).

Through a rigorous normative and conceptual inquiry, grounded in constructivist and interpretivist paradigms, and informed by empirical insights from experienced public service leaders, the study advances a framework that is both theoretically coherent and contextually grounded in the values, constraints, and expectations of the South African Public Service.

The study contributes to the body of knowledge in Public Administration by:

- Establishing behavioural guidelines for SMS members that will influence their leadership styles and positively impact public servant behaviour
- Extending leadership theory through the incorporation of cognitive psychology, behavioural public administration, and ethics;
- Bridging the gap between leadership competencies and actual leadership behaviours in practice;
- Offering a normative and context-specific model that responds to the leadership imperatives of a post-apartheid, developmental state; and
- Enhancing African-centred literature by integrating indigenous knowledge systems, values such as *Ubuntu*, and leadership practices relevant to Global

South contexts (Basheka, 2019; Mantzaris & Pillay, 2023; Nzewi & Maramura, 2021).

Practically, the proposed framework offers a policy-relevant and operational model that supports the goals of the Professionalisation Framework (National School of Government, 2023), especially in the areas of ethical governance, service delivery, and leadership accountability.

By positioning global leadership insights with locally grounded realities, the study contributes not only to South African Public Service reform, but also to comparative leadership discourse in the field of Public Administration. It opens new pathways for future research and curriculum development focused on behavioural leadership and ethical statecraft in transitional democracies and postcolonial contexts.

1.9 PROVISIONAL CHAPTER LAYOUT

The study comprises six chapters:

(a) **Chapter 1: Context and Background:** The chapter outlines the background and rationale and presents the focus of the study. The chapter continues to define the problem statement and details the research objectives and research questions. The chapter highlights the significance of the study, elaborates on the research methodology, design, and data collection methods. It also covers sampling techniques, data analysis procedures, ethical considerations, conceptual clarifications, and provides a summary of the chapters included in the research.

(b) **Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Foundations:** This chapter provides the theoretical overview pertaining to Public Administration (Behavioural Public Administration as a sub-discipline of Public Administration in particular). The Chapter further explains constructs and concepts of human behaviour, thinking styles and preferences, personality, and leadership and motivation, and concludes with an initial conceptual framework developed from the theoretical constructs attained from literature.

(c) **Chapter 3: Legal and Policy Framework for Leadership in the Public Service:** This chapter provides a legal context for leadership and management in the Public Service of the Republic of South Africa, and the policy perspectives and regulatory frameworks that govern the recruitment, selection, and development of the SMS members. The legal and public policy landscape is analysed to determine key enablers and/or limitations to leadership, leadership development and behavioural change.

(d) **Chapter 4: Comparative Global Perspectives on Public Service Leadership Frameworks**: This chapter explores international trends and comparative practices in senior management competency and leadership frameworks, with a focus on behavioural dimensions. It critically analyses models from the OECD, UNDP, Australia, Canada, Ireland and the United States of America, while also incorporating perspectives from African countries including Kenya, Rwanda and Nigeria, as well as broader leadership developments in the Global South. The chapter identifies emerging global shifts toward behavioural, values-based and citizen-centred leadership. It also examines how principles rooted in African leadership traditions, such as *Ubuntu,* are reflected in both indigenous and international approaches. This analysis provides a foundation for contextualising South Africa's leadership development trajectory within a broader global and regional leadership discourse.

(e) **Chapter 5: Research Methodology:** The chapter outlines the systematic approach employed to investigate the behavioural leadership framework for the SMS within the Public Service of the Republic of South Africa. It begins by establishing the philosophical underpinnings of the study, highlighting the paradigms that guide the exploration of subjective realities and the construction of knowledge through social experiences. The chapter details the conceptual research design, emphasising the synthesis of multidisciplinary literature to develop the conceptual framework and the use of semi-structured interviews with experts to enrich and validate theoretical constructs. The chapter further explains how integrating descriptive and explanatory research approaches strengthened the methodology and facilitated the understanding

of leadership behaviours and their contextual influences. Ultimately, this chapter serves as the 'blueprint' for how the study was structured, executed, and analysed, ensuring that the findings contribute meaningfully to the field of Behavioural Public Administration.

(f) **Chapter 6: Empirical Findings and Thematic Analysis**: This chapter presents the results of the analyses of the data collected during the literature review, the analysis of the legal frameworks that govern SMS and leadership of the Public Service of the Republic of South Africa, as well as data collected from the semi-structured interviews. The Chapter presents the empirical findings related to the developed framework and includes thematic analysis of the data. The chapter further provides a comparative overview of the findings and responses and compares the findings with the primary tenets of leadership styles proposed as relevant to the SMS members in the Public Service as presented in Chapter 2. The Chapter presents the empirical findings related to the developed framework and includes thematic analysis of the data.

(g) **Chapter 7: A Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS in the South African Public Service:** This chapter presents the proposed Behavioural Leadership Framework for members of the SMS the South African Public Service. Drawing on the integration of theoretical constructs and empirical findings, the framework outlines four interrelated behavioural dimensions: Dynamic Leadership Response, Ethical Foundations, Transformational Vision and Service Orientation. The chapter provides detailed behavioural indicators for each dimension, supported by evidence from both global practice and local public service experience. The framework is designed to strengthen public service leadership by promoting ethically grounded, citizen-centred and context-responsive behaviours aligned with the National Development Plan and the Professionalisation Framework.

(h) **Chapter 8: Conclusion and Recommendations**: This chapter concludes the study by reflecting on the research aims, methodology and key findings. It revisits the contribution of the proposed Behavioural Leadership Framework in addressing the leadership development needs of the SMS within the South

African context. The chapter outlines practical recommendations for implementation of the framework, with specific reference to the role of the Department of Public Service and Administration, the National School of Government, and other public service institutions and regulatory bodies. The chapter highlights areas for future research, particularly the testing and refinement of the framework. The conclusion affirms the importance of behavioural leadership in realising a capable, ethical and developmental South African state.

1.10 CONCLUSION

The chapter provided the introduction and background to the thesis. The subsequent chapter will delve into the theoretical foundations underpinning this framework, examining Behavioural Public Administration, Human Factors, and Theories and Models for effective South African Public Service Leadership. This exploration will provide critical insights into how these elements interact to shape effective leadership practices, ultimately contributing to the advancement of public service in RSA.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

“The COVID-19 crisis is proving to be a revealing test of leadership. Emerging from it strengthened, compassionate, confident, forward looking, and successful will be those leaders who can cope with the extraordinary personal and professional challenges. They will be the ones who know themselves the best and can respond to the many challenges " (Hatami, Sneader, & Singhal, 2020:online).

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter offers a theoretical overview of Public Administration, with a particular focus on Behavioural Public Administration as a sub-discipline within the field. It explores key constructs and concepts related to human behaviour, including thinking styles and preferences, personality, leadership, and motivation. The chapter concludes by presenting an initial theoretical baseline, developed from the theoretical insights drawn from the literature. Chapter 2 provides the theoretical context in response to research questions 1 and 2 (Section 1.5).

2.2 BACKGROUND

In 2020, the Public Service of the Republic of South Africa faced unprecedented challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted operations and complicated its responsibilities. This highlighted the critical importance of human factors in public administration, particularly in leadership roles. Effective crisis leadership requires strength, compassion, and adaptability, underscoring the need to understand human behaviour and its influence on public service leadership.

To explore this relationship, the study examined Behavioural Public Administration, which integrates insights from Psychology and behavioural sciences into Public Administration. This approach seeks to understand how human behaviour, including biases and public decision-making, affect public service outcomes. Understanding

these dynamics is essential, as leadership decisions directly impact both individual and organisational performance.

For the Public Service to fulfil its mandate effectively, it must focus on enhancing the capabilities of its employees, especially those in senior management positions. SMS members play a crucial role in fostering high performance and effective governance. Their leadership behaviours significantly shape institutional culture and employee engagement, making a behaviourally informed leadership framework vital for improving public service outcomes.

The complexities of 21st-century public administration demand a shift from traditional linear governance models to more adaptive and flexible strategies. The COVID-19 pandemic exemplified the necessity for leaders to manage uncertainty and respond effectively to crises. Public servants were thrust into frontline roles without clear protocols, highlighting the urgent need to redefine the competencies required for effective public service leadership.

Ethical leadership is particularly crucial within the SMS, as it maintains trust and accountability in public service. Reports indicate that a notable percentage of SMS members have engaged in ethically questionable activities. Calls for the professionalisation of public service leadership emphasise the need for robust ethical standards to combat misconduct.

The Professionalisation Framework (National School of Government, 2023:iv) defines three key terms when determining the expectation of a professional public service, and a professional public service senior management. The Professionalisation Framework (National School of Government, 2023:iv) makes a critical distinction between being professional and professionalisation. Being professional refers to the values, behaviour, conduct, and practices individuals demonstrate, regardless of their formal education, qualifications, or role. In contrast, professionalisation involves a deliberate effort to shift individual mindsets, behaviours, and performance in alignment with the ethos of public service.

Professionalisation is rooted in the principle of valuing and serving citizens with empathy, guided by the Constitution, *Batho Pele* principles, and the Public Service

Charter. It also involves ensuring that public servants are appropriately qualified and capable, continuously enhancing their knowledge and competencies. This process promotes ongoing professional development and builds a workforce that is skilled, efficient, and equipped to deliver quality public services.

Diversity within the Public Service workforce also significantly influences leadership approaches. With a substantial proportion of senior managers being women, diverse perspectives shape leadership dynamics. Incorporating African cultural knowledge into leadership models is essential for addressing the unique needs of the population, fostering more effective governance.

Despite legislative support for public service leadership, challenges stem from the need for innovative solutions to enhance leadership effectiveness rather than resource deficiencies. African leadership models should be rooted in community-oriented values and a shared sense of purpose.

In summary, this chapter lays the theoretical groundwork for developing a behavioural leadership framework tailored to the South African Public Service. By synthesising insights from public administration and behavioural science, this framework will illuminate the role of psychological constructs in shaping effective leadership practices. This understanding will inform strategies to promote ethical governance and improve public service delivery, equipping leaders to navigate the complexities of a changing governance landscape while fostering a culture of accountability and responsiveness. Against this backdrop, the evolution of public administration theories highlights the necessity for adaptive, responsive leadership, setting the context for exploring behavioural approaches in leadership frameworks

2.3 THE DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AS AN ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE

Public Administration (the discipline) has developed in parallel with the evolution of structured societies, with administrators playing a critical role in ensuring effective governance (Basheka, 2019:25; Tshiyoyo 2018:81). While administrative practices have existed since antiquity, the formal academic study of Public Administration is a relatively modern phenomenon (Bayat & Meyer, 1994:5). Contemporary definitions of Public Administration continue to build on these foundational ideas, with Morse

and Buss (2020:897) that characterised Public Administration as the implementation of government policies, the stewardship of public resources, and the provision of public services to citizens. Their definition underscored the discipline's central role in fostering democratic governance and advancing the public interest, which are fundamental to its ongoing relevance in modern governance frameworks.

Thornhill (2006:794-796) identified four generations of Public Administration theory. The pre-generation period included classical philosophers like Aristotle and Plato, who focused on moral and political governance (Thornhill, 2006:794). The first generation, led by scholars such as Von Stein, integrated law, sociology, and political science to establish Public Administration as an interdisciplinary science (Thornhill & van Dijk, 2010:95-109). Woodrow Wilson is often credited with formally distinguishing administration from politics, advocating for efficiency in government operations (Thornhill, 2006:795). The second generation, including scholars like Fayol (1949) and Gulick (1937), emphasised managerial principles, while the third generation sought to establish Public Administration as an independent field with its own body of knowledge (Thornhill, 2006:796). The subject field has undergone significant scrutiny, with some questioning its legitimacy as a science (Parker, 1965:99). Weber (1966) emphasised in the rational-legal bureaucratic model that efficiency and technical expertise are key components of public administration (Serpa & Ferreira, 2019:12-18). More contemporary perspectives, such as those of Bryson, Crosby, and Bloomberg (2014:445), advocated for a governance-oriented approach that focuses on public values and service delivery.

Classical Public Administration theories, dominant until the 19th century, primarily focused on constitutional arrangements and normative governance (Lamidi, 2015:2). Over time, increasing government complexity led to a shift towards empirical analysis and more pragmatic approaches to administration (Akindele *et al.,* 2000:247-256). There are historically five key theoretical stages in the development of the field of Public Administration that includes the politics-administration dichotomy, the principles of administration era, the human relations theory challenge, the crisis of identity, and the policy-oriented perspective (Lamidi, 2015:3).

Modern Public Administration theories, influenced by behavioural approaches, emphasise results, accountability, and performance (Katsamunska, 2012:74-81).

The rise of NPM brought a transformative approach that advocated for efficiency and decentralisation in public service (Hood, 1991:3-19). Critiques of NPM highlighted its limitations, including ambiguity, exclusivity, and challenges in broader applicability (Funck & Karlsson, 2020:347-375).

Henry (1975) proposed six paradigms in Public Administration, reflecting shifts from a rigid politics-administration dichotomy to more governance-oriented approaches. Governance theories emphasise the role of inter-organisational networks and public-private partnerships in policy implementation (Bang, 2003:101-102). Scholars emphasised the need to move beyond bureaucratic structures toward collaborative governance models (Peters, 2003:19; Osborne, 2006:377-389; Osborne, 2010:1-10).

Cameron (2008:43-68) critically examined the state of Public Administration as an academic discipline in South Africa, highlighting challenges as well as developments in the field relevant to the South African context. He asserted that throughout both the apartheid and democratic eras, Public Administration in South Africa has lacked a strong knowledge-based foundation. Cameron (2008:43-68) furthermore contended that the discipline has not advanced significantly as a knowledge-based field, remaining largely practice-oriented rather than academically rigorous. He traced the evolution of Public Administration from the dominance of an administrative processes approach during apartheid to the post-1994 democratic era, where NPM approaches gained prominence (Cameron, 2008:43-68). This shift is characterised by an increasing emphasis on efficiency, effectiveness, and managerial techniques. According to Cameron (2008:43-68), the main transformation in the discipline of Public Administration in South Africa was the move away from the traditional social sciences towards a more management- and business-oriented approach (Cameron, 2008:43-68). He explained that this transition has led to a narrow focus on technical skills and administrative techniques, often at the expense of broader theoretical and conceptual engagement, and that the emphasis on practical competencies comes at the cost of critical academic inquiry, limiting the development of a robust body of knowledge in the field. Cameron (2008:43-68) advocated for a more knowledge-based approach to Public Administration, emphasising the need for cumulative and meaningful research and a discipline that addresses practical administrative concerns while also building a coherent and theoretically informed knowledge base.

From the perspectives of Cameron (2008:53), transformation of South Africa's public administration, highlighted by efforts to decolonise curricula and embed indigenous knowledge, necessitates a leadership approach that is both inclusive and ethically driven. These insights validate the development of a behavioural leadership framework for the Republic of South Africa SMS, ensuring that leadership practices align with the transparent, accountable, and people-centred values emerging from post-apartheid reforms.

Behavioural Public Administration integrates psychological insights into governance, acknowledging the impact of individual behaviour on administrative effectiveness (Tummers *et al.,* 2020:online). This sub-field explores motivation, leadership, and ethical decision-making within the public service (Christensen & Wright, 2018:1-8), focusing on micro-level perspectives, such as public service motivation and leadership challenges (Grimmelikhuijsen *et al.*, 2017:45-47). The increasing focus on leadership, motivation, and ethical conduct marks a significant shift in the discipline, as seen in the contribution of this study, which examines the behavioural dimensions of SMS members in the South African Public Service sector, with implications for leadership effectiveness and governance improvement (Labuschagne, 2016:154).

Notably, Public Administration has undergone substantial transformation, moving from a focus on efficient public law execution to broader governance concepts. The field's expansion has been influenced by the rise of NPM and the growing recognition of African agency and context (Matsiliza, 2020:299). The current paradigm is characterised by governance that emphasises engagement with diverse stakeholders and an increased focus on the general welfare (Matsiliza, 2020:297). This shift recognises the complexities of the political environment and highlights the importance of government accountability and performance.

The decolonisation of Public Administration represents a significant rethinking of curricula and practices, challenging the historical dominance of Western, European, and apartheid-era knowledge production (Matsiliza, 2020:295; Makiva, Ile, & Fagbadebo, 2022:479-497). This process is not simply anti-Western but aims to recognise African agency, culture, and societal values as central to governance studies (Matsiliza, 2020:295). Curriculum reform approaches should prioritise African

values and history while acknowledging African experiences in governance (Nzewi & Maramura, 2021:205).

Perspectives on decolonisation include the ideas of traditionalists like Fanon, who advocated for changing the curriculum lens to eliminate colonial influences (Nzewi & Maramura, 2021:206-207). Radicals argue for adopting African studies, using African languages in education (Nzewi & Maramura, 2021:207), and creating "Pluriversities" that dismantle hierarchical educational structures (Nzewi & Maramura, 2021:207). Innovators push for inclusivity within a Pan-African framework, emphasising the role of African languages in facilitating understanding of governance (Nzewi & Maramura, 2021:207-208). The current curriculum is overly influenced by Western knowledge systems, which do not adequately reflect the realities and practices of indigenous communities (Makiva, Ile, & Fagbadebo, 2022:480-482). Nisar (2022:1-11) discussed the resistance to decolonisation efforts, highlighting the entrenched colonial legacies that continue to shape public administration practices and theories. He called for a more radical and inclusive approach to decolonisation that fundamentally rethinks the underlying principles and practices of Public Administration (Nisar, 2022:1-11).

A key component of decolonisation is the integration of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) into the Public Administration curriculum. IKS, shaped by local conditions and historical experiences (Agathangelou, 2016:335-349, Nzewi & Maramura, 2021:210), offer alternative frameworks to challenge Western dominance in knowledge production. Incorporating IKS involves the intellectual protection of culturally relevant history and governance practices, alongside developing infrastructure for knowledge transfer (Nzewi & Maramura, 2021:211-212). The decolonised curriculum should be grounded in African value systems while still engaging with global contexts (Nzewi & Maramura, 2021:212; Nzewi & Maramura, 2021:213).

Undoubtedly, Public Administration is understood through multiple lenses. It refers to implementation of government policies, and the management of public programs, involving the institution, direction, and coordination of government programmes

toward the achievement of public service objectives. From the academic perspective the many definitions lead to understanding the field as the study and practice of managing public agencies, institutions, and programs with a focus on the principles, processes, and structures that underpin public policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. From a South African context, the country's unique socio-political and economic environments inform how Public Administration is understood and as such, Public Administration is defined by its role in managing and executing public policies within the country's unique context to ensure that the needs of the country's diverse communities are met, and that there is efficiency and effectiveness in governance and public service delivery. Adding the contexts of decolonisation, Public Administration as a subject-field is evolving towards a more relevant subject that, inter alia, integrates indigenous knowledge systems and practices and foster an inclusive and contextually relevant approach to managing public affairs in post-colonial societies.

The evolution of Public Administration in South Africa, from its historically practice-oriented roots to a call for more robust, knowledge-based frameworks, naturally sets the stage for examining how behavioural insights can further enrich this field. As the discipline grapples with the dual imperatives of decolonisation and modern governance challenges, integrating behavioural public administration offers a promising pathway to bridge traditional administrative practices with contemporary leadership dynamics, thereby ensuring that reforms not only address structural issues but also nurture ethical, effective leadership within the Public Service sector. Understanding the theoretical foundations of leadership provides a conceptual backdrop for the specific competencies and behaviours addressed in contemporary leadership frameworks.

2.4 BEHAVIOURAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Even though public administration is everywhere and influences all lives, not one definition can describe or explain the field of the focus thereof, leading to the acknowledgement that Public Administration exists within the greater context of its numerous definitions (Bayat & Meyer, 1994:4). This section records the key concepts and theories in relation to the field of Behavioural Public Administration,

and the importance thereof in the consideration of a behavioural leadership framework for the SMS.

2.4.1 Definition and Scope

Behavioural Public Administration has emerged as a distinct subfield within Public Administration, driven by the growing recognition of the influence of human behaviour on administrative processes. This evolution signifies a departure from traditional bureaucratic models, focusing instead on the intricacies of interpersonal relationships, decision-making processes, and organisational culture (Kasdan, 2020:605-621).

Behavioural Public Administration examines public administration through a micro-level lens, focusing on individual behaviour and attitudes. It incorporates psychological insights to understand how individuals and groups behave within the public service (Grimmelikhuijsen *et al.,* 2017:45).

Researchers in the area of behavioural public administration have increasingly drawn on insights from psychology and sociology, highlighting how these disciplines can deepen the understanding of public service performance and effectiveness (Kasdan, 2020:605-621). Tummers (2020:online) identified the following four (4) key contributions from the sub-field of Behavioural Public Administration:

(a) Concepts and theories of Psychology are assessed and extended to include political and administrative environments and situations.
(b) The fundamental building blocks of Public Administration theories and concepts, including interpersonal relationships and collaborative approaches such as co-production, integration, or partnerships in public policy, are examined, validated, and further developed.
(c) New theories and concepts such as public policy relation and alienation, motivation in/of public service/servants and the impact of administrative burden are developed.
(d) Applied solutions to current problems.

Considering the key factors proposed by Tummers (2020:online), the approach emphasises the need to consider behavioural factors in policymaking and

administration, fostering a more nuanced comprehension of individual interactions within the public service (Waldo, 1990:73-83; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000:549–559). The consideration of such human factors in public administration theory emphasises the relevance of a behavioural leadership framework for the SMS and the benefit it brings to the Public Service of the Republic of South Africa.

2.4.2 Key concepts and theories

A public institution is formed at a particular moment in history and is as a result influenced by the cultural norms, values, and contexts of that time, which leave a lasting impact on its structure and operations (Christensen, Lægreid, & Røvik, 2020:51). The sub-field of Behavioural Public Administration is continually evolving, integrating perspectives from various disciplines to tackle the complexities of governance and public management in modern society (Perry, Hondeghem & Wise, 2010:681-690; Zumbansen, 2012:83-96; Grimmelikhuijsen *et al.,* 2017:45-47). The sub-field contributes significantly to the ongoing discourse on improving public administration by incorporating human-centric approaches, which are essential for enhancing public service delivery and promoting effective, efficient and cost-effective (economical) governance.

After the waves of reform discussed in the paragraphs above, a new sub-discipline, known as Behavioural Public Administration, evolved. Behavioural Public Administration is not regarded as a wave of reform, as it does not intend to accomplish a paradigmatic shift in Public Administration, but rather, develop a focus *within* Public Administration by means of an inter-disciplinary approach. Dahl (1947:1-11) acknowledged the role of complex human behaviour, values, and social setting in administrative situations.

Behavioural Public Administration connects topical public administration with insights from psychology and the behavioural sciences (Tummers, 2020:online; Tummers *et al.*, 2016:1-3). Behavioural Public Administration is complementary to traditional Public Administration as it infuses the field and practice of Public Administration with psychological insights, while at the same time providing permeation of administration insights of psychology and behavioural debate (Grimmelikhuijsen *et al.*, 2017:45-47).

Searching for the causal reasons, the behaviour exhibited by administrators, has taken researchers on a path into Sociology and Psychology, adding a descriptive flavour to prescriptive classical theory (Morrow, 1975:47) and influencing the work of scholars like Presthus (1962), Herring (1936), Waldo (1963), Simon (1957), and Hyneman (1952). Much earlier, between 1927 and 1932, Mayo (1934) studied a number of workers in context over a period of time and found that, in contradiction to the classical theories of administration and the application of science in the workplace to improve productivity, the individual or "social person" was an important consideration in productivity and that social factors rather than economic factors fuel and energise workers toward greater productivity (Smith, 1998:221-249). Workers were motivated by acknowledgement, by being given personal control in the work situation, and when they feel cared for (Mayo, 1934:201; Smith, 1998:221-249). The findings of the Hawthorne studies were not recognised by Public Administration scholars at the time, but was later explored and innovations in administrative theory established in the context of the human relation school of thought (Morrow, 1975:47-49).

Kasdan (2020:605-621) examined the integration of behavioural economics into Public Administration. Kasdan (2020:605-621) critiqued traditional models of Public Administration for their reliance on rational efficiency, which often overlooks the actual behaviours and biases of individuals involved in administrative processes. Kasdan (2020:606-608) underscored the necessity for a theory that incorporates empirical evidence of human behaviour, drawing insights from psychology and behavioural economics.

There is a historical connection between Public Administration and behavioural economics with an on-going tension between institutional demands for rational efficiency and the realities of human behaviour (Kasdan, 2020:608). Behavioural insights can enhance policy-making and administrative practices by addressing biases and heuristics that influence public decision-making (Kasdan, 2020:609-611). The contribution of Behavioural Public Administration theory lies in its integration of behavioural science with traditional public administration principles, thereby strengthening the field's practical relevance (Kasdan, 2020:612-617).

Morrow (1975:41) asserted that public administration cannot be fully understood unless we have a comprehensive understanding of human behaviour and how individuals interact with their institutional surroundings. Vermeulen (2015:482-506) commented that successful public service institutions require public officials to be skilled, competent, and committed public officials who are dedicated to their roles and responsibilities within the Public Service. This commitment involves a strong sense of duty and loyalty to their work, as well as a proactive attitude towards achieving the goals and objectives of the Public Service (Vermeulen, 2015:20). Vermeulen emphasizes that committed public officials are essential for the success of public service institutions because their dedication leads to higher performance, better service delivery, and overall organizational effectiveness. Kyndt, Dochy, Struyven, and Cascallar (2011:135-150) linked motivation to context in additional to personal (Labuschagne & van Dijk, 2016:1-18). Clearly, behavioural aspects are key to public administration and is the consideration of behaviour in the context of public administration leadership of great value to the sub-field of Behavioural Public Administration.

Public officials determine the performance of public service institutions, and it is the responsibility of management and leadership to motivate employees to be committed (Cooke & Meyer, 2007:1-2; Shadare & Hammed, 2009:7-17) and then contribute to the success of the State (Vermeulen, 2017:35-67). A logical deduction is that “effective leadership is required to inspire, develop, and steer employees towards performance” (Vermeulen, 2017:36) and the psychological and somatic factors influencing leaders' behaviour are often overlooked in the field of Public Administration (Vermeulen, 2017:35). In the current, post-Covid pandemic reality, self-serving and arrogant public service leadership is cited by Maserumule (2020:1-4) as a key contributor to the dwindling governance in countries worldwide, that further highlights the imperative of giving greater attention to the individual within the Public Service, particularly in leadership roles.

Insights from Behavioural Public Administration are used to tackle practical issues, such as increasing diversity in public organisations (Tummers, 2019:1-30). The author proposed that researchers in the sub-field of Behavioural Public Administration should expand their scope of research questions. He recommended

broadening the methodological toolkit for Behavioural Public Administration research to also consider descriptive and predictive research inquiries. Tummers (2019:1-30). projected that this approach could provide deeper insights into leadership behaviours. This global shift towards behavioural leadership further underscores the importance of behaviours and traits in effective public service leadership.

2.5 CONCEPTS AND PROPERTIES THAT SUBSTANTIATE A SCHOLARLY THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK THAT GIVES IMPETUS TO A PREFERRED COGNITIVE PROFILE FOR THE SMS

Section 2.4 responds to research questions 1 and 2 (Sections 1.5 (a) and 1.5 (b)) and provides the concepts and properties that substantiate a scholarly theoretical framework that gives impetus to a preferred cognitive profile for the SMS in the South African Public Service.

In response to research questions 1 and 2, this section presents the consolidation of the theoretical perspectives and insights derived from the in-depth literature review that informed, and formed, the basis for the development of a behavioural leadership framework for the SMS in the South African Public Service (Chapter 6).

Human behaviour, cognition, and personality are essential areas of study within the broader field of public administration. Understanding the interaction between these factors is critical for developing effective leadership within the SMS in South Africa. Leaders at this level face challenges that require them to navigate complex administrative systems, motivate diverse teams, and make decisions in dynamic environments. By examining the constructs and concepts of human behaviour, thinking style preferences, personality, leadership, and motivation, this chapter provides the theoretical foundation necessary to inform leadership strategies for the SMS.

Literature consistently argues for an integrated approach to understanding effective leadership. The workplace is not isolated, and effective leadership is the result of a combination of various factors, each contributing to a leader's overall success. (Figure 2.1).

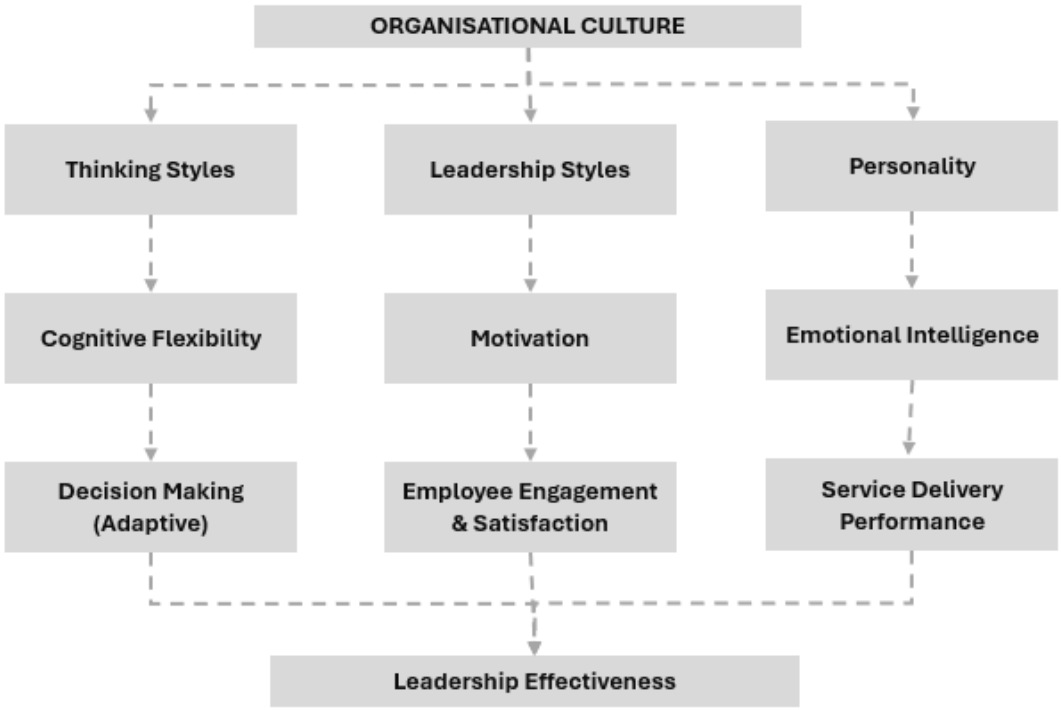

Figure 2.1 A synthesis of generic theoretical concepts for leadership effectiveness
(**Source:** Researcher's construct, 2025)

Figure 2.1 illustrates a synthesis of theoretical concepts for leadership effectiveness. It highlights the interplay between key elements such as thinking styles, leadership styles, and personality, all of which are influenced by the overarching organisational culture.

Thinking Styles:

Thinking styles influence how leaders process information and make decisions. For example, the eight (8) dimensions in Neethling's thinking styles (Realist, Analyst, Strategist, Imagineer, Preserver, Organiser, Socialiser, and Empathiser) can significantly shape leadership effectiveness by impacting how leaders approach problem-solving and innovation (Neethling, 2005:6-12).

Grant and McCann (2025:2-4) identified distinct types of thinking skills that leaders need to practice and teach that are expert, critical, strategic, and systems thinking. The authors emphasized the importance of these thinking styles in adding value and

solving complex problems and highlighted the need for leaders to develop and apply these skills effectively (Grant & McCann, 2025:2-4).

Neethling's thinking styles offer a comprehensive framework for understanding how leaders process information and make decisions through eight dimensions: Realist, Analyst, Strategist, Imagineer, Preserver, Organiser, Socialiser, and Empathiser (Neethling, 2005:6-12). While this model provides valuable insights into the diverse ways leaders approach problem-solving and innovation, it has been critiqued for oversimplifying the complexity of human cognition; leaders frequently exhibit a blend of these styles, which rigid categorization may fail to capture (Labuschagne & Van Dijk, 2016:3-5). The practical effectiveness of these thinking styles appears to be highly context-dependent, as a Realist, for example, might excel in crisis management, yet struggle in environments that demand high levels of creativity and innovation (Grant & McCann, 2025:2-4). Additionally, Neethling's model has been questioned for potential cultural bias, with concerns that the framework might not be universally applicable without further adaptation to diverse cultural contexts (Neethling, 2023:6-8).

Personality:

Personality traits, including the Big Five traits (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism), affect how leaders handle challenges and engage with their followers. These traits can predict leadership behaviour and effectiveness (Roberts, Kuncel, Shiner, & Goldberg, 2007:33-50).

Leadership Styles:

Leadership styles, such as transformational or transactional, determine how leaders interact with their teams and influence performance outcomes. Transformational leaders inspire and motivate, while transactional leaders focus on structure and reward systems (Bass & Avolio, 1990:231-272; Northouse, 2016:162-181).

Motivation:

Understanding both intrinsic motivators (e.g., personal growth) and extrinsic motivators (e.g., rewards) is key to enhancing leadership effectiveness. Leaders who are aware of what drives them, and their teams can foster higher levels of engagement and productivity (Ryan & Deci, 2000:54-67).

Emotional Intelligence:

Emotional intelligence, which involves recognising, understanding, and managing one's own emotions as well as those of others, is crucial for leadership. It impacts decision-making, conflict resolution, and how effectively leaders manage team dynamics (Goleman, 1998:93-102).

Decision-Making:

Adaptive decision-making, which involves considering various leadership styles and external factors, leads to more effective leadership in dynamic and complex environments. This adaptability is essential for responding to shifting conditions and challenges (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010:81-93).

Employee Engagement & Satisfaction:

High levels of employee engagement and satisfaction contribute positively to organisational performance. Engaged employees are more productive, committed, and motivated, which enhances team performance and overall success (Kahn, 1990:692-724).

Service Delivery Performance:

In the Public Service context, effective leadership directly impacts service delivery outcomes. Strong leadership enhances the quality and efficiency of services delivered to the public (Robinson & Judge, 2013:175).

Organisational culture:

Organisational culture shapes how leadership and employee behaviours manifest within the workplace. A positive culture can foster collaboration and trust, enhancing the overall effectiveness of leadership and improving organisational outcomes (Schein, 2010:175-176).

Leadership Effectiveness:

Leadership effectiveness is the culmination of integrating the aforementioned components. By combining effective thinking styles, emotional intelligence, motivation, and decision-making, leaders can drive performance and improve service delivery in the public service. Effective leadership is the result of a combination of various factors, each contributing to a leader's overall success. (Yukl, 2017:9).

Having explored the broad theoretical landscape, it becomes clear that integrating behavioural insights into competency frameworks is essential for enhancing leadership effectiveness.

2.5.1 Human Behaviour

Human behaviour is a multidisciplinary area of study that spans psychology, sociology, and organisational behaviour. In public administration, human behaviour refers to the ways in which individuals act and respond within the public service, shaped by external factors, social influences, and internal cognitive processes (Chen *et al.,* 2023:63-87). Understanding human behaviour is crucial for leadership in public service contexts, where decisions can have far-reaching impacts on governance, policy implementation, and the lives of citizens.

Behaviour does not require mindfulness of the actor that consciously makes a choice, but comprises an unintentional response to a stimulus, (Weber, 1981:173;178). Behaviour encompasses the actions and patterns exhibited by individuals, organisms, systems, or artificial entities in response to their environment, including interactions with other systems, living beings, and the physical surroundings. It represents how an organism or system reacts to various stimuli, both internal and external, conscious or subconscious, overt or covert, and voluntary or involuntary (Sidorou & Budefield, 2024). Behaviour is also understood as observable actions that occur as a reaction to internal or external stimuli (American Psychological Association, n.d.). Similarly, Weber (1981:174) described behaviour as a reflex-like response triggered by a stimulus, emphasising the necessity of external or internal triggers for behavioural actions.

Behaviourists simplify all behaviour, regardless of complexity, to fundamental conditioning processes and assert that all intricate behaviours are acquired from the environment (Malone, 2017; Watson, 1913, 1966). Behaviourism holds the advantage of offering clear definitions of behaviour and the ability to scientifically measure changes in behaviour. Behaviourism potentially presents an incomplete portrayal of human behaviour by excluding considerations of emotion, expectation, and higher-level motivation. This limitation restricts the capacity to incorporate

alternative perspectives and essential factors (Malone, 2017; Watson, 1913, 1966; Weiten, 2007).

The whole human must be considered and the inherent good recognised (Colman, 2014). It is recognised that individuals have personal agency and free will to follow opportunities or things that help them achieve their full potential (Koole, Schlinkert, Maldei, & Baumann, 2019:15-36).

The SMS leader is no different, and this unique nature and personal agency contributes to the success in their role as leader in the Public Service. The difference between individuals cannot be disregarded when determining a behavioural leadership framework for the SMS.

There are numerous facets of human thought and behaviour that are affected by cultural factors and cultural distinctions and have a surprising consequence on human cognition and how people think, feel, and act (Cherry, 2020a). By considering these differences, more can be learnt about how culture influences human thinking and behaviour (Lonner, 2015:804-814).

The perspective of some cultures appreciates and stresses individualism and personal autonomy while another may rather value collectivism and collaboration between members of the group (Wang, 2016:583-596).

“Change begins with each one of us. It resides in the willingness to ensure greater daily and frank interaction with diverse fellow South Africans on an equal footing, by talking to each other honestly and openly about our debilitating history and future we will build social cohesion and common understanding” (Mthethwa, 2020).

In the Public Service of the Republic of South Africa, Cross-Cultural perspectives are important considerations, and the SMS member should have a well-develop sense of culture and its impact in the workplace.

2.5.2 Human Behaviour in organisations and institutions

In organisational or institutional contexts, behaviour is understood through various theories that highlight how individuals interact with their environment and colleagues. Organisational behaviour studies reveal that factors such as personality, perception,

attitudes, and group dynamics directly influence performance (Robbins & Judge, 2019:2). In the Public Service, SMS leaders need to navigate the complex interaction of these factors to ensure effective governance and public service delivery.

The work environment of the Public Service includes unique challenges such as policy formulation, resource allocation, and crisis management. For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic revealed the need for adaptive leadership within the SMS, where human behaviour and leadership approaches significantly influenced outcomes (Hatami *et al.,* 2020).

2.5.3 Emotional and Social Behaviour

Emotions play a significant role in how individuals make decisions and interact within the workplace. Goleman (1995) introduced the concept of emotional intelligence (EI), which is the ability to recognise and manage one's emotions and the emotions of others. For SMS leaders, high emotional intelligence is critical for managing diverse teams and fostering a supportive work environment. Emotional intelligence contributes to effective leadership by helping leaders navigate interpersonal dynamics, manage conflicts, and maintain high levels of morale within their teams.

Social behaviour, on the other hand, involves interactions within hierarchical and social structures in the Public Service. These structures are shaped by institutional norms, policies, and workplace culture. Leaders within the SMS must be adept at managing social relationships and understanding how social dynamics influence behaviour, particularly in a multicultural context like South Africa's public service (Grimmelikhuijsen *et al.,* 2017:45-47). In this context, African values such as *Ubuntu,* emphasising community and interconnectedness, play a crucial role in guiding leadership approaches that focus on collective well-being (Nussbaum, 2003:21-26).

2.5.4 Thinking Style Preferences

Thinking is the activity or action of using one's mind to produce ideas, decisions, and memories (Merriam-Webster.com, 2018), or the activity that uses the mind to consider a problem or possibility or to create an idea (Collins English Dictionary, 2024).

Thinking style preferences refer to how individuals process information and approach problem-solving, decision-making, and leadership (Hermann, 1996). SMS leaders are required to adapt their thinking styles to manage the complexities of public service, particularly in high-pressure situations where critical decision-making is essential. Understanding different thinking styles helps leaders assess their own cognitive processes and improve decision-making strategies.

2.5.5 Analytical, Creative, and Practical Thinking

Sternberg's (1999) theory of Mental Self-Government suggests that individuals exhibit preferences for different types of thinking namely analytical, creative, and practical. Analytical thinkers tend to approach problems by breaking them down into smaller components, focusing on detail and logical analysis. Creative thinkers, by contrast, generate ideas and solutions, while practical thinkers focus on solutions that are applicable in real-world settings. Each of these thinking styles has implications for leadership in public administration.

For example, in the SMS, analytical thinking is vital for policy formulation, where complex issues must be deconstructed into manageable parts. Creative thinking, on the other hand, is necessary when addressing unprecedented challenges, such as those posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Practical thinking Practical thinking occurs when theoretical components are applied to real-life experiences in order to adapt, shape, or choose environments effectively and hence ensures that policies and strategies are feasible and implementable within the constraints of public service resources (Kaufman & Grigorenko, 2009:390, Sternberg, 1999).

2.5.6 Cognitive Flexibility in Leadership

Cognitive flexibility refers to the ability to adapt one's thinking to changing situations and demands (Diamond, 2013:135-168). In leadership, cognitive flexibility allows SMS leaders to switch between different problem-solving approaches depending on the circumstances. This is particularly important in public administration, where leaders must navigate changing political landscapes, public expectations, and administrative challenges. Cognitive flexibility is closely related to adaptive leadership, where leaders adjust their strategies to address evolving crises and ensure organisational resilience (Heifetz, Grashow, Linsky, 2009:62-69).

2.5.7 Neethling Thinking Style Preference =Model

Each individual, and consequently every SMS member, is distinctive, and this uniqueness is evident in the different ways in which people choose to think and reflect, make decisions, solve problems, communicate, and manage (both self-management and the management of others) (Neethling, 2005:29; Rothman, 1990:144). Awareness, insight, and interaction, as well as action, are assimilated with the mind and integrated with the mechanisms of the mind and its workings (Billet, Harteis, & Gruber, 2014:102). Thinking style preferences are somewhat dependent on the anatomy of the brain and how it is structured. Further to this, social, and environmental interaction are also contributors to these preferences, and experiences contribute to how style preferences develop over time (Neethling, 2000:29).

The concept of brain dominance theory underpins various thinking preference models, including Neethling's 2000 framework, which is aligned with the Whole Brain Model developed by Ned Herrmann. This model posited that the brain comprises four metaphorical quadrants namely logical/analytical (A), organised/sequential (B), interpersonal/emotional (C), and imaginative/holistic (D), each representing distinct clusters of thinking preferences (Herrmann Global, 2016:4-5). The Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument was developed to measure these preferences and offered a metaphorical mapping of cognitive tendencies and facilitating increased awareness of individual and team thinking styles (Herrmann Global, 2016:6). Importantly, the model did not claim to measure aptitude but rather preference, supporting applications in leadership development, communication, and organisational effectiveness (Herrmann Global, 2016:6-7).

Neethling, building on the work of Hermann, offered four quadrants in the of the Neethling Brain Instruments model each reflecting a dominant style in decision-making, problem-solving, and communication, and as such offered structured insight into both personal and professional development (Neethling, 2005:4-7). Importantly, the Neethling Brain Instruments model did not restrict individuals to a single mode of thinking; rather, it highlighted preferred thinking styles while acknowledging that individuals may operate across quadrants as needed. Neethling (2005:2, 29) maintained that knowledge of these cognitive differences enhanced adaptability,

especially in leadership and interpersonal engagement. Each person has a dominant thinking preference that influences how they process information, interact with others, and make decisions (Neethling, 2005:4-6). Leaders who understand their own cognitive preferences are better positioned to tailor communication strategies, inspire their teams, and adapt to diverse contexts. By recognising and responding to varying thinking preferences, leaders can foster inclusive environments and leverage diverse strengths for collaborative problem-solving all of which are essential competencies in dynamic public service contexts (Neethling, 2005:12, 29).

The Public Service sector of Republic of South Africa mainly occupies itself with public policies, procedures and processes, further intensifying limitations (Vermeulen, 2015:482-506; Labuschagne & van Dijk, 2016:1-18). Vermeulen (2017:7) contended that effective leadership can only be achieved by a leader who is attuned to the complexities of human nature, including individual aspirations, disappointments, emotions, strengths, weaknesses, and the factors that drive [their] motivation. Contrary to this archetype, in a study conducted by Labuschagne and vVan Dijk (2016:1-18)., it was revealed that SMS members portray behaviour and traits that are more task-orientated than behaviour-orientated. These typically left-brain thinking style preferences possibly play a role in the leadership style of the SMS members and may have an influence on the response of public servants and their behaviour and attitude towards their work. The left-brain leader is generally more rational and analytical, able to resolve complex issues in an unemotional manner, and resolve financial difficulties without limitation (Labuschagne & van Dijk, 2016:1-18), arguably resulting in a leader that is able to take charge and demand results with available resources. The challenge with such singular unemotional leadership is a lack of ability to inspire or appeal to the sense of ethics of employees, and their emotions to deliver on challenging goals (Neethling, 2005:4-6). In the context of the developing South African Public Service, there is a strong argument for the need of a multi-skilled, holistic leader who employs a whole-brain approach. Such a leader would not only provide rational, financially responsible leadership but also demonstrate an acute awareness of the social and economic obligations of the Public Service.

The Neethling Thinking Style Preference Model (2000) supports the premise of a behavioural leadership framework within the SMS of the public service. By acknowledging diverse cognitive preferences, analytical, organised, interpersonal, and imaginative, leaders can better understand their own thinking styles and those of their colleagues, subordinates, and the public. Incorporating this model into leadership practices fosters holistic and adaptive leadership, enhancing cognitive flexibility, emotional intelligence, and creativity, which are crucial for improving leadership effectiveness in the complex and dynamic public service environment.

2.5.8 Personality

Personality refers to the consistent patterns of thought, emotion, and behaviour that make individuals unique (McAdams & Pals, 2006:204-217). Personality traits play a significant role in leadership, as they influence how leaders interact with their teams, make decisions, and respond to challenges. In the context of the Public Service, understanding the personality traits of SMS leaders is essential for developing effective leadership strategies (McCrae & Costa, 2008:999-1009).

The McAdams and Pals (2006: 204-217) framework underscores that leadership is a dynamic construct influenced by personality, identity, and life course development, integrating both psychological and socio-cultural factors (McAdams & Pals, 2006:204). Recent research has expanded upon this perspective, delving into the fluid and contextual nature of leadership.

Studies have underscored the significance of emotional intelligence, adaptive leadership, and transformational leadership, aligning with the notion of leadership as an evolving process. Nöthel *et al.* (2023:1-16) developed and validated the Adaptive -Leadership Behaviour Scale (ALBS), identifying key characteristics of adaptive leaders, including flexibility, empathy, innovation, and long-term vision, highlighting the necessity for leaders to adjust their approaches based on context and challenges (Nöthel *et al*., 2023:1). Shahid (2024:3806-3822) investigated transformational leadership in contemporary settings, emphasising the importance of leaders being receptive to challenges, adaptation, leadership, and learning, which underscores the necessity for adaptability in leadership roles (Shahid, 2024:3806).

The role of authenticity and self-awareness in leadership has garnered increased attention. A study by Munawar, Chaudhry and Munir (2024:online) suggests that leaders with high emotional intelligence can create a more psychologically safe environment for their teams by demonstrating empathy, effective communication, and emotional support (Munawar *et al.,* 2024:online). This perspective resonates with McAdams and Pals (2006) perspective that personal values and life experiences shape leadership practices over time.

Despite its comprehensive approach, McAdams and Pals' framework (2006) has faced critiques regarding its broad applicability. Epstein (2007:59-60) noted that the McAdams and Pal framework (2006) may not consider the balance between individual traits and contextual factors and may not sufficiently address the implications of external pressures and organisational culture. Epstein (2007:59-60) claimed that while the framework offered valuable insights, it may lack clear, operational guidelines for specific organisational contexts, posing challenges for practical implementation in leadership studies

2.5.8.1 The Five-Factor Model of Personality

The Five-Factor Model (FFM) of personality, also known as the Big Five, is one of the most widely accepted models of personality in psychology. The FFM includes five broad personality traits: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (McCrae & Costa, 2008:999-1009). Research has shown that these traits are related to leadership effectiveness, with certain traits, such as conscientiousness and extraversion, being particularly important for leadership success (Judge, Heller, & Mount, 2002:530-541).

For instance, leaders who score high on conscientiousness are likely to be organised, reliable, and goal-oriented, which can contribute to effective leadership. On the other hand, leaders who score high on neuroticism may struggle with managing stress and may be less effective in high-pressure environments (McCrae & Costa, 2008:999-1009).

2.5.8.2 African perspectives on personality

In contrast with the individualistic focus typical of Western models of personality, African scholars emphasized the importance of collectivism and community in shaping personality (Thabede, 2008:25; Mkhize & Nkosi, 2021:210). In African contexts, personality is constructed relationally, with individuals defined by their connections to family, community, and society. Traits such as *Ubuntu* that symbolizes shared humanity, interconnectedness, and a commitment to collective well-being are central to the African understanding of personality (Nussbaum, 2003:45-47; Mkhize & Nkosi, 2021:205-220).

The relational perspective between family, community and society has significant implications for leadership within the Public Service, especially for SMS leaders in South Africa. From the perspective of Mantzaris and Pillay (2023:262-269), *Ubuntu* provides an ethical framework that informs and transforms leadership practices by promoting empathy, collaboration, and responsiveness to communal needs. Leaders who internalise these values are more adept at developing and implementing strategies that address complex challenges such as social inequality and cultural diversity. By integrating these culturally grounded principles with modern leadership practices, SMS leaders can enhance governance and public service delivery and foster a more inclusive and effective public administration.

2.5.9 Concepts and properties of a preferred cognitive profile for the SMS

In response to research question 1 in section 1.5 (a), and against the backdrop of the analysis of constructs and concepts of human behaviour discussed in the paragraphs before, the four concepts and related properties were selected to give impetus to a preferred cognitive profile for leadership behaviour amongst SMS (Figure 2.2). The decision to focus on four specific concepts from a broader range was guided by their direct relevance to the study's objectives and their importance in addressing key aspects of leadership behaviour within the SMS in the South African Public Service. These concepts were carefully selected based on a thorough review of existing literature and theoretical frameworks, revealing their significant influence on shaping leadership behaviour, cognitive profiles, and effectiveness. This allowed for a more focused approach of each concept contributes to SMS leadership dynamics. This approach was chosen to ensure that the study remains closely

aligned with the practical challenges faced by SMS leaders in South Africa, where the ability to navigate complex socio-political issues and drive organisational change is crucial. While other concepts were considered, they were ultimately excluded due to their limited relevance to the study's goals or their lesser impact on the specific leadership behaviours under investigation. Focusing on these four concepts not only strengthens the coherence and clarity of the study but also ensures that the developed framework effectively addresses the core aptitudes needed for effective public service leadership.

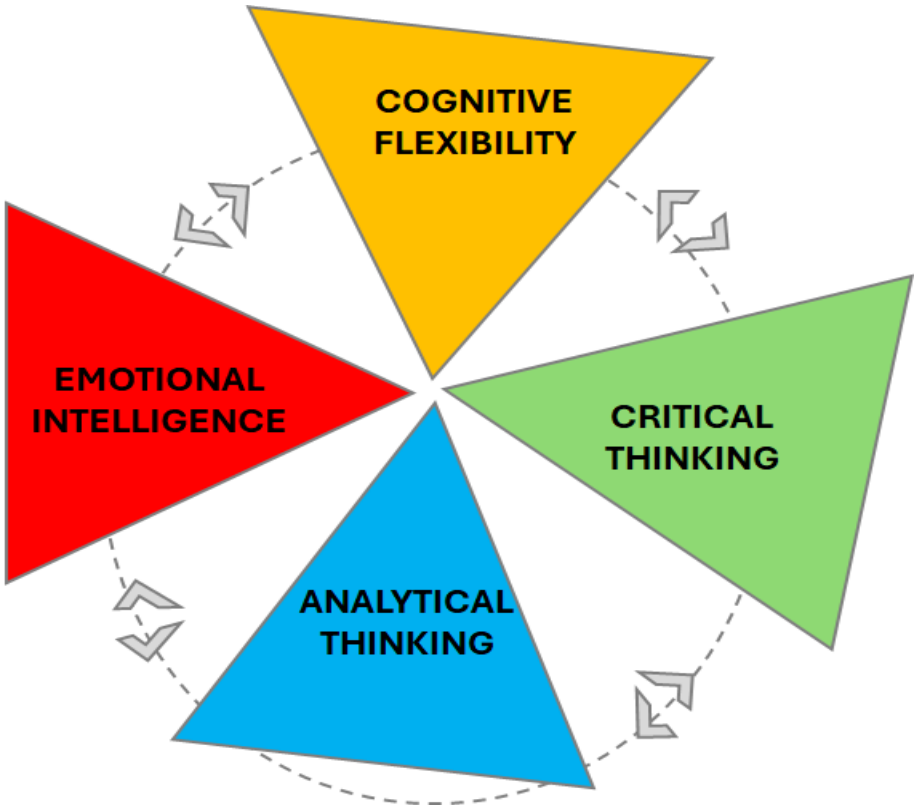

Figure 2.2 Cognitive concepts that give impetus to a preferred cognitive profile for the SMS
(**Source:** Researcher's construct, 2025)

2.5.9.1 Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI), also known as emotional quotient (EQ), is widely recognised as a form of social intelligence involving the identification, differentiation, management, and utilisation of emotions to guide thoughts and behaviours (Salovey & Mayer, 1990:189). Mayer Salovey and Caruso (2008:511) and Mayer, Caruso and Salovey (2016:290-300) highlighted that EI encompasses accurately reasoning about emotions and using emotional insights to enhance cognitive processes. Mayer

and Salovey (1997:3-31) provided for a four-branch ability model, which delineates four interconnected competencies: Perception, that recognising emotions in oneself and others through sensory cues like facial expressions, tone, and posture; Facilitation that encompasses employing emotions effectively to enhance cognitive activities and task performance; Understanding that refers to comprehending the dynamics of emotions, including how they blend and evolve across diverse contexts; and Management that means the regulating of emotions within oneself and others to promote psychological well-being and personal development (Chiseyeng'I *et al.*, 2022:19-25)

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a key construct that is essential for leadership effectiveness, particularly in the context of the SMS. As posited by Goleman (1995), EI involves the ability to recognise and manage one's emotions and those of others. For SMS leaders, high emotional intelligence enables better decision-making, conflict resolution, and the ability to foster teamwork and morale within their departments. EI helps leaders navigate the complexities of public administration, especially in multicultural environments like South Africa's public service. By developing EI, SMS leaders can create a supportive work environment that encourages collaboration, adaptability, and ethical decision-making. This is crucial for responding to crises and maintaining public trust, as illustrated during the COVID-19 pandemic (Hatami *et al.,* 2020).

While EI has gained considerable attention over the past decade, particularly within organisational contexts, definitions and models proposed by various theorists differ substantially, leading to considerable theoretical pluralism (Glynn & Raffaelli, 2010:359-401). This lack of definitional consensus and clarity has drawn significant criticism (Cherniss, 2010:110-126). Notably, three primary models have emerged: the ability model (Mayer & Salovey, 1997:3-31), the mixed model (Goleman, 1995, 2016), and the trait model (Petrides & Furnham, 2018:24-36), the ability model being endorsed as the primary standard due to its rigorous conceptualisation and measurable components (Jordan, Dasborough, & Daus, 2010:145-148; Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2004:197-215).

From the perspective of this study, EI is deemed the capacity to effectively use emotions to enhance reasoning, and to reason intelligently about emotions. EI

reflects how cognitive abilities are influenced by emotions (meaning all of feelings, moods, and emotions) and how well emotions are cognitively managed.

Emotional Intelligence faces substantial criticism, notably regarding measurement and practical application. Mayer, Caruso, and Salovey (1999:267-298) argued that EI lacks reliable, objective measures, resulting in assessments that are subjective and arbitrary. Consequently, EI assessments are often criticised for inconsistency and limited predictive validity regarding leadership effectiveness.

Chiseyeng'I *et al.* (2022:19-25) maintained that while EI was widely recognized as a crucial measure of human intelligence and a predictor of success, its excessive enthusiasm had obscured potential downsides. They contended that the uncritical acceptance and application of EI might be counter-productive to the leadership process. Through a narrative review, the researchers highlighted that blind acceptance of EI could lead to negative outcomes in leadership. They advocated for a balanced view of EI, recognising its importance but also being aware of its limitations. The study underscored the need for a critical examination of EI in contemporary leadership contexts, emphasizing that a more nuanced understanding was essential for effective leadership.

Critics further contend that EI does not constitute a unique form of intelligence. Locke (2005:425-431) argued that EI is better understood as intelligence applied to emotional contexts rather than a distinct form of intelligence, and that EI is more accurately described as a personality trait or interpersonal skill. Subjective self-report methodologies have raised further concerns due to inherent biases, potential misinterpretation, and susceptibility to impression management, especially in organisational settings such as the South African Public Service (Mayer, *et.al.*, 2004:197-215).

There are also ethical considerations which complicate the discourse of EI. Historical examples such as Martin Luther King Jr and Adolph Hitler show that EI can serve ethical purposes by either facilitating positive leadership or be exploited unethically for manipulation (Locke, 2005:425-431). Cherniss (2010) emphasised that the applicability of EI is context dependent. High EI is particularly beneficial in roles requiring substantial interpersonal interactions, while in more analytical professions

like accounting or mechanical roles, high EI may be irrelevant or distracting. Roberts, Zeidner and Matthews (2002) raised the concern that "… might we not some-day soon be reading a book touting the advantages of an emotional elite and the deterioration brought to our society by the emotional underclass" (2002:522) and cautioned that emotionally compelling leaders can diminish critical thinking among followers, potentially leading to harmful outcomes.

Within the reviewed framework for EI proposed by Mayer *et al.* (2016:1-10), emotional reasoning comprises four essential capabilities: perceiving emotions, which entails accurately recognising emotional cues and distinguishing authentic from deceptive emotional expressions; facilitating thought through emotion, which involves using emotional states strategically to prioritise thinking and decision-making; understanding emotions, which includes comprehending emotional meanings, identifying their causes, consequences, transitions, and their cultural contexts; and managing emotions, the highest level of emotional reasoning, which focuses on regulating emotions effectively in oneself and others to achieve organisational objectives and personal growth.

Consequently, despite the complexities and criticisms surrounding emotional intelligence, its thoughtful integration into the SMS behavioural leadership framework in the context of the SMS and the South African Public Service landscape is essential for enhancing leadership capabilities and institutional effectiveness in the South African Public Service.

From the perspective of the SMS in the South African Public Service, emotional intelligence is relevant since these leaders need to manage diverse teams and maintain high levels of morale, particularly in a complex environment, with on-going challenges in governance and public service delivery. Including EI in a behavioural leadership framework provides for an SMS leader that is emotionally resilient and capable of fostering an inclusive and adaptive work environment.

2.5.9.2 Cognitive Flexibility

Cognitive flexibility is the ability to adapt one's thinking and behaviour in response to changing situations and demands, and it is vital for SMS leadership in a dynamic public service environment. As noted by Diamond (2013), cognitive flexibility is

essential for problem-solving, decision-making, and leadership in complex situations, such as those faced by the SMS during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders who exhibit cognitive flexibility can shift between different approaches and strategies, allowing them to respond more effectively to evolving challenges in public administration. This adaptability is closely related to adaptive leadership, where leaders adjust their strategies in real-time to ensure organisational resilience (Heifetz *et al.,* 2009:62-69).

Incorporating cognitive flexibility into the leadership framework would enable SMS leaders to be more adaptive, open to change, and capable of navigating the uncertainties and complexities of public service governance. Leaders who can flexibly approach policy formulation, crisis management, and resource allocation are better equipped to lead effectively in a rapidly changing public service landscape.

2.5.9.3 Analytical Thinking

Analytical Thinking is a crucial concept within a behavioural leadership framework, providing a structured approach to decision-making and problem-solving. Leaders with strong analytical thinking skills are able to break down complex issues into manageable components, examine each element critically, and derive logical solutions based on data and evidence. In the context of the South African Public Service, analytical thinking empowers SMS leaders to assess information methodically, identify patterns and trends, and make informed decisions that drive strategic outcomes. This concept aligns with the need for precision and accountability in public service, where leaders are often required to make high-stakes decisions that impact communities. Analytical thinking fosters a disciplined mindset that prioritises objectivity and reduces the influence of biases, enabling leaders to focus on achieving effective and sustainable solutions.

2.5.9.4 Critical Thinking

Critical Thinking enhances a behavioural leadership framework by equipping leaders with the ability to evaluate information, challenge assumptions, and reflect on the broader implications of their decisions. This cognitive skill allows SMS leaders to question conventional wisdom, scrutinise existing processes, and consider alternative perspectives when addressing issues within the Public Service. In a

leadership context, critical thinking is essential for anticipating potential challenges, recognising risks, and making decisions that are not only logically sound but also ethically grounded. It plays a pivotal role in fostering innovative solutions and encouraging a culture of continuous improvement within public service institutions. By integrating critical thinking into a leadership framework, leaders can develop strategies that are adaptable, forward-looking, and responsive to the dynamic socio-political landscape of South Africa.

2.6 THEORIES AND MODELS OF LEADERSHIP AND MOTIVATION

Leadership is a dynamic process in which a leader guides and influences others toward achieving a shared objective (Northouse, 2016:336). Leadership involves influence, collaboration, and shared objectives. (Northouse, 2016:63). In the context of public administration, leadership is critical for ensuring that the Public Service operates effectively and that the needs of the public are met (Northouse, 2016:1-19). Motivation, on the other hand, refers to the internal and external factors that drive individuals to achieve their goals (Ryan & Deci, 2017b:19-43). In this section, the relationship between leadership and motivation will be explored, with a focus on the role of SMS leaders in motivating their teams to achieve organisational goals.

2.6.1 Leadership

The Public Service of the Republic of South Africa needs leaders that are able to initiate contextual change and take the lead and cause the change required for the successful implementation of public policy and service delivery. Regrettably, the NDP (Republic of South Africa, 2011) and the reports on the State of the Public Service, issued by the PSC (Republic of South Africa, 2017; RSA, 2020) reveal that these traits are not evident in Public Service leadership, resulting in challenges in service delivery.

Post-COVID leadership has evolved to address the unique challenges and complexities that arose during the pandemic. Effective leaders are now required to adapt to rapidly changing environments, manage remote teams, and prioritise employee well-being and mental health. Research indicates that transformational leadership styles, which emphasise empathy, adaptability, and collaboration, are

crucial for fostering resilience and engagement among employees in this new context (Avolio & Gardner, 2005:315-338).

Additionally, leaders are increasingly recognising the importance of digital literacy and the need to leverage technology to enhance communication and operational efficiency. As organisations navigate hybrid work models, leaders must also cultivate a culture of inclusivity and transparency, ensuring that all team members feel valued and connected (Mortensen & Haas, 2021:45-53).

There are numerous theories of leadership, each of which offers a different perspective on how leaders influence their teams. One of the most widely studied leadership theories is transformational leadership, which suggests that leaders can inspire and motivate their teams to achieve exceptional outcomes by creating a shared vision and fostering a sense of commitment and purpose (Bass, 1985). Transformational leaders are often seen as role models, and their behaviour can have a profound impact on the motivation and performance of their teams (Northouse, 2016:175).

2.6.1.1 Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership, as conceptualised by Bass and Avolio (1994), emphasises the importance of inspiring and motivating employees through a shared vision and commitment to change. It has proven effective in the Public Service, where leaders are tasked with driving improvements in performance and service delivery. Transformational leadership positively impacts job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and overall performance within the Public Service (Agazu, Kero & Debela, 2025:1-3; Trottier, Van Wart, & Wang, 2008:319-333). For SMS leaders, adopting this leadership style can inspire teams and foster a commitment to public service values (Bass & Riggio, 2006:58; Trottier *et al.*, 2008:319333). Agazu, Kero and Debela (2025:1-3) confirm that transformational leadership remains the most influential style for enhancing performance, particularly through its influence on innovation and dynamic capability.

Transformational leadership is comprised of four core components: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised

consideration (Bass & Riggio, 2006:6-7). Leaders who demonstrate idealised influence act as ethical role models, engendering trust and respect from followers, an essential trait for public service leaders, where transparency and accountability are paramount (Bass & Riggio, 2006:6, Min, 2024:1-2). Inspirational motivation involves articulating a compelling vision that promotes enthusiasm and commitment, encouraging employees to align their efforts with the organisation's broader goals (Bass & Riggio, 2006:6). Being a leader that can inspire and motivate, fosters organisational cultures grounded in shared values, inclusivity, and strategic alignment (Min, 2024:1-2).

Intellectual stimulation encourages innovation and critical thinking by challenging traditional practices and fostering new ideas to solve public service challenges (Bass & Riggio, 2006:7). In this regard, SMS leaders can promote creative approaches to service delivery reforms and governance issues. Agazu *et al.* (2025:2) determined that intellectual stimulation contributed significantly to organisational innovation, which is increasingly critical for public service responsiveness. Individualised consideration involves giving personalised attention to team members, nurturing their professional development and ensuring that their unique needs are met (Bass & Riggio, 2006:7). This is particularly important in the Public Service, where mentorship and development are crucial for the sustainability of leadership across the sector. Arnold and Connelly (2021:2) confirmed that individualised consideration fosters psychological safety, meaning, and trust, all of which are actors that directly enhance employee well-being and performance.

Al Khajeh (2018:1-10) provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of transformational leadership within diverse organisational contexts. The study examined several leadership styles, including transformational, transactional, autocratic, and democratic leadership, and concluded that transformational leadership is particularly effective in fostering long-term organisational success. Transformational leaders, by inspiring and motivating their teams, create a work environment characterised by high levels of job satisfaction, employee commitment, and productivity (Al Khajeh, 2018:3-5). This style of leadership enables organisations to achieve sustainable performance outcomes through enhanced workforce engagement and strategic alignment.

Al Khajeh (2018:1-10) found transformational leaders have a superior ability to increase employee motivation and engagement. By focusing on individual development and by aligning employees' personal values with organisational goals, transformational leaders foster a culture of empowerment and mutual respect (Al Khajeh, 2018:6-7). This supportive environment not only contributes to employee well-being but also encourages proactive behaviour and a sense of ownership, which are critical for driving performance and innovation in the public service.

Al Khajeh (2018:1-10) provided a comparative analysis of transformational leadership against other leadership styles. The findings indicated that while transactional leadership may be effective for short-term results, and autocratic leadership can ensure control in specific situations, transformational leadership stands out as the most effective style for achieving sustainable performance and cultivating employee well-being (Al Khajeh, 2018:4-6). This is attributed to its participative, visionary, and developmental nature, which allows for greater alignment between leadership objectives and employee aspirations.

For SMS leaders in the South African Public Service, these findings carry important implications. The adoption of transformational leadership practices can enable SMS leaders to build high-performing teams characterised by motivation, commitment, and shared purpose. By promoting an environment of inspiration, innovation, and individual growth, SMS leaders can contribute significantly to public service reform and improved service delivery. In this context, transformational leadership serves not only as a strategic leadership approach but also as a mechanism to foster a positive and resilient organisational culture in the face of ongoing challenges.

Mehdiyev (2024:3049-3061) explored the intersection of transformational leadership with international law and human rights, providing a unique perspective on how leadership styles can influence broader societal outcomes. Mehdiyev (2024:3049) found that transformational leaders promote human rights and ethical governance, and, with their focus on ethical behaviour and moral standards, transformational leaders are well-suited to advocate for human rights and justice and inspire their followers to uphold ethical principles and contribute to societal well-being (Mehdiyev, 2024:3049-3061). Transformational leadership in public institutions has the potential to effect positive change beyond institutional boundaries by fostering trust, integrity,

and a shared vision (Mehdiyev, 2024:3049-3061). Mehdiyev (2025:3049-3061) suggested that adopting transformational leadership can strengthen the leadership response to address complex global challenges by integrating ethical considerations in their day-to-day work.

Parker and Mason (2024:174-182) underscored the role of transformational leadership in fostering adaptive organisations. Leaders who exhibit transformational qualities, such as inspiring a shared vision, fostering innovation, and promoting collaborative efforts, cultivate environments that are responsive to change and capable of navigating complex challenges. This leadership style not only enhances employee motivation and engagement but also drives organizational adaptability, ensuring sustained success in dynamic contexts.

This contemporary approach to transformational leadership argues that leaders have the capacity to adapt and cultivate an organisation that is flexible and responsive to change. A transformational leader is a visionary who creates a compelling vision that inspires total commitment to, and acceptance of, change by followers. This form of leadership stimulates creativity, innovation, and new ideas, enabling the organisation to grow faster and adapt well to the dynamic environment. Transformational leaders develop and communicate a vision to employees, showing consistency in its implementation, which cultivates commitment from employees towards the organisation's vision. This leadership style ignites a positive change in employees' attitudes towards the strategies and goals of the organisation. The concept includes four interrelated constructs: charisma or idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration (Ndlovu, Ngirande, Setati & Zhuwao, 2018:1-7).

Transformational leadership has a positive and significant relationship an employee's emotional attachment to their organization that is characterised by an alignment between personal values and the organization's mission, allowing for positive organisational outcomes, higher job satisfaction and involvement, and extra-role performance (Mercurio, 2015:389-414).

Trottier *et al.* (2008:301-333) highlighted that transformational leadership leads to higher levels of job satisfaction and organisational commitment, which are directly

linked to improved performance. Wright and Pandey (2010:75-89) further observed that transformational leadership is particularly effective in motivating public servants to engage more fully in their roles, a key factor in enhancing service delivery. Damanpour and Schneider (2009:495-522) also identified transformational leadership as critical in fostering innovation, an important consideration for public service institutions facing complex societal challenges and constrained resources. Min (2024:1-3) emphasised the capacity of transformational leaders to align organisational culture with strategic goals by fostering inclusivity, adaptability, and ethical practice, values that are central to democratic governance and public accountability.

In South Africa, SMS leaders face considerable challenges in addressing inefficiency, corruption, and a lack of accountability within the Public Service. Transformational leadership, with its focus on ethical behaviour and innovation, provides a promising pathway to tackle these issues. By acting as ethical role models and driving a vision of public service reform, SMS leaders can build a culture of accountability and transparency (Naidoo, 2019:1-14). By fostering intellectual stimulation, SMS leaders can promote innovation in governance and service delivery, addressing long-standing inefficiencies. Ravet-Brown, *et al.* (2023:496) echoed this by highlighting transformational leadership's role in promoting creativity, innovation, and high employee engagement which are dimensions urgently needed in South Africa's developmental state.

The concept of transformational leadership in public administration has been widely regarded as effective in fostering motivation, ethical governance, and change-oriented approaches that align with public service objectives. This leadership model not only addresses internal organisational needs but also extends to societal expectations, which are increasingly focused on transparency and inclusivity (Abane & Phinaitrup, 2017:28-45; Fourie & Höhne, 2019:1-10). Veinhardt and Gulbovaitė (2022:574–581) further contributed by validating a multidimensional model of leadership that integrates ethical, transformational, and transactional styles to support diverse team and organisational needs, an approach well suited to the South African Public Service context.

The implementation of transformational leadership within the often bureaucratic and hierarchical structures of the Public Service can be challenging. The rigidity of processes and resistance to change may hinder the capacity of leaders to enact transformative changes quickly. Additionally, political interference can complicate efforts to promote transparency and accountability. Despite these challenges, the focus on ethical leadership, innovation, and the individual development of team members provides SMS leaders with significant opportunities to create lasting positive change (Bass & Riggio, 2006:5, 41).

Transformational leadership offers a powerful framework for improving performance and fostering ethical governance in the Public Service. By inspiring their teams through a compelling vision, promoting innovation, and fostering accountability, transformational leaders can make significant contributions to public service reform. The challenges of implementing this leadership style in bureaucratic settings are substantial, but the potential benefits, particularly in enhancing service delivery and promoting a culture of transparency, are considerable (Mehdiyev, 2024:3049-3061; Min, 2024:1-3; Al Khajeh, 2018:1-10; Trottier *et al.*, 2008:319-333; Wright & Pandey, 2010:75-89). As public service institutions in South Africa and beyond continue to face complex challenges, transformational leadership remains a key tool for driving positive change.

2.6.1.2 Adaptive Leadership

Adaptive leadership, introduced by Heifetz *et al.* (2009:62-69), is a leadership theory that emphasises the importance of flexibility and adaptability in dynamic and complex environments. It recognises that leaders must often navigate unpredictable situations that involve competing interests or ambiguous challenges. Unlike traditional leadership approaches, which focus on maintaining stability and control, adaptive leadership encourages leaders to embrace change and mobilise their teams to tackle difficult issues by fostering a culture of learning, innovation, and problem-solving (Heifetz *et al.,* 2009:62-69).

Central to adaptive leadership is the idea that not all challenges can be solved with technical expertise or existing solutions. Heifetz *et al.* (2009:62-69) differentiated between technical and adaptive challenges, where technical challenges can be

addressed with known expertise, while adaptive challenges require learning, innovation, and behavioural change from the leader and the organisation. In adaptive leadership, leaders do not provide all the answers but instead create an environment where individuals within the team collaborate, experiment, and learn to find solutions to complex problems. This process involves encouraging a shift in mindsets, questioning long-standing assumptions, and sometimes letting go of entrenched practices that may no longer be relevant in changing circumstances (Heifetz *et al.,* 2009:62-69).

Adaptive leadership is grounded in several key principles, including the distinction between technical and adaptive challenges, the practice of getting on the "balcony" to gain perspective, and the need to regulate distress within the team. These principles enable leaders to guide their organisations through difficult transitions while maintaining a focus on long-term success (Heifetz *et al.,* 2009:62-69).

Distinguishing Technical from Adaptive Challenges: One of the central tenets of adaptive leadership is the recognition that different types of challenges require different approaches. Technical challenges can be solved by applying existing expertise, while adaptive challenges demand new ways of thinking and learning. Leaders must accurately diagnose the nature of the challenge and involve others in finding innovative solutions (Heifetz *et al.,* 2009:62-69). This principle highlights the importance of flexibility and the need for leaders to adapt their strategies in response to evolving circumstances.

"Getting on the Balcony": Another important principle of adaptive leadership is the ability to take a step back and view the organisation and its challenges from a broader perspective. Heifetz and Linsky (2002:52) described this as "getting on the balcony", a metaphor for gaining distance from day-to-day operations to better understand the larger patterns and dynamics at play. By adopting this detached perspective, leaders can identify underlying issues, power dynamics, and opportunities for change that may not be apparent in the midst of action.

Regulating Distress: In times of change, organisations often experience heightened levels of stress and uncertainty. A critical role for adaptive leaders is to regulate the amount of distress their team experiences. Too little stress can result in

complacency, while too much can lead to dysfunction or burnout. Adaptive leaders need to create a productive level of tension that encourages learning and growth without overwhelming their team (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002:107-116).

Empowering Others to Tackle Adaptive Work: A key aspect of adaptive leadership is the belief that leadership is not the responsibility of a single individual. Adaptive leaders engage and empower others within the organisation to take ownership of problems and work collaboratively towards solutions. This process encourages distributed leadership and fosters a culture of innovation and shared responsibility (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002:13-20, 102-107, 123-126).

In the context of public administration, particularly within the SMS in South Africa, adaptive leadership is highly relevant. Public service leaders often face complex and unpredictable environments, characterised by shifting political, economic, and social conditions. These challenges are compounded by the need to balance competing stakeholder interests, resource constraints, and the demand for accountability and transparency in governance (Ansell & Torfing, 2021:107-135). Adaptive leadership provides a framework that can help SMS leaders navigate these complexities by fostering resilience, adaptability, and a focus on continuous learning (Ansell & Gash, 2008:543-571).

The dynamic and often unpredictable nature of public administration in South Africa demands a leadership style that is flexible, responsive, and capable of addressing systemic challenges. In this context, adaptive leadership can play a critical role in shaping the future of the SMS by equipping leaders with the tools to address not only technical challenges but also the more complex adaptive challenges that require behavioural and cultural changes within institutions (Ansell & Torfing, 2021:107-135).

Ansell and Torfing (2021) asserted that adaptive leadership is particularly well-suited for public service leadership because it recognises the need for leaders to work collaboratively with various stakeholders and navigate multiple layers of governance. This collaborative, network-based approach is essential in addressing the complex social, economic, and political challenges that SMS leaders face in South Africa.

One specific area where adaptive leadership is relevant to SMS is in addressing issues related to service delivery. Many of the challenges faced by the Public

Service in South Africa, such as inefficiency, corruption, and a lack of accountability, require adaptive solutions that go beyond technical fixes. Adaptive leadership encourages leaders in the Public Service to question entrenched practices, engage with diverse stakeholders, and experiment with new approaches to improve service delivery (Ansell & Torfing, 2021:161-192). By fostering a culture of innovation and problem-solving, adaptive leaders can help to create more responsive and resilient public institutions that are better equipped to meet the needs of citizens (Heifetz *et al.,* 2009:62-69).

A key implication of adaptive leadership for the SMS is the need to cultivate a culture of continuous learning and innovation within public institutions. Heifetz and Linsky (2002:63-126) emphasised that adaptive leaders must create environments where individuals are encouraged to challenge existing assumptions, experiment with new approaches, and learn from failure. This culture of learning is critical in the public sector, where leaders must constantly adapt to new policies, regulations, and social expectations.

In practice, this means that SMS leaders must foster open communication, encourage collaboration across departments, and support professional development opportunities for their teams. By promoting a culture of learning, adaptive leaders can help to build the capacity of public institutions to address complex challenges and adapt to changing circumstances (Ansell & Gash, 2008:543-571).

While adaptive leadership offers many benefits, it also presents certain challenges, particularly in hierarchical and bureaucratic settings like the Public Service. Adaptive leadership requires a shift in mindset from traditional, top-down leadership models to a more collaborative and flexible approach. This can be difficult to achieve in organisations that are resistant to change or where power is concentrated at the top (Heifetz *et al.,* 2009:62-69).

Additionally, adaptive leadership requires a high level of emotional intelligence and resilience from leaders, as they must navigate uncertainty, manage conflict, and support their teams through periods of distress. This emotional labour can be challenging, particularly in high-pressure environments where leaders are expected

to “control the temperature” (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002:107) and deliver results while managing complex and unpredictable challenges (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002:107-116).

Adaptive leadership, with its focus on flexibility, innovation, and collaboration, offers a valuable framework for leaders in the public service, particularly within the SMS in South Africa. By distinguishing between technical and adaptive challenges, regulating distress, and empowering others to take ownership of problems, adaptive leaders can navigate the complexities of public administration and foster more responsive, resilient institutions. As the public service continues to face dynamic and unpredictable challenges, adaptive leadership provides a pathway for creating lasting, positive change in governance and service delivery.

2.6.1.3 Servant Leadership

Servant leadership, introduced by Greenleaf (1970), is a leadership philosophy that prioritises service to others as a foundational element, with leadership emerging from the desire to serve. Greenleaf emphasises that the true servant leadership starts with the innate desire to serve others, prioritising their needs above all else. A servant leader consciously chooses to lead with the goal of helping others grow, becoming healthier, wiser, and more independent. The true test of this leadership style is whether those served develop their potential and, in turn, adopt a service mindset. Additionally, servant leadership evaluates its impact on society's most disadvantaged, ensuring they benefit or at least are not further marginalised. (Greenleaf, 1970:15). This philosophy emerged in response to what Greenleaf described as a leadership crisis, where leaders often focused more on criticism than on actionable solutions (Greenleaf, 1970). Greenleaf (1970) encouraged leaders to be "artists of the better future," emphasising the importance of envisioning possibilities, driving innovation, and cultivating progress through solution-oriented leadership.

According to Northouse (2016:239-241), servant leadership is often viewed as a paradox because it challenges traditional views of leadership as power and authority. Instead, servant leaders act as followers first, supporting others’ development and well-being. This raises critical questions regarding leadership's role in hierarchical structures: how can a leader be both a servant and a leader simultaneously?

(Northouse, 2016:239-241). DePree (2002:89-100) noted that servant leadership's moral foundation offers a framework for addressing unethical practices and inefficiencies, particularly in the public service. Kgatle (2018:1-9) highlighted the relevance of servant leadership in South Africa's leadership crisis, arguing that while the Republic of South Africa Development Plan provides a clear vision, leadership execution remains a challenge. Servant leadership, with its focus on ethics and accountability, offers a potential solution to these issues by cultivating leaders who serve the public rather than their personal gain (Kgatle, 2018:1-9).

Greenleaf's thinking was influenced by Hermann Hesse's *The Journey to the East* (1956), which tells the story of a servant who, through his humble actions, led a group of travellers (Northouse, 2016:227). This allegory underscores Greenleaf's notion that true leadership is about serving others and enabling their success (Northouse, 2016:227). Spears (2002:1-16) identified ten key characteristics of servant leadership, such as listening, empathy, and stewardship, based on Greenleaf's work. These characteristics illustrate the servant leader's role in fostering a supportive and ethical environment where followers can thrive (Spears, 2002:1-16; Northouse, 2016). Listening and empathy, for instance, are critical to building trust, while stewardship emphasises the leader's duty to care for the broader community and future generations (Spears, 2002:1-16; Northouse, 2016:239-241).

Northouse (2016:231-238) expanded on these ideas through a model that outlines three key components of servant leadership: antecedent conditions, servant leader behaviours, and leadership outcomes. Liden, Wayne, Zhao, and Henderson (2008:161-177) offered a detailed servant leadership model that links these components to specific organisational outcomes. Antecedent conditions, such as the organisational culture and the leader's personal attributes, shape how effectively servant leadership is practised. Leaders with a deep desire to serve and ethical responsibility are more likely to succeed in this model (Liden *et al.,* 2008:161-177; Northouse, 2016:231-238).

Servant leader behaviours, such as putting followers first and emotional healing, are central to the leadership process. These behaviours not only promote the well-being of followers but also contribute to a positive and productive organisational culture. When leaders prioritise the growth of their team members, they build trust, loyalty,

and engagement, resulting in higher levels of team performance and overall organisational success (Liden *et al.,* 2008:161-177; Northouse, 2016:231-238).

The outcomes of servant leadership are both individual and collective. On an individual level, followers experience personal growth and greater job satisfaction. Organisationally, servant leadership improves team cohesion, increases employee retention, and fosters innovation (Liden *et al.,* 2008:161-177). Importantly, servant leadership also has broader societal implications: it encourages leaders to prioritise the needs of the community, creating more equitable and inclusive organisations that contribute to societal well-being (Northouse, 2016:239).

In the context of the SMS in South Africa, servant leadership presents a valuable framework for addressing the leadership challenges facing the Public Service (Kgatle, 2018:1-9). In the Ten-Year Review of the NDP, (Republic of South Africa, 2023a:38) the NPC argues that while the Republic of South Africa Development Plan provides a clear vision, there is a lack of leadership that is necessary to execute these plans effectively. Servant leadership, with its focus on ethical behaviour, personal accountability, and the development of others, offers a potential solution by fostering a leadership culture that prioritises service to the public over personal gain (Kgatle, 2018:1-9).

For SMS leaders, adopting a servant leadership approach means placing the needs of citizens and employees at the forefront of decision-making processes. This requires a shift from a top-down leadership style to one that values collaboration, empathy, and shared responsibility. By promoting the growth and well-being of their teams, SMS leaders can build stronger, more resilient public institutions that are better equipped to serve the needs of the country (Liden *et al.,* 2008:161-177; Northouse, 2016:231-238). Servant leadership aligns with the ethical standards outlined in the SMS handbook and competency framework, which emphasise integrity, accountability, and respect for others (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003a: Chapter 6).

Servant leadership provides a compelling framework for addressing the complex challenges facing the SMS in the South African Public Service. By fostering a culture of ethical governance, personal accountability, and service to others, servant

leadership offers a pathway towards more effective and responsive public institutions. As Greenleaf's theory continues to evolve, its relevance to modern leadership contexts, particularly in the public service, remains strong, offering valuable insights for leaders seeking to create positive, lasting change (Liden *et al.,* 2008:161-177; Northouse, 2016:231-238).

2.6.1.4 Situational Leadership

Situational leadership theory posits that leadership effectiveness is contingent upon the leader's ability to adapt to varying situations rather than relying solely on inherent traits. Early studies by Lewin (1935), Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1958), McGregor (1960), and Stogdill (1974) explored leadership behaviours but were later expanded by contingency approaches, such as Vroom and Yetton's (1973) decision-making model. This model emphasises that effective leadership styles must vary according to situational factors, including decision quality, subordinate commitment, and time constraints (Northouse, 2016:99, Yukl, 2017 :107).

House (1971:324) explained that a leader's role is to enhance the rewards for subordinates by helping them achieve their goals and by simplifying the path towards those rewards. This involves clarifying tasks, removing obstacles, and creating opportunities for personal growth along the way. Similarly, House and Dessler (1974:13) highlighted that leader behaviour influences subordinate satisfaction, either by providing immediate satisfaction or by being perceived as a means to future satisfaction. Depending on the circumstances, leadership behaviour can impact both satisfaction and performance, either in similar or distinct ways.

The Vroom-Yetton Normative Decision Model and the Situational Leadership Models by Hersey and Blanchard (1969) both address the need for flexibility in leadership but from different angles (Yukl, 2017:167).

Vroom and Yetton (1973) emphasised that decision-making is central to leadership effectiveness, proposing a model that allows leaders to choose from autocratic, consultative, or group decision-making styles based on the specific situational context (Yukl, 2017:112-114). Their model identifies key situational factors, such as decision complexity and the necessity for subordinate involvement, to guide leaders in selecting the most appropriate style. For example, in time-sensitive situations, an

autocratic approach might be preferred, whereas consultative or group decision-making is more suitable when input from team members is essential. This flexibility in choosing decision-making styles aims to optimise decision quality and team satisfaction (Yukl, 2017:112-114; Northouse, 2016:104-115).

In contrast, Hersey and Blanchard (1969) focused on the maturity levels of followers relative to task requirements. Their Situational Leadership Model categorises leadership styles into four types: Telling, Selling, Participating, and Delegating. Each style is matched with different levels of follower competence and commitment. For instance, the Telling style is directive and effective for followers with low competence, while the Delegating style is more appropriate for highly skilled followers who can operate with less oversight. This model highlights the importance of adapting leadership behaviour to follower needs, which can enhance overall team effectiveness (Northouse, 2016:93-112, Yukl, 2017:165-166).

Building on the original situational leadership framework, Blanchard's Situational Leadership II (SLII) model (1985) introduces two dimensions: directive and supportive behaviour. This model outlines four distinct styles namely Directing, Coaching, Supporting, and Delegating, while emphasising the need for leaders to diagnose each situation and adapt their leadership style based on the developmental levels of followers. This adaptability ensures that leaders can effectively support their teams according to their competence and commitment levels (Blanchard *et al.,* 2013:13; Northouse, 2016:103).

While both the Vroom-Yetton and Hersey and Blanchard models stress adaptability, they operate in different dimensions of leadership. The Vroom-Yetton model is primarily decision-focused, guiding leaders on how to approach decision-making processes based on situational factors. In contrast, the Situational Leadership models emphasise the leader-follower dynamic, providing frameworks for leaders to adjust their styles according to the competence and commitment of their followers.

Both models are particularly relevant for leaders in the Public Service, where the ability to respond to complex and evolving challenges is critical. By integrating the decision-making strategies of the Vroom-Yetton model with the adaptive behaviours outlined in the Situational Leadership models, leaders can enhance their

effectiveness, foster employee engagement, and improve overall organisational performance (Northouse, 2016:93-103; Yukl, 2017:180).

The situational leadership approach holds significant relevance for SMS leaders in the South African Public Service, where the need for adaptability in response to varying levels of follower competence and organisational challenges is paramount. By employing flexible leadership styles, as articulated in the models developed by Hersey, Blanchard, and Vroom, SMS leaders can effectively navigate the complex dynamics inherent in public service settings, thereby enhancing team performance and commitment (Northouse, 2016:93-103; Trottier *et al.,* 2008:301-333).

The situational leadership approach provides valuable insights into the adaptive nature of effective leadership, especially in public service contexts, where dynamic and complex environments necessitate that leaders adjust their styles to meet the needs of their teams and the specific situational contexts. Models such as Vroom and Yetton's decision-making framework and Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership theory offer structured methodologies for determining the most appropriate leadership response, enabling leaders to optimise team performance and organisational effectiveness (Northouse, 2016:93-107).

2.6.1.5 Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership plays a crucial role in public service, where the demands for ethical governance, accountability, and transparency are paramount (Walumbwa *et al.,* 2008:89-106). Public service leaders often face complex challenges that require not only effective decision-making but also a deep commitment to serving the public interest (Germain & Scandura, 2020:321-338). Authentic leadership, emphasising self-awareness, transparency, and ethical conduct, aligns closely with the core values of public service (Luthans & Avolio, 2003:241-258; Northouse, 2016:202; Shamir & Eilam, 2005:395-471).

In the public service, authentic leaders foster trust and engagement among employees and constituents. By being transparent about their values and decisions, these leaders create an environment where team members feel valued and empowered to contribute. This is particularly important in public service, where leaders are tasked with managing resources responsibly while addressing the

diverse needs of the community (Avolio & Gardner, 2005:315-338; Walumbwa *et al.,* 2008:89-106). Research indicates that authentic leadership positively impacts job satisfaction and organisational commitment, which are critical for maintaining a motivated and effective workforce in public service (Germain *& Scandura,* 2020:321-338).

Authentic leadership enhances ethical decision-making in public service. Leaders who operate from an internalised moral perspective are more likely to consider the ethical implications of their decisions, prioritising the well-being of citizens over personal or political gain. This commitment to ethical conduct is essential in public administration, where leaders must navigate the complexities of competing interests and societal expectations (Luthans & Avolio, 2003:241-258; Shamir & Eilam, 2005:395-471). The emphasis on moral integrity within authentic leadership can help to mitigate issues such as corruption and mismanagement, ultimately contributing to better governance outcomes.

Authentic leadership promotes a culture of accountability within public service organisations. By encouraging open dialogue and feedback, authentic leaders create mechanisms for accountability that empower employees to take ownership of their roles and responsibilities. This culture not only enhances individual performance but also strengthens the overall effectiveness of public service organisations (Henriksen & Dayton, 2006:265-275). As public service leaders model accountability through their own actions, they inspire similar behaviour among their teams, fostering a sense of collective responsibility towards serving the community.

In summary, authentic leadership is highly relevant to public service, providing a framework for ethical governance, trust-building, and accountability. By embodying the principles of authenticity, public service leaders can inspire their teams, enhance organisational performance, and better serve the needs of their communities. As the public service continues to face complex challenges, the principles of authentic leadership offer a pathway for fostering resilient, engaged, and ethically responsible organisations

2.6.1.6 Distributed Leadership

Distributed leadership is a contemporary leadership model that decentralises authority and encourages shared responsibility among team members within an organisation. This approach contrasts with traditional hierarchical leadership, which typically concentrates decision-making power in the hands of a few individuals at the top of the organisation. Distributed leadership fosters collaboration, empowerment, and engagement among all members, which can enhance organisational performance and adaptability (Yukl, 2017:294-295). Recent research has further highlighted the importance of distributed leadership in enhancing organisational effectiveness (Bolden, 2020:253–269; Thorpe, Gold, & Lawler, 2021:583-600).

A hallmark of distributed leadership is its emphasis on collaboration and collective decision-making. This model operates on the premise that leadership is not confined to a single individual but is a shared process involving multiple stakeholders. Gronn (2002:423-451) described distributed leadership as a collective or group approach to leadership that engages various participants in the decision-making process. This approach has gained further validation in recent studies, with Bolden (2020:253–269) emphasising that distributed leadership promotes a more inclusive and adaptive decision-making process.

Another critical aspect of distributed leadership is its focus on empowerment. By distributing leadership roles across an organisation, individuals at all levels are encouraged to take initiative, share their insights, and contribute to the leadership process. This empowerment fosters a sense of ownership and accountability, leading to higher levels of engagement and motivation among team members (Harris, 2008:31-34). Jones, Harvey, Lefoe, and Ryland (2021:213-227) claimed that in higher education, distributed leadership has been instrumental in fostering collaboration across professional and academic roles, improving institutional performance.

The implementation of distributed leadership can significantly influence organisational culture. It promotes an environment of trust and collaboration, where individuals feel valued for their contributions and are more likely to engage in open communication and teamwork (Harris, 2013:545-554). In the Public Service, this

collaborative culture can enhance service delivery and improve responsiveness to community needs by leveraging the diverse skills and perspectives of staff members.

Distributed leadership aligns well with contemporary views on leadership development, emphasising the need for continuous learning and adaptation. By cultivating leadership capabilities among all employees, organisations can build a more resilient workforce capable of navigating change and addressing complex challenges effectively (Gronn, 2002:423-451; Harris, 2008:31-34). Fitzsimons, James and Denyer (2022:35-51) pointed out that while distributed leadership enhances adaptability, it also requires careful management of power dynamics to avoid potential conflicts that can arise in collective decision-making processes.

Despite its advantages, distributed leadership is not without challenges. The shift from traditional hierarchical models to a more distributed approach can create confusion regarding roles and responsibilities, especially if they are not clearly defined. Effective communication and collaboration are essential to ensure that all members understand their roles in the leadership process. Additionally, organisational structures may need to evolve to support this approach, requiring ongoing training and development for staff to enhance their leadership capabilities (Harris, 2013:545-554). Thorpe, Gold and Lawler (2021:583-600) noted that in corporate environments, distributed leadership can sometimes struggle to align with existing power structures, leading to resistance or inefficiencies if not managed properly.

In summary, distributed leadership presents a compelling model for fostering collaboration, empowerment, and innovation within organisations. By decentralising authority and encouraging shared responsibility, public service leaders can create a more engaged and adaptable workforce, better equipped to meet the needs of their communities. As organisations continue to navigate complex and dynamic environments, the principles of distributed leadership offer valuable insights into enhancing organisational effectiveness and fostering a culture of collective leadership (Bolden, 2020:253-269; Fitzsimons *et al.,* 2022:35-51).

2.6.1.7 African Leadership

Defining African leadership is a nuanced task, with various sources offering perspectives that converge on key themes. Lerutla and Steyn (2023:2) observed that leadership is often framed within Western paradigms. The two authors found that African leadership is characterised by agility, an entrepreneurial spirit, and the value of *Ubuntu.* This is in contrast with the structured nature of Western leadership.

African Leadership embraces the notion of communal responsibility, empathy, and consensus-driven decision-making, distinguishing African leadership from the more individualistic models prevalent in the Global North. Core traditions, such as respect for elders, community participation, and prioritising collective well-being over personal ambition, shape the leadership approach (Zvavahera, 2025:62-79). Leadership, from this perspective, is not an individual pursuit of power but a responsibility to serve the organisation and guide it towards success while ensuring social cohesion.

Pillay, Subban and Govender (2013:98) defined African leadership as a leadership style or model aims to find African solutions to local problems and places an emphasis on the principles of *Ubuntu* that entails humanness and moral regeneration, as well as *Umoja* that refers to togetherness. The definition proposed by Pillay *et al. (*2013:82), stressed that humans achieve true fulfilment only through meaningful connections and relationships within a community. Correspondingly, Metz (2020:46) described African leadership as grounded in the value of communion. True leadership according to Metz (2020:46) requires communal relations, while enabling others to do the same. Metz (2020:46) maintained that African leadership closely aligns with servant leadership, where the leader uses communicable relationships to help others realise their social nature.

The relevance of African leadership to the 2025 Public Service in the Republic of South Africa is significant. South Africa, with its diverse cultural landscape, stands to benefit from leadership approaches rooted in African philosophies. The emphasis on *Ubuntu*, as highlighted by both Lerutla and Steyn (2025:7) and Pillay *et al.* (2013:108), with its core values of respect for the dignity of others, group solidarity, teamwork, service, and interdependence (Pillay *et al.,* 2013:105), directly addressed

the need for a human-centred and ethical public service as is described by the National Development Plan (National Planning Commission, 2013:Section 13) and the Professionalisation Framework (National School of Government, 2023:i-v). The call for leaders with honesty, integrity, and a vision of a better life for all (Pillay *et al.*, 2013:102) aligned with the constitutional values and aims of the Republic of South Africa state. The recognition that African solutions are required for African problems (Pillay *et al.*, 2013:100) underscored the importance of contextualised leadership and a need to move beyond the known Western models of leadership (Nkomo, 2011: 365–386; Pillay *et al.*, 2013:106).

The relevance of African leadership to improved public service delivery is equally important. The principles of *Ubuntu* foster a sense of collective responsibility and care. This is fundamental to a public service mandated to serve all citizens and residents of the country. A leadership style characterised by humility, empathy, and care (Lerutla & Steyn, 2025:30), can lead to more responsive and citizen-centric public service delivery. The emphasis on consensual democracy in public decision-making (Metz, 2020:50) suggested the value of inclusive approaches that consider the needs and perspectives of both public servants and the communities they serve. By cultivating a sense of togetherness, sympathy, and compassion (Metz, 2020:52), leaders can foster a more motivated and dedicated workforce, ultimately leading to more effective, efficient, and cost-effective (economical) public service delivery. The focus on ethical leadership, imbued with efficacy, integrity, and accountability (Pillay *et al.*, 2013:127) is essential for combating corruption and ensuring that public resources are used effectively to benefit all the citizens and residents of the Republic of South Africa. The entrepreneurial spirit and agility associated with African leadership (Lerutla & Steyn, 2025:2) can also contribute to innovative solutions for public service delivery challenges within the country's context.

African leadership is deeply rooted in communal values, ethical governance, and collective responsibility, distinguishing it from more individualistic leadership models common in Western traditions. Central to African leadership is the concept of *Ubuntu*, a philosophy that emphasises interconnectedness and the idea that an individual's identity and success are tied to the well-being of the community. As Mangaliso (2001:23-33) noted, *Ubuntu* promotes teamwork, collaboration, and

mutual respect, with leaders viewing their success as dependent on the success of their team and the broader community. In the context of the SMS, *Ubuntu* encourages leaders to prioritise the well-being of their teams and the public they serve, fostering an inclusive and participatory leadership style that aligns closely with servant leadership principles.

The concept of *Ubuntu* enhances ethical leadership within the Public Service- as well as Public Sector by ensuring that public decision-making is driven by a commitment to the greater good. Lutz (2009:313-328) emphasised that African leadership is inherently ethical, with leaders expected to act with integrity, maintain strong moral principles, and create environments where trust and collective accountability are paramount. In the SMS, this approach can enhance transparency and trust within public service institutions and between the government and the communities they serve. By integrating *Ubuntu* into the leadership framework, public service leaders can build cohesive teams dedicated to ethical governance and equitable service delivery (Lutz, 2009:313-328; Mantzaris & Pillay, 2014:53-66).

One of the defining features of African leadership is its emphasis on collective decision-making and consensus-building. In traditional African leadership structures, leaders consult with various stakeholders to ensure decisions reflect the collective wisdom of the group (Bolden & Kirk, 2009:69-86). This approach is highly relevant to the Public Service sector leadership, where the diversity of perspectives and stakeholder involvement is critical for effective governance. The consensus-driven nature of African leadership aligns with distributed leadership principles, where leadership roles are shared, and decisions are made collectively. Poovan, du Toit, and Engelbrecht (2006:17-27) highlighted the effectiveness of *Ubuntu*-inspired leadership in enhancing team cohesion and collaboration, noting that team effectiveness improves when leaders and team members are aligned in their values and work towards a common goal.

African leadership incorporates strong moral authority, requiring leaders to serve as role models of ethical behaviour and integrity. Nkomo (2011:365-386) asserted that African leadership is not solely about achieving outcomes but also about how those outcomes are achieved, focusing on upholding communal values and moral leadership. In the context of the SMS, incorporating these elements of moral

authority can help foster a culture of accountability and ethical decision-making, crucial for maintaining public trust (Nkomo, 2011:365-386).

Through *Ubuntu*, African leadership significantly influences organisational culture by fostering a sense of community and shared purpose. Leaders are expected to cultivate a workplace environment where individuals feel valued for their contributions and are encouraged to collaborate openly. Karsten and Illa (2005:607-620) and Chetty and Price (2024:1-10) discussed how applying *Ubuntu* in modern institutions can enhance cohesion and trust, leading to better team dynamics and stronger institutional performance. In public service, this emphasis on community and mutual support can lead to better public service delivery, as leaders and staff-members work together to address the needs of the communities they serve (Poovan, du Toit, & Engelbrecht, 2006:17-27; Karsten & Illa, 2005:607-620).

African leadership also faces challenges, particularly when applied in more hierarchical or bureaucratic structures, such as the Public Service sector. While consensus-building is a core strength, it can slow decision-making when swift actions are required. Additionally, Lutz (2009:313-328) pointed out that *Ubuntu*-based leadership may face resistance in highly competitive or individualistic institutional cultures. With proper training and a focus on integrating these values into the institutional structure, African leadership can offer a powerful framework for leading in complex and dynamic environments like the Public Service (Lutz, 2009:313-328; Bolden & Kirk, 2009:69-86).

African leadership, with its emphasis on community, moral authority, and collective public decision-making, offers a unique and valuable approach to leadership in the Public Service sector of the Republic of South Africa. By incorporating the principles of *Ubuntu*, leaders in the SMS can cultivate ethical, inclusive, and effective leadership practices that promote accountability, collaboration, and trust within their teams and the communities they serve. As institutions face increasingly complex challenges, the communal and ethical focus of African leadership provides critical insights for fostering leadership that is both transformative and responsive to the needs of the public. African traditions, particularly the philosophy of *Ubuntu,* cultivate leaders who prioritise service and the well-being of their communities. These leaders embody transformative and responsive leadership, addressing the complex

challenges faced by contemporary institutions and organizations. (Nkomo, 2011:365-386; Zvavahera, 2025:62-79).

Zvavahera (2025:62-79) challenges the notion of leadership as a rigid and universal construct, advocating for a dynamic model shaped by various factors such as political acumen, social interactions, emotional intelligence, spiritual beliefs, and rational thought. This multi-dimensional perspective moves beyond the norm in leadership theory that heavily rely on logic and rational thinking. In acknowledging the complexity of African leadership, it becomes crucial to incorporate diverse elements such as values, ethics, and social structures into leadership theories and practices.

African leadership is characterised by the pursuit of solutions to local problems, with a strong emphasis on *Ubuntu*, which highlights humaneness and moral regeneration, and "Umoja," meaning togetherness (Ogude, 2019:12). This leadership approach necessitates wise, ethical, and compassionate leaders for the prosperity of Africa, and the Republic of South Africa in particular. A significant challenge for SMS leaders is avoiding the mistakes of past generations, ensuring revival and resurgence of Africa, where character is prioritised over the skin colour (Metz, 2020:41-56).

Ubuntu is presented as a central model for African leadership, focusing on the dignity of people and a collectivist worldview. The core values of *Ubuntu* include respect for others, group solidarity, teamwork, service, and interdependence. *Ubuntu*, a deeply rooted African philosophy, promotes sharing, caring, inclusivity, and communalism. It is built on the principle that a person is a person through other persons, emphasising the importance of community- and mutual respect.

African leadership is inclusive, prioritising collective growth rather than authoritative control. These values contribute to a people-centred, ethical, and holistic leadership approach, which contrasts with hierarchical, authority-driven models. The influence of this leadership style is evident across political, business, and social sectors in Africa (Zvavahera, 2025:62-79).

Relutla and Steyn (2025:1-23) offer a framework for a more comprehensive understanding of leadership in Sub-Saharan Africa and emphasise the importance of

integrating cultural values, particularly *Ubuntu*, into discussions of leadership effectiveness. Key aspects and values in African leadership are deeply rooted in indigenous philosophies and are vital in shaping leadership practices on the continent. *Ubuntu* stands out as a foundational concept in African leadership, emphasising humaneness, respect for the dignity of people, reciprocity, communalism, inclusivity, harmony, and a shared destiny. It is often encapsulated by the aphorism "I am because we are" (Lerutla & Steyn, 2023:16), reflecting the interconnectedness of individuals within a community. *Ubuntu* is associated with human excellence and the moral imperative of recognising and respecting others (Metz, 2020:42). In addition, traditionalism, communalism, and co-operative teamwork are central to African management thought, reflecting a collectivist approach to leadership and collaboration (Pillay, 2023:1-19).

One prominent approach in African leadership is synergistic inspirational leadership, which integrates traditional African values, such as *Ubuntu*, with Western leadership practices. This synthesis creates a leadership model that is both culturally relevant and globally informed (Pillay, 2023:1-19).

Effective African leaders are expected to exhibit certain qualities and skills. They should be visionary and inspirational, motivating others towards a common goal (Pillay, 2023:1-19). These leaders should be empowering and supportive, respecting the dignity of individuals and fostering an environment that empowers others (Lerutla & Steyn, 2023:16). Similarly for the SMS leader in the South African Public Service, an inclusive and consultative leadership style is vital, ensuring that all voices are heard, all contributions are considered, and all service delivery goals are achieved.

2. 6. 2 Motivation

A key aspect of the behavioural leadership framework for the SMS lies in understanding the role of motivation in driving effective leadership. Motivated leaders not only inspire their teams but also foster an environment where individuals feel valued and engaged, ultimately enhancing organisational performance (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Goleman, 1995:169).

Motivation plays a crucial role in shaping the behaviours and performance of leaders and employees within organisations. In the context of leadership and public service,

understanding the dynamics of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations is essential for developing a behavioural leadership framework that fosters both personal fulfilment and effective organisational outcomes. Intrinsic motivation refers to engaging in activities for their inherent satisfaction, interest, or challenge, while extrinsic motivation involves performing tasks to obtain external rewards or avoid negative outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2017:280-290). Both forms of motivation are important for SMS leaders in the public service, as they influence how leaders and employees perceive their roles, engage with their work, and contribute to organisational goals.

Intrinsic motivation is particularly valuable for fostering creativity, commitment, and ethical behaviour. When leaders and employees are intrinsically motivated, they are more likely to exhibit behaviours that align with personal values and the intrinsic rewards of public service, such as making a meaningful impact on society or contributing to the common good. In the SMS, intrinsic motivation can drive leaders to pursue public service excellence not for external rewards, but out of a deep commitment to the mission and values of the public service. According to Olafsen, Deci, and Halvari (2018:178-189), satisfying basic psychological needs enhances intrinsic motivation, which in turn leads to higher levels of engagement and well-being. For public service leaders, fostering an environment where intrinsic motivation is encouraged, through opportunities for professional growth, autonomy, and meaningful work, can lead to more ethical and innovative leadership practices (Gagné, 2018a, 83-104; Gagné, 2018b:1-5; Gagné & Deci, 2005:331-362).

On the other hand, extrinsic motivation is also a powerful tool for aligning employee behaviour with organisational goals, particularly in structured environments such as the public service. Extrinsic motivators, such as salary, bonuses, promotions, or public recognition, can provide clear incentives for employees to perform well, adhere to organisational policies, and achieve measurable outcomes (Kuvaas, Buch, Weibel, Dysvik, & Nerstad, 2017:244-258). In the SMS, extrinsic motivation is often tied to performance management systems and formal reward structures designed to reinforce desired behaviours and outcomes. Solely relying on extrinsic rewards may undermine intrinsic motivation over time (Ryan & Deci, 2017:280-290). Leaders need to balance extrinsic incentives with strategies that promote intrinsic motivation to ensure long-term commitment and ethical behaviour.

In developing a behavioural leadership framework for the SMS, understanding the balance between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations is critical. SMS leaders must recognise that while extrinsic incentives can motivate employees to meet targets and adhere to guidelines, fostering intrinsic motivation is key to cultivating long-term commitment, creativity, and ethical behaviour. Leaders who create opportunities for autonomy, competence development, and relatedness can help their teams tap into intrinsic sources of motivation, leading to more sustainable and ethical outcomes in public service (Ryan & Deci, 2017:280-290; Olafsen, Deci, & Halvari, 2018:178-189).

Intrinsic motivation aligns closely with authentic leadership and servant leadership models, where leaders focus on personal growth, community impact, and ethical conduct. By fostering an organisational culture that values both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, the SMS can encourage a leadership style that balances personal fulfilment with organisational goals, ultimately driving higher levels of engagement, innovation, and ethical governance in the public service.

2. 6. 2. 1 Public Service Motivation (PSM)

Public Service Motivation (PSM) refers to the motivational force that drives individuals to deliver public goods and serve the community, often prioritising societal welfare over personal gain (Perry, Hondeghem & Wise, 1990). This type of motivation is particularly important in public administration because it fosters a sense of duty, responsibility, and dedication to serving the public interest. PSM has been widely studied in the field of public management, with scholars agreeing that individuals possessing high levels of PSM are more committed to their work and likely to perform better in roles that require public engagement and service delivery (Perry, Hondeghem, & Wise, 2010). This makes PSM a critical element for SMS leaders to understand and foster within their teams.

SMS leaders can cultivate PSM by promoting a sense of purpose that aligns with the broader goals of public service. Vandenabeele and Schott (2020:63-79) asserted that when public service institutions align their missions with the intrinsic values of public service, employees are more likely to experience higher levels of PSM, which translates into better job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and job performance. According to recent research by Liu, Tang, and Zhu (2021:1024-1044), PSM not only influences individual behaviour but also enhances collective

organisational outcomes by fostering an environment of trust, collaboration, and shared values. For SMS leaders, promoting a culture that emphasises public service values, ethical governance, and societal impact can inspire employees to contribute more meaningfully to public service goals, even in the face of challenges such as limited resources or political pressures.

Research has identified several key drivers of PSM, including individual predispositions, organisational culture, and job design. Perry, Hondeghem, and Wise (2010:681-690) explained that individuals with a strong sense of altruism, empathy, and civic duty are more likely to be drawn to public service roles, where they can fulfil their desire to contribute to the public good. Organisational factors, such as leadership practices, transparency, and opportunities for public interaction, can also significantly influence PSM levels. For example, a transparent and accountable organisational culture that supports ethical decision-making and recognises contributions to the public good can enhance employees' intrinsic motivation to serve (Liu, Tang, & Zhu, 2021:1024-1044).

The outcomes of high PSM are critical for the success of public service organisations. Employees with higher PSM demonstrate stronger organisational commitment, are less likely to leave their positions, and tend to perform their roles with greater diligence and care (Kim, 2012:830-840). Additionally, a workforce motivated by public service is more resilient in the face of adversity, as employees are driven by a higher purpose beyond financial incentives or external rewards (Perry, Hondeghem, & Wise, 2010:681-690). For SMS leaders, fostering PSM is not only about improving individual performance but also about enhancing the overall effectiveness of public service institutions.

SMS leaders can actively foster PSM by aligning organisational goals with public service values, providing opportunities for meaningful work, and recognising the importance of ethical governance. As Vandenabeele and Schott (2020:63-79) pointed out, when employees perceive that their work contributes to the greater good and aligns with their personal values, they are more likely to be motivated to go above and beyond their basic job requirements. Liu, Tang and Zhu (2021:1024-1044) highlighted the role of leadership in promoting PSM by encouraging a work environment where Public Service values are prioritised and recognised. Leaders

can also create job designs that allow employees to engage directly with the public, giving them the opportunity to see the tangible impacts of their work, which can further enhance PSM.

The prevalence of fraud and corruption across all RSA government entities and levels within public service institutions are of major concern to the country. The government's top priority is to uphold honesty, ethics, and integrity within the Public Service. Corruption undermines the quality of public services, disproportionately harming the poor and depriving them of the services they rightfully deserve. (Mchunu, 2020a, online). Recent studies show that PSM can explain and contribute to increased ethical behaviour in the workplace (Wright *et al.,* 2016:647-663), and improved and ethical decision-making (Christensen & Wright, 2018:1-8).

Finally, SMS leaders should focus on fostering a culture of ethical leadership and transparency, as these elements are essential in promoting trust and commitment within the Public Service. Ethical leadership serves as a model for public servants, reinforcing the values of accountability, integrity, and dedication to the public good (Kim, 2012:830-840). By embedding these practices into the daily operations of public service institutions, SMS leaders can create a work environment that not only enhances PSM but also ensures the delivery of high-quality public services that benefit society at large.

2. 6. 2. 2 Leadership and Motivation in the South African Context

In the South African Public Service, leadership and motivation play critical roles in addressing the country’s unique challenges, including persistent inequality, social unrest, and the legacy of apartheid. These socio-economic issues continue to shape the public service and demand that SMS leaders develop strategies to foster motivation and drive positive change (van Wart, 2013:521-543). Effective leadership is essential not only for improving service delivery but also for guiding teams through complex political and social environments. By understanding the diverse cultural dimensions of leadership and motivation, SMS leaders can inspire their teams to pursue a more equitable and just society while enhancing organisational performance (Naidoo, 2019:1-14).

Leadership in the Public Service must also address structural and systemic inequalities that impact the workforce and the communities they serve (Ospina & Foldy, 2010:292-307). As Araya-Orrelana (2021:463-480) emphasised, leaders need to be equipped with the skills to manage both the internal organisational dynamics and the broader societal pressures that influence the Public Service. By aligning leadership practices with values of social justice and ethical governance, SMS leaders can motivate their teams to actively contribute to reducing inequality and promoting sustainable development. Contemporary research suggests that leaders who foster a culture of inclusivity, participation, and shared purpose are more likely to achieve higher levels of employee motivation and engagement, which are crucial for effective service delivery in South Africa's Public Service (Tummers & Knies, 2016:121-135).

For SMS leaders, understanding these dynamics is key to developing leadership approaches that not only address immediate organisational challenges but also contribute to long-term societal transformation. Recent studies highlight the importance of ethical leadership and transformational leadership in motivating public servants to align their work with broader societal goals, such as reducing poverty and promoting social cohesion (Mantzaris & Pillay, 2014:53-66). By fostering a leadership culture that integrates these elements, Public Service leaders can inspire their teams to contribute to meaningful social change and improved service delivery outcomes.

2.7 PUBLIC SERVICE LEADERSHIP

Due to its constitutional, societal, and service-oriented mandate, leadership in the Public Service is both complex and distinct from leadership in the private sector. According to Ferguson, Ronayne and Rybacki (2014:5-7), public service leaders frequently mentioned that managing and motivating subordinates, balancing a plethora of priorities, building and leading teams, and improving institutional performance as core challenges in their place of work. These challenges continue to be compounded by constrained resources, public scrutiny, bureaucratic red tape, and a workforce often demoralised by structural inefficiencies and limited reward systems. In such environments, traditional hierarchical leadership styles often proved inadequate (Ferguson, *et al.,* 2014:5-7).

One of the most pressing leadership needs is noted as the ability to motivate and inspire subordinates in the face of systemic inertia. Public servants are frequently asked to do more with less, often without recognition or adequate support, which significantly affects morale and productivity (Ferguson *et al.,* 2014:4-6). Leaders in public service should be behaviourally intelligent, demonstrating emotional regulation, empathy, adaptability, and influence, especially when addressing resistance, burnout, or organisational lethargy.

Morgan, Ingle and Shin (2018:85) presented the perspective that public service leadership was shaped by deep-rooted constitutional and moral responsibilities. They identified four core regime values that all public leaders were obligated to uphold: protecting rights, responsiveness to citizens, responsible management of public resources, and civic engagement. Importantly, the authors emphasised that public servants operated in a context defined by legislative constraints, citizen expectations, and institutional complexity (Morgan *et al.,* 2018:62). The ability to navigate these tensions ethically and competently formed the basis of effective public leadership.

Hart and Tummers (2020:43-48) underscored the leadership imperative to develop adaptive, ethical, and collaborative approaches in the face of technological evolution. In the view of the authors, regulatory innovation, ethical integrity, and inter-organisational cooperation were vital traits for public service leaders who must navigate twenty-first-century disruption. Verkuil (2021:202-204) reverberated the argument from Hart and Tummers (2020:43-48) and contributed a broader, future-focused perspective by examining the core competencies required of public service leaders in times of regulatory and institutional transformation. He warned of a decline in administrative capacity and the increasing precarity of employment systems where there is very little job security, placing pressure on public servants, the way in which they perceive their level of authority, and capability. Verkuil (2021:205-212) further called for a professional Public sService that is based on clearly defined occupational standards and individual competencies. This expectation echoes the foundational goals of a developmental state.

Among the top competencies required from public service leaders are integrity, accountability, teamwork, and flexibility (Verkuil, 2021:213–214). Verkuil (2021) also

addressed the challenges posed by a blended workforce of contractors and employees, noting that change management and institutional awareness were vital for navigating increasingly hybrid administrative environments (Verkuil, 2021:215-217).

In response to technological disruption, Verkuil (2021:218-220) emphasised the urgent need for digital transformation, including improved IT and cybersecurity skills. Legacy systems and outdated technologies presented significant risks, and leaders were expected to demonstrate foresight and adaptability in responding to these challenges. Additionally, civil service reform was essential to improving hiring systems and leadership development, including incremental changes such as inter-agency collaboration and competency-based vetting (Verkuil, 2021:221-222).

Sebola, Moloto and Mamabolo (2024:406-408) further highlighted that ethical leadership deficits in the South African Public Service had eroded public trust and undermined service delivery. The authors argue that persistent challenges such as corruption, maladministration, and a lack of accountability demanded a leadership response grounded in transparency and ethical consciousness. Leaders are expected to model integrity, uphold constitutional values, and establish inclusive and responsive cultures within public institutions (Sebola *et al.,* 2024:407-410).

Effective leadership in South Africa's Public sService is critical to delivering value to citizens and achieving national development priorities. Contemporary authors such as Pooe and Munyanyi (2022:45-67), Jonck (2024:78-90), De Clercq and Sedibe (2022:112-130) and Haricharan (2022:123-140) illuminated key dimensions of public service leadership in South Africa, particularly in relation to how senior managers contribute to stakeholder engagement, innovation, emotional intelligence, and relational governance.

Pooe and Munyanyi (2022:45-67) explored the perceptions of senior managers in selected national government departments, revealing that effective information sharing among departments significantly enhances public value. Their study identified process innovation, particularly in internal systems and practices as a direct contributor to improved service delivery. The authors also underscored the importance of stakeholder analysis and engagement, noting that public value is

maximised when managers actively understand and respond to stakeholder expectations. Pooe and Munyanyi (2022:45-67) accentuated the important of relational governance and the need for cultivating interdepartmental trust, collaboration, and communication to maintain public value in service delivery.

Jonck (2024:78-90) advanced the discussion on public leadership by focusing on responsible leadership and its alignment with public service values. The study found that responsible leadership in government is deeply shaped by personal ethical orientations and a sense of duty to multiple stakeholders, including citizens, communities, and political leaders. Public Service leaders seem more motivated by values such as transparency, accountability, and social justice, which guide their decision-making and support the implementation of national priorities, particularly the NDP (Public Service Commission, 2011).

In examining the traits that distinguish successful public leaders, De Clerq and Sedibe (2022:112-130) observed that effective senior managers are characterised by their ability to adopt public policy, implement programmes, and manage change at the community level. The study highlighted the importance of decision-making competence, community responsiveness, and resource mobilisation. Effective public leaders were seen to possess a forward-thinking attitude towards social change and the mobilisation of collective effort.

An important psychometric perspective for Public Service Leadership in South Africa is presented by Haricharan (2022:123-140) when he assesses the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership performance among public service executive managers. According to Haricharan (2022:123-140) emotional intelligence competencies such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management correlate positively with effective leadership. Public Service leaders who scored highly on the emotional intelligence competencies demonstrated stronger leadership performance, notably in their ability to manage relationships, adapt to stress, and build trust within teams. Haricharan (2022:123-140) offers a compelling argument for incorporating Emotional Intelligence-based assessments into recruitment and development strategies for senior managers strengthening an argument for a behavioural leadership framework for the SMS in the South African Public Service.

Literature in Public Service Leadership presented here underscore the complex and evolving nature of public service leadership, even more so in South Africa. These studies collectively emphasise both systemic enablers and behavioural competencies that drive effective public leadership.

2.8 Cultural Ethnocentrism and Leadership in the South African Public Service

Cultural ethnocentrism, the belief in the superiority of one's own culture, has historically shaped leadership and institutional dynamics in both public and private spheres. In South Africa, the legacy of apartheid entrenched cultural and racial hierarchies that continue to influence contemporary organisational practices (Nkomo & Booysen, 2010:218-243). Ethnocentrism may not always be overt but can subtly manifest through dominant institutional cultures that marginalise indigenous knowledge systems and alternative leadership models, embedding norms that could privilege Eurocentric perspectives and create challenges for inclusive governance in a diverse and democratic society (Hannaway & Du Preez, 2021:4).

Ethnocentric practices constrain the development of culturally responsive leadership and limit the integration of African-centred perspectives into organisational systems. The result is a disconnect between leadership approaches and the cultural identities of both employees and citizens, which undermines transformation goals and deepens mistrust between institutions and the communities they serve (Kasomo, 2013:1-3; Hannaway & Du Preez, 2021:5). To overcome these challenges, public service leadership must embrace cultural humility, an ongoing process of self-reflection, openness to other worldviews, and recognition of systemic power imbalances. Cultural humility extends beyond competence, requiring a commitment to lifelong learning and ethical responsiveness to diversity that centres relational values, respect, and community wellbeing as core to responsible governance (Mahlati, 2024:1-10).

In the South African context, leadership transformation is also linked to broader objectives of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Efforts to decolonise public institutions necessitate an interrogation of the cultural assumptions embedded in current leadership paradigms (Nkomo & Booysen, 2010:218-243). When cultural

ethnocentrism remains unchallenged, it inhibits the development of pluralistic public service institutions capable of delivering equitable services to a diverse citizenry.

In the context of South Africa's diverse and post-apartheid public service environment the concept of cultural ethnicism remains significant. Cultural ethnocentrism may manifest not only through interpersonal biases but also through institutional norms and leadership practices that privilege dominant cultural perspectives over inclusive, pluralistic approaches. The South African Public Service needs context-sensitive leadership that values cultural humility, equity, and responsiveness to a diverse Public Service and citizenry.

2.9 TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED UNDERSTANDING OF LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOURS AND AGENCY IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC SERVICE

The preceding analysis from Chapter 2 emphasised essential intersections of human behaviour, cognitive styles, leadership theories, public service leadership, and cultural ethnocentrism, all of which underpin an integrated behavioural leadership framework suitable for the SMS in South Africa.

Leadership in the South African Public Service is uniquely challenging, necessitating a balance between technical managerial competencies, ethical integrity, and contextually sensitive leadership approaches (Morgan, Ingle & Shin, 2018:85; Hart & Tummers, 2020:43-48; Van der Hoek, Groenewaldt & Kuipers, 2021:363). Public Service leaders operate under formal policy constraints, making informal relationship management crucial for their effective agency (Latib, 2014:30-42). Ferguson, Ronayne, and Rybacki (2014:4-7) emphasised that effective public service leadership demands behavioural intelligence, particularly emotional intelligence, adaptability, ethical decision-making, and resilience in managing institutional challenges (Haricharan, 2022:123-140).

Furthermore, the influence of cultural ethnocentrism significantly shapes leadership practices within the South African Public Service, often privileging Eurocentric models at the expense of indigenous and culturally inclusive leadership approaches (Nkomo & Booysen, 2010:218-243; Hannaway & Du Preez, 2021:4-5). Such ethnocentric tendencies restrict leadership effectiveness by diminishing cultural

responsiveness, fostering distrust, and intensifying inequalities (Mahlati, 2024:1-10). To enhance the effectiveness and equity of leadership within the public service, SMS leadership must integrate inclusive and culturally responsive practices, embracing African principles such as *Ubuntu,* which emphasise communal responsibility, empathy, ethical conduct, and collective welfare (Mangaliso, 2001:23-33; Lutz, 2009:313–328; Metz, 2020:41–56; Lerutla & Steyn, 2023:1–23; Pillay, 2023:1–19).

Three decades into South Africa's democratic era, leadership within public service remains a critical factor influencing effective service delivery. Current literature frequently emphasises empowering leadership behaviours, such as coaching, motivation, and guidance, as mechanisms to enhance organisational effectiveness (Van der Hoek, Groenewaldt & Kuipers, 2021:363). Msila (2022:447) supported this perspective, suggesting a shift from traditional hierarchical leadership towards inclusive and accountable practices as a means to reduce corruption and foster stronger community outcomes.

Scholars often address leadership competencies and behaviours individually rather than as part of an integrated model (Van der Hoek *et al.,* 2021:363). This segmented approach limits comprehensive understanding. Leadership effectiveness in the public service is best demonstrated through an integrated behavioural repertoire strategically used in context-specific situations, encompassing coaching, motivation, and guidance. Leadership should be viewed as interconnected skills rather than isolated activities.

Ethical leadership emerges as pivotal within effective public service leadership. Ethical leaders demonstrate integrity and moral accountability, significantly influencing service delivery efficiency and effectiveness, ensuring alignment with public service goals (Mbandlwa *et al.,* 2020). Latib (2014:30-42) highlighted the constrained agency of senior public servants due to formal regulations and policies, noting their practical influence frequently relies on informal negotiation and relationship-building rather than authoritative decision-making.

Khumalo and Jackson (2024:169-204) demonstrated that transformational leadership significantly impacts job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and trust within the SMS, highlighting its importance for employee retention and

organisational effectiveness. They also emphasised the moderating role of core self-evaluation, indicating that leaders with higher self-appraisals better realise transformational leadership's positive effects. These insights reinforce the integration of transformational leadership in developing the behavioural leadership framework, ensuring SMS leaders inspire commitment and high-performance culture effectively.

In synthesising these insights, the following deductions are explicitly proposed as essential for the SMS leadership behavioural framework:

- **Ethical and Community-Oriented Leadership**: *Ubuntu*-driven leadership characterised by integrity, ethical accountability, and collective responsibility. This fosters community trust, ethical conduct, and social cohesion that is crucial for public value creation and effective governance (Pooe & Munyanyi, 2022:45-67; Jonck, 2024:78-90; Mantzaris & Pillay, 2014:53-66).
- **Transformational, Adaptive, and African Leadership**: Advocates proactive responsiveness to complex challenges, inspiring change, fostering organisational commitment, employee motivation, job satisfaction, and innovation (Heifetz, Grashow & Linsky, 2009:62–69; Khumalo & Jackson, 2024:169–174; Agazu, Kero & Debela, 2025:1-3). African leadership specifically emphasises community interconnectedness, collectivism, ethical governance, and culturally attuned leadership practices (Zvavahera, 2025:62–79; Lerutla & Steyn, 2023:1-23; Pillay, Subban & Govender, 2013:82–108).
- **Cognitive Flexibility and Emotional Intelligence**: Emphasises dynamic adaptability in cognitive and emotional responses, enabling leaders to navigate uncertainty, improve decision-making, effectively manage crises, and enhance organisational resilience (Diamond, 2013:135–168; Haricharan, 2022:123-140; Goleman, 1995:93-102).
- **Recognition and Mitigation of Cultural Ethnocentrism:** Encourages active integration of indigenous knowledge, cultural humility, and pluralistic approaches, overcoming institutional biases limiting leadership effectiveness and inclusivity (Nkomo & Booysen, 2010:218-243; Hannaway & Du Preez, 2021:4–5; Mahlati, 2024:1-10).

Collectively, these deductions provide a robust theoretical synthesis, laying the groundwork for a comprehensive behavioural leadership framework that

acknowledges formal limitations and leverages informal managerial agency, ensuring improved service delivery and equitable governance outcomes in South Africa's public service.

Responding to Research Question 2 (Section 1.5(b)) and building on the cognitive profiles and behavioural traits outlined in Section 2.4.9, African and transformational leadership models emerge as particularly relevant, offering nuanced and contextually grounded theoretical foundations. This extension aligns closely with cognitive concepts, proposing leadership that is empathetic, community-oriented, ethically robust, visionary, and change-oriented. African leadership, with it alignment with the principles of *Ubuntu*, and transformational leadership, emphasise collective well-being, ethical governance, and proactive innovation, essential for effective SMS leadership.

The positive relationship between transformational leadership and employee attitudes, mediated by trust in management and organisational commitment, highlights its relevance in shaping high-performance SMS teams (Khumalo & Jackson, 2024:169-204). Incorporating core self-evaluation in leadership development can further enhance these positive effects, ensuring leaders are more engaged and effective in driving performance.

Figure 2.3 presents the expanded theoretical baseline, visually illustrating the integration of cognitive concepts with leadership theories relevant to the South African Public Service context, underscoring the interconnection between competencies and ethical values and offering a cohesive and adaptable leadership model (Khumalo & Jackson, 2024:169-174).

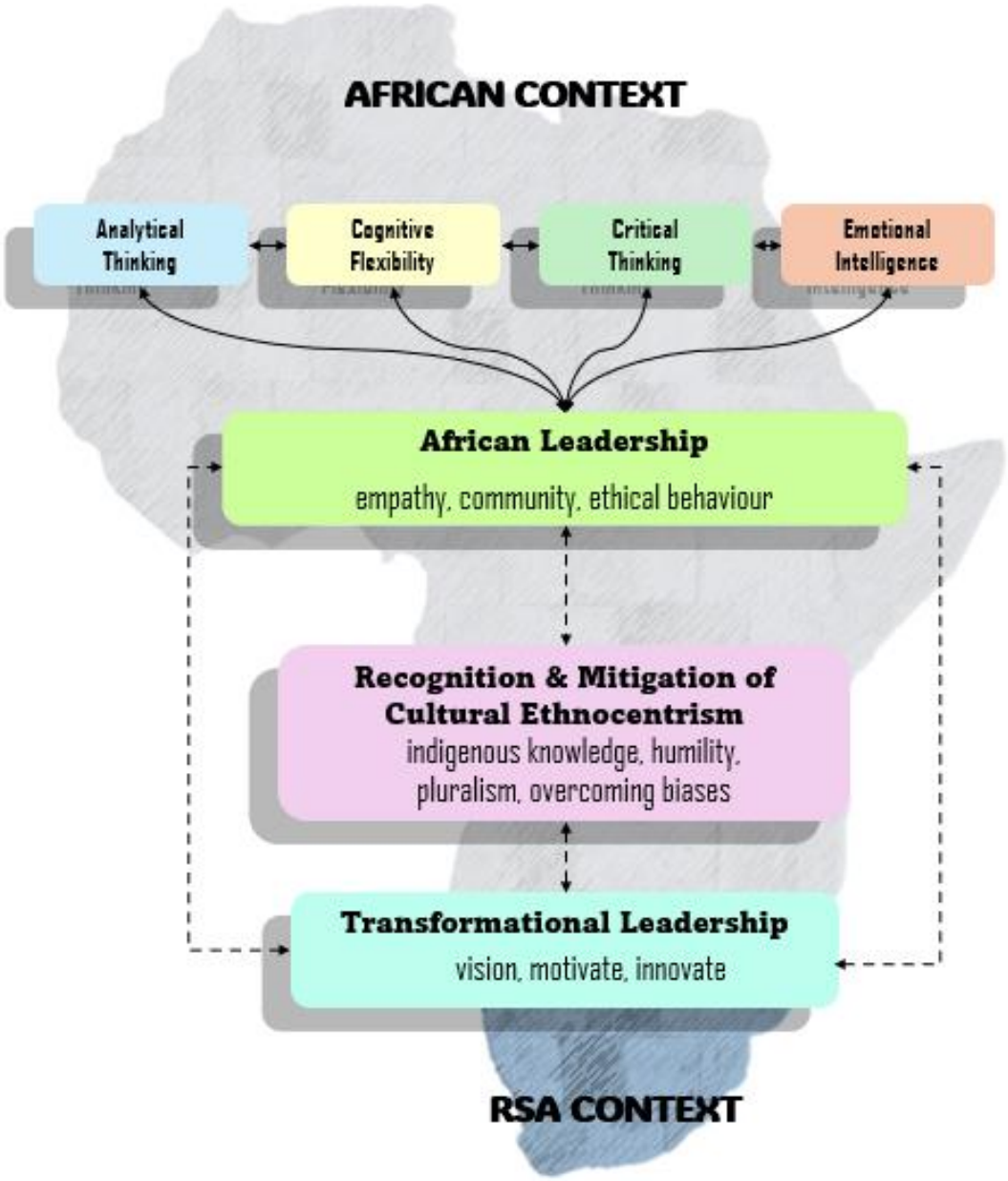

Figure 2.3 Theoretical and Contextual Foundations
(Source: Researcher's construct, 2025)

Figure 2.3 illustrates the foundational role of cognitive skills in shaping African and Transformational leadership practices, emphasising their integration within the South African Public Service context. This framework highlights opportunities for advancing leadership theory specific to the South African Public Service by integrating cognitive concepts with culturally resonant leadership models, providing a robust basis for interpreting empirical findings and refining the framework's applicability to South Africa's evolving public service.

These deductions collectively enable SMS leaders to strategically leverage informal managerial agency within formal regulatory contexts, thereby directly addressing constraints identified in existing research (Latib, 2014).

2.10 THEORETICAL ANCHORING OF THE BEHAVIOURAL LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK

The conceptual insights explored in Chapter 2 provide the theoretical foundation for the Behavioural Leadership Framework developed in Chapter 7 (see Section 7.2). This framework, designed specifically for the SMS in the South African Public Service, is grounded in the synthesis of key behavioural, cognitive, and cultural leadership theories discussed throughout this chapter (Figure 2.4). These theoretical constructs were not only reviewed for their relevance to leadership but also applied as analytical tools in the empirical component of this study (see Chapter 6).

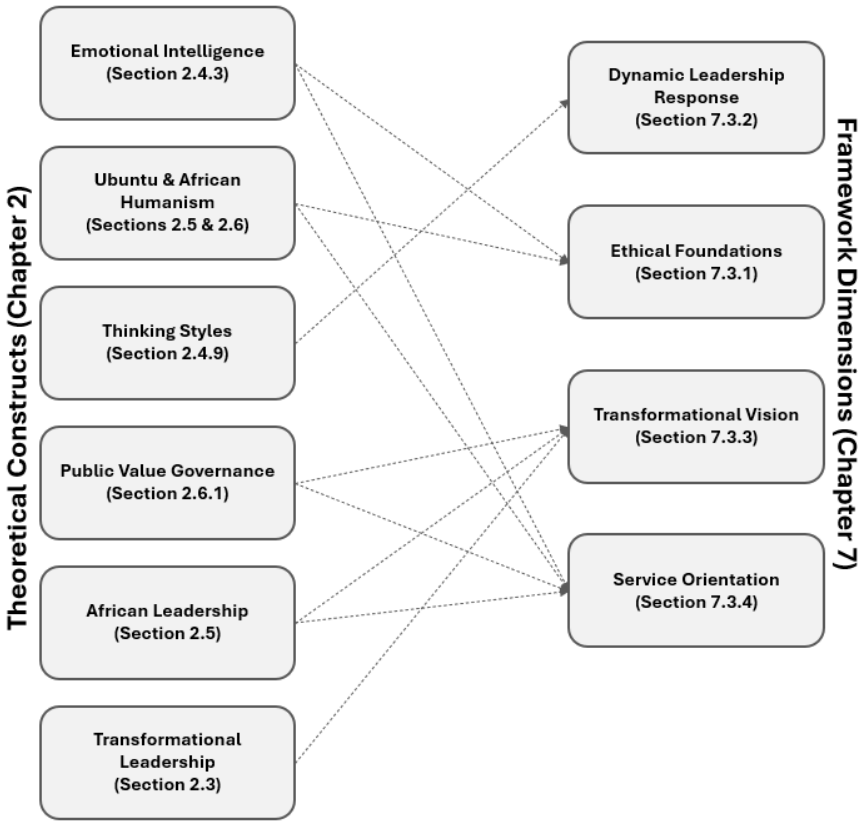

Figure 2.4 Conceptual Linkages Between Theoretical Constructs and Framework Dimensions in the South African Public Service Context
(Source: Researcher's construct, 2025)

Emotional Intelligence (Goleman, 1995), as detailed in Section 2.4.3, contributes to the dimensions of *Service Orientation* and *Ethical Foundations* by underscoring the importance of empathy, self-awareness, and interpersonal competence in effective public leadership. Thinking styles and cognitive flexibility (see Section 2.4.9) form the underpinning of *Dynamic Leadership Response*, equipping leaders to navigate complexity and uncertainty. African leadership principles, rooted in *Ubuntu* and communal ethics (Sections 2.5 and 2.6), align with both *Ethical Foundations* and *Service Orientation*, reinforcing relational accountability and collective responsibility.

Transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985), explored in Section 2.3, directly supports the *Transformational Vision* dimension by highlighting the importance of motivation, vision, and change-orientation in achieving developmental outcomes. Furthermore, the integration of ethical and culturally responsive leadership practices, including the mitigation of cultural ethnocentrism (Section 2.6.2), informs the inclusivity embedded across all four dimensions of the framework.

These theoretical foundations were used to design the interview questions posed to senior managers (see Chapter 5, Section 5.5.2), and guided the coding of themes in the empirical analysis (see Chapter 6, Section 6.3). The convergence between theory and empirical insights ultimately shaped the development of the Behavioural Leadership Framework (see Chapter 7, Section 7.3), demonstrating a strong alignment between conceptual rigour and contextual relevance.

In summary, the behavioural, cognitive, ethical, and culturally contextual leadership constructs discussed in this chapter form the intellectual scaffolding upon which the proposed framework is constructed. By cross-referencing these theoretical anchors throughout the thesis, the study ensures academic integrity, conceptual clarity, and empirical applicability.

2.11 CONCLUSION

Existing literature on SMS leadership must advance beyond conventional models to integrate behavioural insight, ethical grounding, and strategic foresight. The behavioural leadership framework proposed in Chapter 7 of this thesis responds to this imperative by articulating a set of core behavioural attributes essential for senior

Public Service leaders in South Africa. Included in the proposed framework are capabilities that are vital for navigating the complexity and volatility of the public service environment, and that are instrumental in fostering agile, inclusive, and ethically resilient institutions. Attributes such as cognitive flexibility, interpersonal competence, and moral integrity are considered for a leadership orientation is critical to restoring public trust, enhancing state legitimacy, and driving the developmental outcomes envisioned for the South African Public Service. Such capabilities are not only essential for managing complexity, but are also foundational to creating agile, inclusive, and ethical institutions capable of restoring public trust and achieving developmental outcomes in the South African Public Service.

The review of relevant literature in this Chapter revealed growing scholarly attention to leadership capacity, relational governance, stakeholder responsiveness, and emotional intelligence within the South African Public Service. A consistent limitation in this body of work is the lack of explicit attention to the behavioural dimensions of leadership, particularly at the senior management level.

Recent South African studies have offered valuable contributions in this regard. Pooe and Munyanyi (2022:45-67) found that senior managers play a significant role in enhancing public value through information sharing, process innovation, and stakeholder engagement. While the study confirms the strategic significance of these practices, it does not detail the behavioural attributes of the managers who lead them (Pooe & Munyanyi, 2022:61). Jonck (2024:78-90) developed a sector-specific framing of responsible leadership rooted in values and ethics, but did not explore how these are enacted in observable leadership behaviours. De Clerq and Sedibe (2022:112-130) contributed insights into leadership capacity in managing change and driving community initiatives, yet their emphasis remained on high-level traits rather than grounded behavioural practices (De Clerq & Sedibe, 2022:118-120).

The scholarly work analysed and captured in this chapter demonstrates the strategic importance of behavioural constructs such as emotional intelligence, ethical responsibility, and stakeholder orientation. The body of research revealed a persistent gap in the literature: the absence of detailed, contextually grounded descriptions of the actual behaviours that senior managers (should) exhibit in their leadership roles. This study seeks to fill that gap by developing a behavioural

leadership framework for the SMS in the South African Public Service that is rooted in the specific governance and developmental demands of the South African Public Service.

The considerations and theoretical analysis of Chapter 2 responded to research questions 1 and 2, Section 1.5 (a) and (b) and provided the positioning of the study within the field of Behavioural Public Administration which is a sub-discipline that integrates human behaviour into the study of public service management. Key constructs such as thinking styles, personality, leadership, and motivation were explored, emphasising how these factors influence the behaviours of public servants and leaders within the South African Public Service. The review of the concepts and properties that substantiate a theoretical framework for the SMS in the South African Public Service, and the analysis of theories and models of leadership in relation to South African Public Service SMS, provided an integrated theoretical basis for the development of a behavioural leadership framework for the SMS.

Concepts identified as points of intersection emerged following a thorough analysis of the information. These concepts served as the basis for developing the interview questions, which were designed to delve into key aspects of leadership behaviour within the SMS in the Public Service.

The synthesis of these varied perspectives clearly indicates the strategic value of integrating behavioural dimensions into public service leadership, directly informing the design of the proposed framework in Chapter 7).

Chapter 3 will build on the theoretical foundation by examining the statutory and regulatory frameworks governing the South African Public Service and the SMS providing a synthesis of existing legal frameworks governing the SMS, and aligning these frameworks with cognitive and behavioural constructs to identify additional competencies relevant to leadership within the SMS not provided for in existing policies and frameworks.

CHAPTER 3
LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR LEADERSHIP IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

"By breaking down silos, optimising resources, and streamlining reporting, we can unlock new levels of service delivery excellence and, ultimately, enhance the lives of all South Africans…'Growing South Africa together for a capable and ethical Public Service" (Davids, 2024:online).

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter a background on the South African Public Service and the Republic of South Africa developmental state is provided, followed by the legal context for leadership and management in the South African Public Service. This Chapter captures the policy perspectives and regulatory frameworks that govern the recruitment, selection and development of the SMS, provides an analysis of this legal and public policy landscape to determine key enablers and/or limitations to leadership, leadership development and behavioural change. This Chapter concludes with an analysis of the gaps in the SMS Competency Framework identified during the course of the analysis followed by a short conclusion.

3.2 BACKGROUND

Since the end of apartheid and the establishment of a democratic government in 1994, the South African Public Service has undergone significant changes aimed at creating an inclusive and equitable public service reflective of the country's diversity. This transition has shaped the expectations and responsibilities of public service leaders.

The need for a robust Public Service in RSA is emphasised in the 2022/2023 Public Service Commission Annual Report (National School of Government, 2023:13),

which underscores the importance of building a professional public service as essential for a capable, ethical, and developmental state. The report highlights that capacity issues have hindered effective service delivery. Initiatives like the Professionalisation Framework aim to address these gaps through human resource development and capacity building for skilled SMS members (Public Service Commission, 2023:13).

Lessons from successful developmental states reveal that effective leadership can mitigate corruption and foster economic growth by managing political pressures and leveraging economic interests (Leftwich, 1996:405; Wade, 2003:621-644). A developmental state, according to Haggard (2018:62), requires strong state intervention and collaboration between public and private sectors, emphasising the need for a coherent bureaucracy capable of learning and adapting. The concept of a democratic developmental state balances state autonomy with accountability and societal demands for equity and welfare (Nagar, 2021:24).

In this context, public service leadership must foster transformation and economic growth while addressing South Africa's socio-economic challenges, including poverty and inequality. Yukl (2006:8) highlighted leadership as influencing others to align on objectives, and leaders must navigate complex internal and external dynamics to resolve conflicts and enhance performance (Madonsela, 2016:iv; Yahaya *et al.,* 2011:9637-9640).

The National Development Plan (NDP) underscores the need for strong leadership to improve service delivery and drive innovation within the Public Service (Republic of South Africa, 2011:26, 409; NATIONAL SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT, 2023:56). The 2023 PSC report further emphasized leadership development, particularly within the SMS, as vital for creating a sustainable public service workforce. Enhancing leadership capacity is crucial for improving service delivery across the South African Public Service (Public Service Commission, 2023:56).

Systemic corruption and a lack of accountability have weakened the capacity of the Public Service to implement policies effectively (Gumede, 2017b). The Public Service, comprising over 1. 1 million employees are led by less than nine-thousand SMS who are pivotal in addressing these challenges and achieving government

priorities (Public Service Commission, 2024:11) SMS members must exhibit competencies in policy management and transformative initiatives to fulfil their roles in a democratic developmental state.

The South African Public Service also faces challenges related to inequality, globalisation, and ethical leadership (Fortuin, Grebe & Makoni, 2022:243). Building public trust requires ethical leadership that prioritises transparency and accountability, especially considering the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (Mchunu, 2021).

Kumalo and Scheepers (2021:137-157) highlighted the need for specific leadership competencies during institutional turnarounds, emphasising that SMS leadership is crucial for ensuring successful change and overcoming service delivery challenges.

The SMS was established to enhance the Public Service's ability to deliver essential services effectively. The inception of the SMS Programme in 2001 acknowledged the importance of effective public management (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003). As outlined in the Public Service Regulations, SMS aims to cultivate a culture of excellence based on constitutional values (Republic of South Africa, 2016:81(a)).

Key SMS functions include promoting a management ethos aligned with constitutional principles, facilitating collaboration among departments, and establishing a structured network for disseminating public policy. These initiatives aim to enhance public service management while adhering to constitutional foundations and statutory mandates (Republic of South Africa, 2016:Chapter 5).

Labuschagne and van Dijk (2016:1-18) highlighted the limitations in the current behavioural and cognitive profiles of SMS members, noting that while these SMS members possess advanced academic credentials, many lack the personal attributes essential for innovative leadership and effective public service delivery. To ensure the Public Service delivers effectively, SMS leaders must demonstrate a commitment to ethical standards and collective well-being (Sebola, *et al*., 2024b:405-416). Furthermore, the developmental state model necessitates significant investment in building state capacity while balancing economic growth with social justice (Nealer & Naude, 2011:257).

The financial implications of maintaining an efficient public service include addressing inequality and ensuring all citizens benefit from development efforts (World Bank, 2023). The state must navigate funding challenges while maintaining fiscal responsibility, highlighting the crucial role of effective SMS leadership.

Finally, it is essential to reflect on the regulatory frameworks related to SMS recruitment, selection, and development to assess their effectiveness as enablers or limitations of leadership and behavioural excellence. While these frameworks reflect a strong legal infrastructure, they have often focused on compliance and structural performance metrics, offering limited guidance on behavioural or cognitive leadership traits necessary for navigating complex institutional challenges.

3.3 THE PUBLIC SERVICE ACT (1994)

The Public Service Act, No. 103 of 1994 (PSA), Chapter 3 establishes the legal framework for the formation of public service institutions, including national departments and provincial administrations (Schedule 1 Institutions) as well as various organisational components (Schedule 2 components) (Republic of South Africa, 1994: Chapter III, Section 7.2). The PSA stipulates that each public service institution must have a head of department, who holds a fixed establishment position and is responsible for the efficient management and administration of their department. This includes effective staff utilisation and training, maintaining discipline, promoting sound labour relations, and ensuring proper care of state property (Republic of South Africa, 1994: Chapter III, Section 7.3).

Additionally, the PSA defines the Public Service as comprising individuals who hold permanent posts on the fixed establishment or additional permanent or temporary posts (Republic of South Africa, 1994: Chapter III, Section 8.1). Chapter 4 (Section 9.1) delegates the authority for staff appointments within national and provincial departments to the Executive Authority or their designated officials (Department of Public Service and Administration, 1994). Appointments, promotions, and transfers must comply with prescribed conditions, including language proficiency as directed by the Public Service Commission (Republic of South Africa, 1994: Chapter IV, Section 9.2).

In Chapter IV, Sections 10(1) and 10(2) stipulate that all public service posts must be filled by RSA citizens of good standing and character, with a minimum probation period of 12 months before permanent employment. Appointments must be based solely on qualifications, training, merit, efficiency, and suitability, ensuring fairness and non-prejudice in the hiring process (Republic of South Africa, 1994: Chapter IV, Section 11). Confirmation of appointments is contingent upon compliance with PSA requirements during the probationary period.

The PSA also outlines provisions for terminating the service of public servants (Republic of South Africa, 1994: Chapter V). Aside from retirement due to legal or health reasons, it allows delegated authorities to terminate employment if a public servant is deemed unfit, unable to perform efficiently, or guilty of misconduct or misrepresentation (Republic of South Africa, 1994: Chapter V, Section 17. 2). Misconduct is elaborated on in Chapter 6 of the PSA, reflecting the government's commitment to maintaining excellence within the Public Service.

Overall, the PSA provides a comprehensive legal framework designed to ensure a capable and accountable public service, as envisioned by the Constitution (1996).

3.4 THE CONSTITUTION (1996)

The Constitution of the RSA, 1996 (Section 212 (1)), establishes the Public Service and addresses a host of values and principles that are required as the foundation of Public Administration in a democratic state (Republic of South Africa, 1996:Section 195 (1)). The values and principles that the Constitution clearly explains on what is expected from government employees, and as such the senior managers and leaders in the Public Service, are the building blocks of a capable, developmental state as envisioned in Chapter 13 of the NDP, Vision 2030 (Republic of South Africa, 2011).

Section 195 (1) of the Constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996) captures the basic values and principles governing public administration, including a shared professional ethos and value system and an expectation of a high standard of professional ethics. Even so, the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2022:10) reported that, despite the well-designed regulatory and policy frameworks promoting good

governance in government, Constitutional values and principles are amiss in most public institutions - evident in non-compliance and unacceptable behaviour of public servants and -officials.

3.5 WHITE PAPER ON HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE (1997)

The White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service of South Africa establishes a framework for transforming public administration, focusing on leadership capacity and accountability at senior management levels. It advocates for a shift from centralised personnel administration to a dynamic human resource management system, where line managers take greater responsibility for managing both people and resources.

A central theme is enhancing leadership capacity among senior managers, including heads of departments and provincial administrations. The White Paper (Section 3.1.3) emphasises that leadership must extend beyond rule enforcement to include aligning organisational structures with strategic goals, fostering multi-skilling, and ensuring employees are equipped to meet evolving policy demands (Republic of South Africa, 1997a). Section 3.1.4 of the White Paper stipulates that senior managers are expected to excel in people management, objective setting, and financial oversight, making human resource management a core competency at all levels of public service (Republic of South Africa, 1997a).

The white paper promotes granting senior managers greater autonomy to make critical staffing and resource management decisions within their departments, enhancing their leadership capacity (Republic of South Africa, 1997a:Section 3.1.6). This approach ties into the broader goal of holding managers accountable for the development and performance of their teams. Senior managers are responsible for achieving organisational goals while cultivating a corporate culture that encourages diversity, continuous development, and employee empowerment.

Accountability is another critical aspect highlighted in the White Paper, particularly concerning performance management. Senior managers are tasked with setting clear objectives for their teams, regularly monitoring performance, and ensuring that good performance is rewarded while addressing underperformance. Employees, including senior managers, are encouraged to participate in goal-setting and are held

accountable for achieving these goals through a structured appraisal process (Department of Public Service and Administration, 1997a:Section 5.9).

Capacity building is also emphasised as crucial for developing leadership skills at senior levels. The Department of Public Service and Administration, in collaboration with the South African Management Development Institute (now the NSG), is identified as a key player in helping departments build the leadership capacity required to manage human resources effectively in a decentralised system (Republic of South Africa, 1997:Section 5.3). This approach aims to equip senior managers with the necessary skills to align their departments' activities with broader national goals.

In conclusion, the White Paper on Human Resource Management underscores the importance of building leadership capacity and fostering accountability in public administration. By promoting decentralisation, multi-skilling, and transparent performance management, the document positions senior managers as the drivers of transformation within the Public Service (Republic of South Africa, 1997a:Section 7).

3.6 THE SMS HANDBOOK (2003)

Chapter 3 of the SMS Handbook (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003) outlines the roles of the SMS and establishes the conditions of employment for its members. The purpose of the handbook (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003) is to guide current and aspiring senior managers on the expectations and guidelines necessary to deliver public services that enhance the quality of life for all citizens.

The performance management system designed for the professional development of SMS members is governed by the SMS Handbook (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003a: Section 4(2)). The performance requirements for SMS members include core competencies defined by the competency framework for Senior Managers (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003a: Section 5(2)).

The Handbook emphasises the importance of developing a skilled and equipped SMS corps capable of leading a competent and willing workforce in the Public Service, as embedded in the legal frameworks for learning and development. Swanepoel, Erasmus and Schenk (2010:451) highlighted that both the organizational structure and individual roles are crucial when considering the requirements for a capable public service. The SMS Handbook Chapter 5 (Section 3. 1), defines competence as a collection of behavioural patterns exhibited by an individual to carry out their role effectively and efficiently, underscoring the significance of behaviour in establishing competence within the Public Service (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003).

On 19 October 2022, the Republic of South Africa Cabinet approved the Professionalisation Framework (National School of Government, 2023). This Framework critiques the SMS Competency Framework published in the SMS Handbook (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003), stating it is inadequate and should be revised to include competencies, indicators, and behavioural attributes, emphasising the importance of SMS leaders' behaviour (National School of Government, 2023:70). Clearly, certain sections of the SMS Competency Framework are outdated and unresponsive to the current realities of the South African Public Service.

The Professionalisation Framework (National School of Government, 2023) stresses the necessity of professionalism in public service, highlighting the qualities and behaviours essential for public servants (National School of Government, 2023b:70). The Framework outlines that conduct, work ethic, and adherence to standards and principles are crucial for a capable state, with an expectation for public servants to demonstrate honesty, ethical behaviour, and integrity consistently (National School of Government, 2023:52-59).

3.7 SMS COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

The SMS Handbook outlines a comprehensive Competency Framework for SMS members within the South African Public Service (SMS Competency Framework) (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003:Chapter 5). The SMS Competency Framework was established to professionalise the senior management

service and ensure consistency in human performance across national and provincial levels (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003a:Chapter 5). The primary focus of the SMS Competency Framework was on defining generic competencies, which were prioritised over technical competencies. This distinction enabled the establishment of a common understanding of the key success factors required for senior management roles within the Public Service. The framework facilitated a more structured approach to managing performance, development, and recruitment within the SMS.

In 2008, the Department of Public Service and Administration published a reviewed SMS Competency Framework intending to strengthen the senior management service and to maximise the potential and contribution from senior managers in the Public Service (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2008:10). This reviewed SMS Competency Framework provided a comprehensive and standardised set of competencies for members of the SMS in the South African Public Service.

Developed to support the professionalisation of the SMS, the framework aimed to ensure consistency in leadership and management performance across national and provincial departments (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2008:10). The primary focus of the SMS Competency Framework was on defining generic competencies, which were prioritised over technical competencies. This distinction enabled the establishment of a common understanding of the key success factors required for senior management roles within the Public Service. The framework facilitated a more structured approach to managing performance, development, and recruitment within the SMS (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2008:5-7).

The competencies as listed in Table 3.1 provided the foundation for objective performance assessments and targeted development initiatives and were measured in a range skills, knowledge, behaviour, and attitudes pertaining specifically to these competencies regarded as essential for senior managers to perform effectively.

Table 3.1 SMS Competencies

CORE COMPETENCIES				
	Skills	**Knowledge**	**Behaviour**	**Attitudes**
Strategic Capability and Leadership (DPSA, 2008:10)	Strategic planning, decision-making	Organisational performance systems, government priorities	Inspires and guides teams, sets clear objectives	Visionary, adaptable, results-driven
Programme and Project Management (DPSA, 2008:12)	Project planning, risk management, execution	Project management methodologies, resource control	Delivers complex projects, ensures timely delivery	Results-focused, organised, accountable
Financial Management (DPSA, 2008:13)	Budgeting, financial planning, expenditure control	PFMA, MTEF, Treasury Regulations	Manages financial risks, ensures compliance	Ethical, cost-conscious, responsible
Change Management (DPSA, 2008:14)	Leading transformation, implementing change	Organisational design, change strategy models	Drives and sustains change initiatives	Flexible, innovative, open to new ideas
People Management and Empowerment (DPSA, 2008:12)	Coaching, team building, conflict resolution	HRM, talent retention, diversity management	Empowers teams, promotes inclusion and growth	Supportive, inclusive, collaborative
PROCESS COMPETENCIES				
	Skills	**Knowledge**	**Behaviour**	**Attitudes**
Client Orientation and Customer Focus (DPSA, 2008:13)	Service delivery, public engagement, communication	*Batho Pele* principles, service standards	Responsive to client needs, ensures service excellence	Service-oriented, empathetic, citizen-focused
Communication (DPSA, 2008:13)	Listening, speaking, presenting, writing	Strategic communication, public accountability	Fosters open communication, clarity and engagement	Transparent, persuasive, engaging

Knowledge Management (DPSA, 2008:14)	Information sharing, coaching, mentoring	Knowledge systems, organisational learning	Facilitates knowledge transfer and retention	Trustworthy, knowledge-driven, ethical
Problem Solving and Analysis (DPSA, 2008:14)	Critical thinking, decision-making, analysis	Problem-solving frameworks, data interpretation	Analyses root causes, identifies sustainable solutions	Solution-oriented, proactive, reflective

Source: Guideline for the management of competency assessments for the SMS in the Public Services (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2008:Chapters 2 & 3)
(Researcher's perspective)

Sections 4 and 5 of the SMS Competency framework (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2008:Chapter 2) promoted competency-based assessments through the use of simulations, psychometric tests, and other evaluation tools with the intention to help in identifying developmental gaps and informing the training needs of SMS members. Assessment results were noted as vital for personal development and enhancing the alignment between individual capabilities and organisational objectives (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2008:9, 33).

As a policy instrument for the South African Public Service, the competency framework is closely integrated with key human resource processes such as recruitment, performance management, and training. This integration ensures that the competencies outlined are continuously aligned with organisational goals and that performance is monitored systematically across the Public Service (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2008:8–9, 19).

In the 2008 version of the SMS Competency Framework, honesty and integrity was incorporated as a value underpinning all competencies of the Framework. The revised framework expanded the behavioural indicators and proficiency levels and introduced assessment tools aligned with specific performer levels, such as Director and Chief Director. It also integrated the framework more explicitly with personal development planning and learning needs analysis (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2008:17-20, 33-36).

In a 2023 report, *Effectiveness of the Competency Framework & Capacity Measures for Senior Managers in the Public Service*, the DPSA presented a flawed status on the implementation of competency assessments, highlighting significant gaps in the application of the framework and the lack of alignment between identified competency needs and actual training interventions (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2023: slides 1-12). The report concluded that in the financial year 2021/2022, departments failed to prioritise addressing the competency gaps identified through targeted training interventions (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2023: slide 12). Specifically, only 13% of national departments and 8% of provincial departments provided such interventions, reflecting a significant gap in the application of competency assessments in practice. This lack of action highlighted a broader trend where assessments are conducted primarily to comply with recruitment processes, rather than as part of a structured effort to improve SMS performance. Evidence was presented that 87% of national departments and 92% of provincial departments in the RSA's Public Service sector viewed these assessments solely as a requirement for employment purposes, rather than a tool for professional development. Further analysis proved that the results of competency assessments are often not given due consideration when decisions about appointments are made to SMS positions, suggesting the need for a review of the current directives to ensure that assessment results are systematically integrated into selection processes. This oversight is further compounded by the fact that personal development plans for senior managers are seldom informed by the training needs identified in competency assessments (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2023:slides 1-12).

DPSA (2023:slides 1-12) found that there is a lack of collaboration between Human Resource Management (HRM) and Human Resource Development (HRD) units in departments. The developmental areas identified in competency assessments are not shared with HRD units to ensure that training needs are effectively integrated into HRD plans. This collaboration is required for creating a comprehensive, well-rounded strategy for addressing competency gaps. The challenge seems to be financial constraints that hinder progress in this regard. The report (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2023:slides 1-12) highlighted the need to put in place required measures to prevent training funds from being diverted to other

departmental needs while the development of senior managers is not prioritised, potentially undermining leadership capacity and professionalisation objectives within the Public Service.

The realities presented in the DPSA calls into question the effectiveness of the SMS Competency Framework. The implications are that the inability of such a large proportion of national and provincial departments to effectively utilise the framework emphasises the diminished practical utility. Further reform is undoubtedly needed to ensure that the SMS Competency Framework serves its intended purpose in enhancing the competency and professionalisation of the Public Service.

The SMS Competency Framework is central to the South African government's efforts to professionalise and standardise leadership and management competencies across the public service (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2018:5). Other similar competency frameworks for the Public Service include the Middle Management Service (MMS) Competency Framework (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2006), the Financial Management Competency Framework (National Treasury, 2010), and the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Competency Framework (Department of Monitoring and Evaluation, 2014). Each of these frameworks was developed to respond to specific functional and institutional needs, and relate to the SMS Competency Framework in both complementary and contrasting ways (REAL, 2023:7-8).

The MMS Competency Framework (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2006) builds on and supports the SMS framework by offering a suite of feeder, generic, and some technical competencies appropriate to middle managers. It includes competencies such as planning and organising, project management, and budgeting. Unlike the SMS framework, the MMS framework recognises the technical and operational roles middle managers often play, especially in sector-specific departments (REAL, 2023:25-26). Importantly, the MMS framework acknowledges the transitionary nature of middle management roles as a pipeline for senior leadership, creating an explicit competency progression (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2006:4).

The Financial Management Competency Framework (National Treasury, 2010) represents a more functionally detailed approach. This framework sets out both technical and behavioural competencies required for effective financial management across nine occupational functions, including budgeting, expenditure control, internal audit, and enterprise risk management (National Treasury, 2010:12-14). While the framework includes generic leadership skills such as communication and team management, its strength lies in the structured progression from tactical (middle management) to strategic (senior management) financial roles. This framework is unique in its integration of technical depth with generic managerial competencies and behavioural expectations, and offers a more holistic and role-specific competency model (REAL, 2023:30-31).

The Monitoring and Evaluation Competency Framework (Department of Monitoring and Evaluation, 2014) seeks to professionalise public service evaluation roles by mapping competencies across four domains: overarching competencies, evaluation leadership, evaluation craft, and implementation. These domains are aligned with three practitioner roles: programme managers, monitoring and evaluation advisors, and evaluators (Department of Monitoring and Evaluation, 2014:4). The Monitoring and Evaluation framework strikes a balance between generic leadership and technical competencies such as statistical analysis, data collection, and understanding of policy contexts. Similar to the Financial Management Competency Framework, the Monitoring and Evaluation Competency Framework illustrates the value of embedding generic competencies within technical practice domains (REAL, 2023:30).

There are synergies and gaps when comparing the MMS Competency Framework (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2006), Financial Management Competency Framework (National Treasury, 2010) and the Monitoring and Evaluation Competency Framework (Department of Monitoring and Evaluation, 2014) with the SMS Competency Framework (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2008). The MMS framework serves as a feeder mechanism that prepares candidate senior managers through progressively aligned competencies (REAL, 2023:24). According to REAL (2023, 27-28) the Financial Management Competency Framework (National Treasury, 2010) and the Monitoring and

Evaluation Competency Framework (Department of Monitoring and Evaluation, 2014) highlight a key limitation of the SMS framework to be the lack of occupational specificity and technical grounding in the framework. While the SMS framework focuses on broad managerial abilities, it does not incorporate the specialist knowledge, competencies and behaviours required for effective sectoral leadership, especially in highly technical environments such as health, engineering, or education (National School of Government, 2022:34; REAL, 2023:27–28).

Further critique from the *Review of Professional Competency Frameworks in the Public Service* (REAL, 2023:27) and the *Professionalisation Framework* (National School of Government, 2022:34) emphasises that senior managers often lack the technical depth needed to implement policy effectively. This shortfall in personal technical ability results in reliance on consultants or technical experts and weakens internal state capacity and accountability. The Financial Management Competency Framework (National Treasury, 2010) and the Monitoring and Evaluation Competency Framework (Department of Monitoring and Evaluation, 2014) provide models of how behavioural competencies can be more meaningfully linked to technical knowledge domains, ensuring both credibility and effectiveness.

The four (4) frameworks discussed in this section are all intended to be used for purposes of recruitment, development, and performance management of public servant. Even so, the SMS framework is often applied only in developmental contexts, with limited traction in recruitment or performance evaluation while performance management remains inconsistently implemented, and recruitment processes are not fully aligned with competency assessments (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2023:Slides 1-12; REAL, 2023:35-37).

The SMS Competency Framework outlined ten key competencies (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2018:5-6), and was designed to foster mobility across departments and to ensure uniformity in the recruitment, performance management, and development of senior managers throughout the South African Public Service (De Clercq, 2023:365-384, De Clercq & Mlauzi, 2024:24). As discussed earlier in this section, the SMS Competency Framework focussed on competencies identified as relevant to senior managers in the Public Service from a generic management perspective not related to any specific occupational or

technical domain. This status may limit the applicability of these competencies in functionally specialised sectors (National School of Government, 2023:34).

The 2008 revision of the SMS Competency Framework marked a significant improvement in aligning competencies with assessment tools and development processes, but to maintain efficacy in the contemporary South African Public Service, the SMS Competency Framework must continue to evolve to address emerging challenges and ensure that SMS members are equipped with the necessary competencies and behaviours to drive ethical, accountable, and responsive leadership in the South African Public Service. The analysis suggests that the lack of consideration in the SMS Competency Framework relating to the complexities of the public service and the need for senior managers to operate within a multifaceted, dynamic, and rapidly evolving context, highlights a further limitation of the SMS Competency Framework in effectively contributing to a capable and ethical public service that serves all citizens.

3.8 ETHICS AND CONDUCT (CHAPTER 6 OF THE SMS HANDBOOK)

Chapter 6 of the SMS Handbook (2003) focuses on the ethical responsibilities of senior managers within the Public Service. It promotes a high standard of ethical behaviour, grounded in values such as integrity, accountability, and impartiality. Senior managers are expected to adhere to these ethical principles in all aspects of their work, ensuring that their actions align with the values outlined in key legal frameworks such as the Constitution, the Public Service Act, and the Financial Disclosure Regulations (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003).

Ethical Principles and Decision-Making: The chapter underscores the importance of ethical decision-making, requiring senior managers to follow the principles of impartiality, accountability, and responsiveness in their decisions. Senior managers are also expected to demonstrate integrity in their conduct, acting in accordance with constitutional and statutory requirements such as the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003).

Accountability and Transparency: Senior managers are held accountable under the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) and are responsible for ensuring the transparent use of public resources. Reporting unethical behaviour and addressing

misconduct is an essential part of this responsibility (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003:Chapter 5).

Leadership and Ethical Culture: Senior managers are expected to lead by example, promoting transparency and open communication to cultivate an ethical working environment. This includes managing conflicts of interest and maintaining confidentiality in all aspects of their duties (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003:Chapter 6).

3.9 PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION MANAGEMENT ACT (2014)

The Public Administration and Management Act (PAMA) (2014) aims to promote a high standard of professional ethics in the public administration, facilitate the eradication and prevention of unethical practices in the public administration; and provide for the setting of minimum norms and standards to give effect to the values and principles of section 195(1) of the Constitution (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2014: Chapter I, Section 3). In Chapter 2 of the PAMA, the basic values and principles to govern public administration are recorded and require all institutions to promote and maintain high standards of professional ethics, to promote efficient, economic and effective use of resources, to be development oriented, to provide services impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias, to respond to people's needs and encourage public participation in public policymaking, to be accountable, to be transparent and provide timely, accessible and accurate information, maintain high standards in human resource management and career development practices and as such maximise human potential, ensure representation of the South African people, with employment and personnel management practices that are founded in ability, objectivity, fairness, and redress (Republic of South Africa, 2014:Chapter 2).

PAMA further deals in depth with matters of ethics and integrity (PAMA, Chapter 6), and the setting of, and compliance with, minimum norms and standards (PAMA, Chapter 7) for the Public Service (Republic of South Africa, 2014). PAMA does not deal specifically with the legal and regulatory framework for SMS, but the ethical and normative requirements set in the Act apply equally to the profile of and expectations from the SMS in the Public Service. The PAMA supports and strengthens the specific

legal frameworks that govern the recruitment, selection and capacity building of the SMS and further strengthens the objectives of an SMS that behaves with integrity and commitment towards the Public Service and the people it serves.

3.10 PUBLIC SERVICE REGULATIONS (2020)

The Public Service Act (PSA) is supported by the Public Service Regulations (PSR), 2020 (Republic of South Africa, 2020), which provide legal requirements for the recruitment, selection, and conduct of public servants. The PSR further clarifies the responsibilities of public servants with respect to constitutional and legislative compliance. Regulation 13 of the PSR (2020) addresses conduct, financial disclosures, anti-corruption, and ethics, reinforcing the duty of every public servant to uphold the Constitution (1996) and the laws of the Republic. It outlines expectations for public servants to interact ethically with the public, maintain integrity in their duties, and pursue excellence in fulfilling state objectives (Republic of South Africa, 2020: Regulation 13).

The PSR (2020) sets high standards for ethical conduct and behaviour, aligning with the vision of a capable and ethical state as envisaged in the Constitution and legislated in the PSA (1994). Competence is defined in Regulation 2 as the combination of knowledge, skills, personal attributes, and behaviour applied in the workplace to successfully perform the functions of a position (Republic of South Africa, 2020: Regulation 2). In this definition, behaviour is explicitly recognised as a critical element of competence.

Chapter 5 of the PSR (2020) focuses on the establishment and regulation of the Senior Management Service (SMS). It emphasises leadership accountability, ethical behaviour, and the promotion of professional excellence. The chapter aligns with the principles of section 195(1) of the Constitution and the broader objectives of the PSA to ensure consistent coordination across Public Service management structures and facilitate the transfer of skills and institutional knowledge. The SMS is further supported by the SMS Handbook, which provides detailed regulatory frameworks, including determinations and guidelines for SMS members (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003).

The ethical standards expected from SMS members are clearly articulated. Regulation 91 provides that:

“Members of the SMS shall:

(a) display the highest possible standards of ethical conduct;

(b) set an example to those employees reporting to them and maintain high levels of professionalism and integrity in their interaction with political office bearers and the public;

(c) ensure that they minimise conflicts of interest and that they put the public interest first in the performance of their functions; and

(d) avoid any conflict of interest that may arise in representing the interests of his or her department and being a member of a trade union, as defined in section 213 of the Labour Relations Act.”

(Republic of South Africa, 2020:Regulation 91)

Regulation 86 of the PSR (2020) mandates that the selection process for SMS positions be based on identified competencies to ensure that candidates possess the necessary attributes and capabilities for effective leadership. This competency-based approach supports the intentions of the Professionalisation Framework, which calls for integrated human resource practices based on merit, competence, and continuous professional development.

The PSR (2020) advances the regulatory framework for public servants and strengthens the state’s commitment to a professional, ethical, and capable Public Service. It affirms the intent of the Constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996) and the PSA (Republic of South Africa, 1994) by setting behavioural expectations for the SMS that reflect both ethical leadership and accountability. The regulations highlight the importance of behavioural competence and reinforce the behavioural shift required among SMS leaders to deliver a responsive and developmental state.

While the Public Service Regulations (2020) acknowledge the importance of ethical conduct and competence among members of the SMS, they fall short in explicitly

detailing the behavioural leadership competencies required for transformative public service leadership. The regulations establish a foundational expectation for professionalism, integrity and ethical behaviour, particularly through provisions such as Regulations 13, 86 and 91. However, these expectations remain largely normative and generalised, lacking the specificity needed to guide behavioural development in practice. The absence of a clearly articulated behavioural competency framework within the regulations presents a gap between policy intent and operational guidance. As a result, while the PSR (2020) affirm the constitutional vision of a capable and ethical state, they do not yet provide a comprehensive behavioural leadership model to enable the consistent selection, development and accountability of SMS members. This highlights the need for supplementary frameworks or instruments that translate these values into measurable and actionable leadership behaviours across the public service.

3.11 THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK TOWARD THE PROFESSIONALISATION OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR (2023)

The South African Public Service has faced criticism for inefficiency, corruption, and inadequate service delivery. In response, the Professionalisation Framework was introduced in 2019, approved by Cabinet in October 2022, and gazetted in August 2023. This Framework applies comprehensively to the entire South African public service, including the South African Public Service.

Advancing nations prioritise a public service system based on merit and competence, ensuring that the Republic of South Africa government consists of well-qualified professionals committed to serving the public and supporting national welfare and economic stability (National School of Government, 2023:7). The government’s primary goal is to establish a capable, ethical, and developmental state, and the Framework includes measures such as stringent recruitment processes, ongoing professional development, and collaboration between government entities, professional organisations, and academic institutions (Ramaphosa, 2022; National School of Government, 2023).

The Framework's recommendations are comprehensive, addressing all aspects of public administration, including organisational structures and workforce activities

essential for effective state functioning (National School of Government, 2023:8). It aims to drive a cultural shift towards ethical, efficient, and capable public administration by:

- **Competency-Based Recruitment and Promotion**: Emphasising a merit-based recruitment system fosters a culture of excellence, especially for senior positions within the SMS.
- **Continuous Professional Development**: Promoting lifelong learning and skills development through structured training programmes creates a learning culture among public servants, encouraging innovation.
- **Ethical Leadership and Accountability**: Instilling a culture of ethical leadership holds public officials accountable to high conduct standards, reinforcing values of integrity and transparency.
- **Professional Standards and Accreditation**: Ensuring public servants are accredited by professional bodies fosters a culture rooted in professionalism and accountability.
- **De-politicisation of the Public Service**: Limiting political interference in appointments encourages civil servants to perform their duties independently, fostering a service-oriented culture.
- **Leadership Development**: Developing strong, ethical leadership is crucial for setting a tone of professionalism and effectiveness within public service.
- **Performance Management and Accountability**: Improved performance management systems promote accountability and a results-oriented culture, moving away from complacency.
- **Building Trust with Citizens**: As public officials become more accountable, trust between citizens and the government increases, leading to efficient, transparent service delivery.

The Framework recognises 'public servant' as a term encompassing all employees in public administration, acknowledging the diversity in their employment conditions and responsibilities (National School of Government, 2023:8). It emphasises the need for a capable state apparatus that efficiently delivers high-quality services aligned with the country's developmental objectives (National School of Government, 2023:22).

Character is pivotal in expected professionalism, alongside technical qualifications. Public servants are expected to demonstrate ethical conduct, integrity, and respect towards colleagues and the public, thus establishing trustworthiness in the Public Sector (National School of Government, 2023:3-9).

Behaviour is a critical component of professionalism, involving how public servants conduct themselves in their roles. The Framework stresses that professionalism encompasses not just technical qualifications but also appropriate behaviours and attitudes, such as empathy and respect. Behavioural changes are vital for enhancing public service performance and fostering public trust (National School of Government, 2023:10).

Effective resolution of challenges in South Africa's Public Service relies significantly on senior managers. The South African Public Service needs a senior management cadre characterised by leadership styles that blend transformational and servant leadership qualities. SMS leaders should inspire transformative change and articulate a shared vision, demonstrating charisma and the ability to mobilise teams toward collective objectives (Barth-Farkas and Vera, 2014:217-232; Bass & Riggio, 2006:3; National School of GOvernment, 2023:10; Sun & Henderson, 2017:554-565; Vashistha, 2019).

Given the emphasis on transformative roles in the National Framework, leaders are expected to foster effective, efficient public service while advocating for necessary changes to enhance service delivery and accountability. As leaders, SMS members must embody ethical conduct and prioritise the well-being of employees and the public over personal interests (National School of Government, 2023:8-11, Greenleaf, 1970).

Finally, adaptability and resilience are crucial for leaders in South Africa's public service. Leaders in the South African Public Service must be able to adjust strategies in response to evolving circumstances and withstand the pressures associated with public service transformation (National School of Government, 2023:11).

Although the Professionalisation Framework makes strong reference to ethical, capable, and values-driven leadership as discussed, it stops short of defining how specific behavioural attributes such as emotional intelligence, adaptability, or

cognitive flexibility, can be practically assessed or embedded within senior leadership roles in the South African Public Service. As explored in Chapter 7, Section 7.3, while there is broad alignment in principle, the Professionalisation Framework lacks the operational detail required to guide behavioural transformation at SMS level.

3.12 LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AS ENABLERS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A BEHAVIOURAL LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK FOR THE SMS

Since the establishment of democracy in South Africa in 1994, numerous legal and regulatory frameworks have been introduced to create an efficient Public Service and develop strong public service leadership. These interventions reflect the commitment of the government of the Republic of South Africa to foster a capable and accountable public service.

The Public Service Commission (PSC) attested to a comprehensive legal framework governing recruitment and selection within the Public Service, which aims to ensure consistency and accountability in these practices (Public Service Commission, 2015; 2018; 2023; 2024). Divergent interpretations of the legal provisions by employees, labour representatives, and HR officials have been noted, leading to inconsistent application, which undermines the efficacy of these frameworks (Public Service Commission, 2015:32, 2023).

The Minister for the Public Service and Administration (MPSA) has enacted legal and policy frameworks, including the Public Service Regulations, 2020 (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2020), with a focus on improving leadership at SMS level. These regulations affirm the importance of ethical conduct, professional competence and merit-based selection, particularly through Regulations 13, 86 and 91. However, as discussed in Section 3.10, while the PSR (2020) establish clear normative expectations, they fall short in detailing the behavioural competencies necessary to develop a responsive and values-based leadership cadre. The SMS Handbook (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003) similarly underscores the importance of leadership in ensuring an effective and accountable public service. This is further supported by the NDP (2011), which stresses that the

behaviour and ethical conduct of senior leaders are crucial in achieving successful public service delivery (National Planning Commission, 2011:343).

Despite these frameworks, reports of misconduct and public service failures persist, raising questions about the effectiveness of leadership. According to Labuschagne and van Dijk (2016:1-18), addressing the root causes of leadership issues, rather than merely treating symptoms, is key to resolving public service challenges. Public service leaders have sometimes demonstrated questionable behaviours, lacking the ethical accountability required for nation-building (Trottier, Van Wart, &Wang, 2008:319-333). It is contended that the behaviour of SMS leaders, rather than the frameworks themselves, is central to the continued inadequacies in service delivery.

The persistent disconnect between legislative intentions and actual behavioural expectations within frameworks such as the SMS Competency Framework (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2008), results in inconsistencies in employment, implementation and leadership development. This weakens the State's capacity to drive value-based, citizen-centred service delivery.

3.13 SYNERGY BETWEEN THE DPSA COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK AND THE PROFESSIONALISATION FRAMEWORK

Both the SMS Competency Framework (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003:Chapter 5, Department of Public Service and Administration, 2008), and the Professionalisation Framework (National School of Government, 2023) share the overarching objective of promoting professionalism within the South African Public Sector. The DPSA SMS Competency Framework (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003:2, 2008), outlines key generic competencies required for senior managers, and adds behavioural attributes related to the specific competencies deemed necessary to perform at SMS level. The competencies included in the DPSA SMS Competency Framework (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003:3, 2008), encompass functional competencies intended to guide the recruitment, selection, performance management, and development of senior public servants similar to the requirements of the Professionalisation Framework (National School of Government, 2023:146).

The Professionalisation Framework integrates the existing SMS Competency Framework into a broader strategy aimed at enhancing professionalism and capability across the public service. The Professionalisation Framework (National School of Government, 2023:11) emphasises the need for reviewing and refining the SMS and Middle Management Service (MMS) competency frameworks to include competencies related to political, economic, and technical expertise (National School of Government, 2023:146). The framework explicitly advocates the use of competency assessments as part of recruitment processes and continuous professional development initiatives, including periodic competency assessments for SMS employees, also related such competencies and assessments to a possible accreditation process with professional bodies (National School of Government, 2023:59).

The Professionalisation Framework further proposes a structured, five-pillar professionalisation value chain. The five (5) pillars encompass pre-entry requirements, comprehensive induction and on-boarding of public servants, rigorous planning and performance management linked to competencies, continuous learning and professional development (CLPD), and clear consequence management and career progression criteria (National School of Government, 2023:47, 56-62). The need for periodic assessments proposed in the National Framework, and the expectation for certification aligned with the SMS competencies, validates the importance of these competencies and integrates competencies strategically within the professionalisation process.

Despite the two frameworks having overlapping goals, the SMS Competency Framework and the Professionalisation Framework diverge in their treatment of behaviour: the SMS Competency Framework reduces expectations form SMS leaders to ‘competencies’, while the Professionalisation Framework promotes values without noting concrete behavioural indicators, missing the opportunity to bridge policy with practice.

3.14 GAPS IN EXISTING POLICY

The SMS Competency Framework in the South African Public Service (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003:Chapter 5), outlines essential leadership

competencies for effective governance, however, it lacks critical components related to behavioural, ethical, and adaptive leadership, limiting its effectiveness in preparing SMS leaders for the complex and dynamic public service landscape in South Africa. There is further evidence that departments are not implementing the framework due to the associated costs, complexity, and the significant effort required for effective implementation (Section 3.7). Additionally, misalignment between HRM and HRD processes further exacerbates these challenges (Section 3.7).

A prominent gap in the framework is its insufficient emphasis on behavioural dynamics beyond the functional competencies recorded. While the framework prioritises technical skills like strategic capability and financial management, it neglects essential personal qualities such as emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and empathy, traits that are vital for effective leadership in the public service (Goleman, 2004:82-91; Haricharan, 2022:online). These attributes are crucial for fostering a culture that prioritises productivity, ethical conduct and accountability (Northouse, 2016:203-209; Klasmeier, Güntner, & Schleu, 2025:10008-10009; Haricharan, 2022:online).

Public Service leaders must lead with empathy and efficiency to respond to community needs (National Planning Commission, 2011:25; Vermeulen, 2017:36-67; Klasmeier, *et al.* 2025:10008-10009; Haricharan, 2022:online). The Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture highlighted ethical governance failures attributed to poor leadership, contributing to substantial financial losses and diminished public trust (Commission of Inquiry into State Capture, 2020:Volume 1). The Covid-19 pandemic further exposed the need for stronger leadership accountability amid widespread fraud involving senior managers (Cokayne, 2020:online).

Key competencies like emotional intelligence (EI) and transformational leadership are either underdeveloped or absent from the framework. EI is recognised as critical for managing teams and fostering collaboration (Haricharan, 2022:online; Klasmeier, *et al.*, 2025:10008-10009; Northouse, 2016:27-28). Similarly, transformational leadership is essential for inspiring employees to align their goals with organisational objectives but is underrepresented in the current framework (Yukl, 2017:321-324).

Another significant gap relates to ethical leadership and values. While the framework acknowledges ethics, it does not adequately equip leaders to cultivate a strong ethical culture. The current focus on compliance lacks emphasis on developing integrity and accountability as core leadership skills. SMS leaders often encounter ethical dilemmas and need clearer guidance on decision-making under ethical pressure, promoting transparency and fairness.

The lack of behavioural accountability is another shortcoming of the SMS Competency Framework. While ethical conduct and responsibilities are outlined, ethical behaviour as a leadership skill requires stronger emphasis. The framework should connect ethical principles to specific behaviours expected from senior leaders, providing practical guidelines for managing ethical practices within their teams. The framework underrepresents people-centric leadership aspects. It emphasizes operational and strategic management while neglecting qualities essential for connecting with and motivating teams. Inclusive leadership is one such area that needs depth; while it addresses diversity from a compliance perspective, it falls short in promoting the behaviours necessary for fostering an equitable workplace.

The absence of adaptive leadership focus is another critical gap. Given the rapidly changing socio-political environment in South Africa, leaders must develop adaptive skills to navigate unpredictable challenges effectively. This includes the ability to respond flexibly to complex problems and exhibit effective crisis leadership during emergencies.

Finally, the operationalisation of ethics in daily leadership practice is insufficiently addressed. While the SMS Handbook discusses ethical conduct, it does not provide strategies for translating ethical principles into everyday actions. This gap includes fostering an ethical culture, mentoring subordinates, and making ethically sound decisions in real-time.

The SMS Competency Framework in the South African Public Service (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003:Chapter 5), outlines essential leadership competencies for effective governance. The This framework however lacks critical components related to behavioural, ethical, and adaptive leadership, limiting its

effectiveness in preparing SMS leaders for the complex and dynamic public service landscape in South Africa. Although the Public Service Regulations (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2020) reinforce expectations of ethical conduct and professional competence among SMS members (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2020: Regulations 13, 86, 91), they do not provide the structured behavioural indicators needed to operationalise these expectations in leadership practice. There is further evidence that departments are not implementing the SMS Framework due to the associated costs, complexity, and significant effort required for effective implementation (Section 3.7). Additionally, misalignment between HRM and HRD processes further exacerbates these challenges (Section 3.7).

The Public Service Regulations (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2020) provided a legal foundation for SMS appointments and ethical behaviour; however, these regulations still reflect a generalised, compliance-oriented approach to leadership, rather than offering specific behavioural competencies or assessment tools (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2020). This gap reinforces the need for a dedicated behavioural leadership framework for the SMS to guide leadership development in the Public Service.

The legal and policy frameworks reviewed above play an important role in shaping public service leadership. In their alignment with key behavioural leadership dimensions there is a considerable variation. The summary below (Table 3.2) evaluates the extent to which each framework incorporates or omits core behavioural constructs such as ethical leadership, emotional intelligence, adaptability, and cognitive traits. This evaluation helps to clarify the behavioural gaps that exist in current policy and regulatory instruments

Table 3.2: Alignment of Legal and Policy Frameworks with Behavioural Leadership Dimensions

Framework	Ethical Leader-ship	Emotio-nal Intelligen ce	Adapta-bility	Cogni-tive Traits	Assess-ment Tools	Beha-vioural Gap (Y/N)

Constitution of South Africa (1996)	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	Yes
PSA (1994, amended)	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	Yes
SMS Competency Framework (2003, 2008)	✓	Partial	Partial	✗	Competency-based	Partial
NDP (2011)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	No
Batho Pele Principles (1997)	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	Yes
PAMA (2014)	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	Yes
PSR (2020)	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	Yes
Professionalisation Framework (2023)	✓	Partial	Partial	Partial	CPD, accreditation guidance	Partial

(Source: Researcher's construct, 2025)

Table 3.2 provides an overview of the extent to which key legal and policy frameworks in the South African Public Service integrate behavioural leadership dimensions. The National Development Plan (National Planning Commission, 2011) is the strongest in aligning with behavioural constructs such as cognitive flexibility, emotional intelligence, and adaptive leadership. While the SMS Competency Framework (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2008) references leadership capabilities, it does not fully integrate interpersonal and emotional skills. The Professionalisation Framework (National School of Government, 2023) strongly promotes ethical leadership but lacks structured tools for assessing behavioural attributes. Frameworks like the Public Service Act and Public Administration Management Act remain structurally focused with minimal behavioural orientation.

The *Batho Pele* Principles reflect values linked to emotional intelligence, but these have a strong institutional orientation and do not provide guidance on individual cognitive traits or behavioural assessment. The observations reflected upon in Table 3.2 reinforce the argument that an explicit behavioural leadership framework is needed to close the gaps in senior leadership development in the public service.

A behavioural leadership framework for the SMS is essential for continuous professional development and accountability. While the competency-based assessment system established in 2015 is useful, it should be accompanied by behavioural assessments. Integrating behavioural insights into performance evaluations and development plans will hold leaders accountable not only for their achievements but also for their methods, thereby supporting effective leadership succession planning.

3.15 CONCLUSION

This chapter demonstrates that while South Africa possesses a sophisticated legal framework for public service governance, the absence of behavioural specificity and the over-reliance on structural and procedural compliance dilute its effectiveness in shaping ethical, emotionally intelligent, and adaptive SMS leadership. Although the Public Service Regulations (2020) affirm values such as integrity and competence, the regulations do not provide adequate behavioural indicators or assessment tools to operationalise these expectations (Republic of South Africa, 2020). This lack of behavioural indicators limits the transformative potential of the regulations and reinforces the need for a more nuanced leadership model.

The Professionalisation Framework (2023) represents an important step forward by promoting competency-based practices and ethical standards, yet it still lacks a fully integrated behavioural leadership model tailored to the specific demands of SMS roles. These gaps highlight the urgency of creating a Behavioural Leadership Framework that provides measurable, practical guidance for leadership development, accountability, and performance in the public service.

The imperative to redefine leadership within South Africa's Public Service is clear, especially in the pursuit of establishing a functional and capable state. This chapter underscores the critical need for skilled public service leaders who can adeptly

navigate the evolving challenges facing the nation. This highlights the urgency of creating a Behavioural Leadership Framework specifically designed for SMS leaders, positioning it as a vital step toward developing a more effective, responsive, and proficient public service.

Such a framework is essential to address the limitations of existing leadership models within the South African public service. It offers a comprehensive and adaptable approach to leadership development, emphasising not only technical and strategic skills but also the behaviours that characterise ethical and effective public service leadership. By nurturing leaders who demonstrate integrity, emotional intelligence, and a commitment to the public good, this framework will play a crucial role in transforming the Public Service into a capable and accountable institution that serves all South Africans. This study posits that implementing a behavioural leadership framework is an urgent necessity for enhancing leadership effectiveness and achieving the objectives outlined in South Africa's National Development Plan.

This synthesis of various legal frameworks within the context of the South African Developmental State emphasises the importance of integrating cognitive profiles with legal standards. Understanding the cognitive approaches of SMS leaders can lead to more robust strategies for decision-making, problem-solving, and guiding organisational change. The forthcoming Chapter 4 reflects on the international context and examine global best practices in senior public service management behaviour, exploring competency and behavioural leadership frameworks from various countries, with valuable insights into professionalisation strategies to inform the development of the Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS in South Africa.

CHAPTER 4
COMPARATIVE GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON PUBLIC SECTOR LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORKS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 provides a contextual overview of international trends related to SMS competency and behavioural leadership requirements. The professionalisation of senior management in the Public Service has become a global priority, with various countries implementing competency and behavioural leadership frameworks to strengthen governance, accountability, and service delivery. Leadership within public service institutions requires a combination of technical expertise and behavioural competencies to navigate complex administrative environments effectively. Many governments and public administration bodies have developed structured frameworks to guide the selection, training, and evaluation of senior managers, ensuring that they possess the leadership attributes needed to address evolving governance challenges.

This chapter examines international best practices by analysing competency and behavioural leadership frameworks in Kenya, Ireland, the OECD, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the European e-Competence Framework, and the United States' Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs). These frameworks provide valuable insights into leadership professionalisation and validate the principle that behavioural competencies are fundamental requirements for senior public servants. This review affirms the need for the proposed Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS within the South African public service by demonstrating that similar approaches have been successfully adopted elsewhere. The inclusion of behavioural competencies in competency frameworks and their assessment in the Public Service of the Republic of South Africa is critically examined, particularly in terms of outcomes and their theoretical alignment with public leadership models.

4.2 EXAMPLES FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

The status of public service competency frameworks in the global South and on the African continent varies greatly, with each country reflecting its unique administrative reforms and strategic priorities. This section presents selected cases from the Global South namely Kenya, Saudi Arabia, Tanzania, and Ethiopia, to illustrate varied models of public service leadership development. These countries were selected due to their adoption of competency-based frameworks and recent reform agendas that reflect diverse administrative and socio-economic contexts on the African continent and relevant for South Africa.

4.2.1 Kenya

Kenya has made significant progress in professionalising its public service through structured competency and behavioural leadership frameworks designed for senior managers. The Kenyan Competency Framework for the Public Service, introduced by the Ministry of Public Service, Youth, and Gender Affairs, aimed to enhance service delivery, strengthen leadership capabilities, and foster accountability within the public service (Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs, 2024:1-6). The Kenyan Framework provided a structured approach to developing leadership competencies at various levels of public administration (Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs, 2024:Chapter 2).

The Kenyan Framework emphasised that the Public Service is challenged by globalisation and modernisation of service delivery systems (Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs, 2024:1). To respond to the realities of the day, and to fulfil the goals of a swiftly industrialising nation that aims to offer a high quality of life to its citizens, the public service needs employees who possess the skills to navigate the constantly evolving and complex tasks associated with their roles (Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs, 2024:1), and public servants who embody ethical behaviour, efficiency, effectiveness, motivation, and high competence (Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs, 2024:vii).

Leadership Competencies of the Kenyan Public Service Competency Framework (Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs, 2024:Section 2.4) outlines the

essential skills and attributes required for effective leadership within the public service. In this section the following areas are identified:

Strategic Thinking: Leaders are expected to have a clear vision, set strategic goals, and make informed decisions that align with the organization's objectives.

People Management: Effective leadership involves managing and developing teams, fostering a collaborative work environment, and ensuring employee engagement and motivation.

Performance Management: Leaders must monitor and evaluate performance, provide constructive feedback, and implement strategies for continuous improvement.

Ethical Leadership: Upholding integrity, transparency, and accountability is crucial for building trust and credibility within the public service.

Change Management: Leaders should be adept at managing change, guiding their teams through transitions, and ensuring the organization adapts to new challenges and opportunities.

These competencies are designed to equip leaders with the necessary tools to navigate complex challenges, inspire their teams, and drive organizational success, and to instil behavioural attributes and capabilities in public servants, empowering them to effectively perform their duties (Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs, 2024:v).

A critical analysis of the Kenyan Competency Framework for the Public Service (Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs, 2024) reveals that its approach to defining behavioural traits aligns with the SMS Competency Framework of the South African Public Service (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003). The Kenyan framework (Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs, 2024:Section 4) established direct linkages between behavioural attributes and managerial competencies toward ensuring that senior managers demonstrate proficiency in specific functional areas.

While the framework categorises these attributes as leadership behaviours, they predominantly reflect task-oriented responses and operational requirements rather

than broader strategic or transformational leadership capabilities. For example, within Financial Management and Budgeting competency (Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs, 2024:18), the behavioural traits outlined include financial analysis, budget forecasting, expenditure monitoring, and ensuring compliance with financial regulations. These competencies are critical for effective management, yet they are largely technical and operational, focusing on execution and compliance rather than visionary or strategic leadership. Similarly, within Coaching (Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs, 2024:19-20 behavioural traits such as assigning roles and responsibilities, monitoring and tracking team performance, and setting of objectives and team performance are proposed. It is evident that, while the Kenyan framework embeds some leadership elements, it primarily reinforces managerial proficiency over transformative leadership development, positioning leadership as a means of ensuring functional efficiency rather than driving systemic change.

4.2.2 Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has been undergoing significant economic and administrative reforms under the Vision 2030 initiative (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2025:83-84), aiming to diversify the economy (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2025:41-42) and enhance public service efficiency. The Kenyan government has been implementing various reforms to diversify the economy away from oil dependence and create more private sector jobs for a young and growing population (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2025:36, USA Department of State, 2024).

Under the Vision 2030 initiative, Saudi Arabia has been reforming its public service to enhance efficiency and service delivery (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2025:64-66). These competencies are part of broader efforts to modernize the public service, diversify the economy, and improve governance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2025:64-66).

Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030 introduced a leadership competency framework that extends beyond managerial efficiency to position leadership as a fundamental enabler of national transformation (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016:64). The framework articulates a shift from conventional administration toward strategic governance, innovation, and performance-oriented leadership. Leadership is

embedded in the ambition to create a high-performing, transparent, and accountable public service, aligned to national developmental priorities (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016:64). The concept of leadership excellence in the Vision is associated with strategic vision, sound decision-making, and the ability to implement institutional change effectively. Leaders are expected to drive productivity, instil a culture of accountability, and operate within transparent and agile public institutions (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016:65).

Ethical governance is positioned as a cornerstone of effective leadership, with transparency and accountability framed as essential characteristics of modern governance (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016:65). The Kingdom commits to high standards of public financial management, institutional agility, and continuous performance monitoring to improve overall government effectiveness (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016:65-66). Innovation and adaptability are reinforced through the digital transformation agenda (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016:57). The vision calls for strengthening governance through a national digital council and building partnerships to integrate technological infrastructure, aiming to increase efficiency and enhance competitiveness (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016:57).

Through the King Salman Program for Human Capital Development, the transformation agenda for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was activated by mandating all ministries to adopt best practices in human capital development, establish human resource centres of excellence, and train public servants to become future-ready leaders; to identify, support, and empower emerging leaders while fostering a culture of performance and continuous learning (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016:68).

Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016:64-70) outlined a strategic shift in public service leadership, where leadership competencies were positioned not only as managerial tools but as fundamental enablers of national transformation. The plan framed leadership within the broader ambition of building an agile, effective, and high-performing state that is transparent and responsive to citizen needs (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016:64-65). Central to this was the integration of ethical governance, strategic vision, and performance accountability into leadership expectations (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016:65). The King Salman Program for Human Capital Development complemented this agenda by mandating

the identification, development, and empowerment of future leaders, while also instituting centres of excellence within each government department to institutionalise leadership development and continuous performance improvement (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016:68).

Innovation and adaptability were further reinforced through the digital transformation agenda of the Kingdom. Leaders were expected to embrace emerging technologies and modernise the Public Sector by leveraging digital platforms, performance dashboards, and cross-institutional collaboration (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016:57). These traits were embedded in the vision's call for a government that delivers high-quality, citizen-centric services and responds proactively to evolving public expectations (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016:66). In addition, collaboration and interdepartmental synergy were framed as core leadership capabilities, particularly in the context of shared services and integrated governance (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016:69-70). This holistic framing of leadership competencies positioned public leaders as both agents of transformation and custodians of systemic accountability.

4.2.3 Tanzania

Tanzania has been actively engaged in public service reforms to enhance administrative efficiency and service delivery (Marijani,2017:169). The Tanzanian Public Service Leadership Competency Framework (TPSLCF) was established by the President's Office-Public Service Management (PO-PSM) to ensure that leadership positions in the Public Service are occupied by individuals who demonstrate the competencies required for successful public administration in (Marijani, 2017:178). The TPSLCF aimed to align public service leadership with the government's core knowledge needs (Marijani, 2017:170-171).

The Tanzania Public Service Leadership Competency Framework (TPSLCF), established in 2008, was developed as part of the broader Public Service Reform Program (Marijana, 2017:169-184). Its objective was to professionalise the public service and enhance service delivery by strengthening leadership capacity. The framework identified eight competency clusters, comprising 24 competencies, which were designed to serve as a reference point for recruitment, development, and

performance evaluation of leaders within the public service (Marijani, 2017:176–179).

The first cluster, Setting Clear Direction, focused on the ability of public leaders to formulate and communicate a compelling vision and make strategic decisions that align with organisational and national goals. This was consistent with reform initiatives that promoted performance-based planning and strategic leadership, as outlined in the government's Public Sector Reform Project (World Bank, 2008:14-16).

The cluster Achieving Results highlighted competencies related to delivering high-quality services and ensuring the efficient use of resources. These expectations were reinforced by the adoption of service delivery benchmarks and client service charters across Ministries, Departments and Agencies, which required leaders to demonstrate outcome-focused leadership (World Bank, 2008:22).

Managing Change placed emphasis on adaptability, innovation, and the ability to lead transformation processes. Public leaders were expected to manage organisational transitions effectively and drive continuous improvement in line with the government's performance enhancement objectives (World Bank, 2008:35).

The cluster Upholding Integrity and Ethics addressed the need for leaders to act transparently, promote accountability, and model ethical behaviour. These values were institutionalised through national efforts such as the National Anti-Corruption Strategy and Action Plan which aimed to embed integrity in the functioning of public institutions (United Republic of Tanzania, 2013:15).

Developing and Empowering Others focused on leadership behaviours related to mentoring, coaching, and creating a collaborative team environment. This aligned with Tanzania's Public Service Training Policy, which prioritised capacity building and the development of leadership potential within the public service (URT, 2013:11).

The cluster Communicating Effectively emphasised the importance of active listening and persuasive communication. These competencies were seen as essential for aligning teams, facilitating change, and building relationships within and outside the organisation (Marijani, 2017:177).

Building and Maintaining Relationships encompassed competencies related to collaboration, networking, and stakeholder engagement. Leaders were expected to

foster cooperative relationships within the public service and beyond, recognising the value of inclusive and participatory governance (Marijani, 2017:178).

Thinking and Acting Strategically, the last in the set of clusters required leaders to engage in analytical thinking and evidence-based policy development. This competency supported the capacity of public leaders to interpret complex information, plan effectively, and ensure alignment between institutional mandates and national development goals (World Bank, 2008:10; United Republic of Tanzania, 2013:9).

Marijani (2017:169-184) found that the effectiveness of the TPSLCF was tainted and that despite its intended purpose, the framework faced significant challenges in implementation. The TPSLCF extensively borrowed from global competency models, making it less reflective of Tanzania's specific governance and administrative context Marijani (2017:181). Marijani (2017) stressed that the framework lacked widespread recognition among local institutions, which resulted in uncoordinated training programmes that failed to effectively address the government's core knowledge requirements. The absence of a structured approach to integrating TPSLCF into national capacity-building initiatives limited its ability to enhance public service leadership competencies (Marijani, 2017:181).

Marijani (2017:181) observed that while the framework theoretically addressed key knowledge areas of strategic leadership, accountability, and service delivery, it did not significantly improve the Public Service's outcomes. The reasons noted for the unsuccessful implementation of the framework was limited adoption, inadequate institutional buy-in, and a lack of regular updates on progress. The study concluded that the TPSLCF needed substantial revision to ensure it is aligned with contemporary public administration challenges to effectively contribute to service delivery improvements in Tanzania (Marijana, 2017:169-184). Marijani (2017:181) presented the view that, since the TPSLCF had been in place for more than eight (8) years without revision, it was outdated and required a complete review retain relevance in an evolving Tanzanian Public Service landscape.

4.2.4 Ethiopia

Ethiopia has undertaken a series of Public Service reforms aimed at enhancing performance management and accountability within its civil service. These reforms are central to the government's broader strategy to professionalise the public service, improve service delivery, and ensure effective governance (Tesfaye, 2023:2; World Bank, 2013:3). The role of senior managers in the implementation and sustainability of these reforms is critical, particularly in translating national strategies into institutional performance and behavioural change.

One of the foundational reform instruments was the Result-Oriented Performance Appraisal System (ROPAS), introduced in 2003 to shift performance evaluations from procedural compliance to results. While conceptually aligned with output-driven leadership, its effectiveness was hindered by the absence of clearly defined indicators and insufficient alignment between institutional roles and strategic outcomes (Tesfaye, 2023:4).

ROPAS was introduced to improve civil service capacity by setting formal performance targets agreed upon by staff and supervisors (Tesfaye, 2023:6; Debela & Hagos, 2012:90-92). ROPAS faced challenges, including difficulties in identifying appropriate performance indicators, integrating institutional roles, and ensuring a structured approach to performance-based rewards (Debela & Hagos, 2012:92; Jiru, 2020:18). These limitations hindered its effectiveness, as performance goals often lacked alignment with broader institutional objectives (Jiru, 2022:70).

In response and to resolve the challenges with ROPAS, a Balanced Scorecard (BSC) approach was adopted in 2008 as a strategic planning and performance management tool to improve public service efficiency to align individual performance goals with national development goals (Jiru, 2020:22; Jiru, Teklu & Aga, 2022:74).

The BSC's implementation aimed to foster a performance-oriented culture within the public service, though challenges such as inconsistent application and lack of training continued (Jiru, 2020:23-24). the competencies outlined within the framework are primarily functional and fail to incorporate essential behavioural attributes necessary for effective leadership and management (Debela & Hagos, 2012:91). This structural gap has further contributed to inequitable performance

appraisals and inconsistencies in professional development efforts (Jiru *et al.,* 2022:75-76).

For senior managers, the BSC provided a framework to set strategic objectives, cascade them to team level, and monitor outcomes using performance data *(Tesfaye, 2023:5)*. The inconsistent implementation that was largely due to inadequate training, lack of performance incentives, and weak accountability structures, pointed to deficits in leadership behaviour related to change management, strategic thinking, and performance monitoring *(World Bank, 2013:5–6)*.

The implementation of the BSC aimed to cultivate a performance-driven culture within the public service (Tesfaye, 2023:6), but its effectiveness was hindered by challenges such as inconsistent application and inadequate training. Additionally, the competencies outlined within the framework were predominantly functional, lacking a strong emphasis on behavioural attributes essential for effective leadership and management (Debela & Hagos, 2012:90-92; Jiru, 2020:22-26; Jiru *et al.,* 2022:74-76).

Despite its ambitious aims, the BSC framework in Ethiopian public service has encountered significant implementation challenges, particularly due to inconsistent application, lack of adequate training, and an overemphasis on functional rather than behavioural competencies (Jiru, 2020:23). Notwithstanding its potential, the framework requires significant revisions to address its limitations and align with modern competency-based leadership models (Debela & Hagos, 2012:92; Jiru, 2022:78).

The Government of Ethiopia introduced a Business Process Reengineering (BPR) reform, that was more technical in its approach and scope but still had significant implications for senior leadership behaviour (Debela, 2009:87). The BPR required leaders to rethink and redesign workflows, eliminate inefficiencies, and introduce customer-focused service delivery models. Successful implementation demanded competencies such as innovation, stakeholder management, and systems thinking all which are hallmarks of modern public service leadership (Debela, 2009:87).

Ethiopia also launched the "Change Army" initiative in 2012 to drive cultural transformation and instil a mindset of collective responsibility among civil servants. This initiative placed emphasis on teamwork, patriotism, and alignment with organisational objectives. For senior managers, this reform redefined leadership as not only a managerial function but a values-based role requiring behavioural modelling, team mobilisation, and communication of strategic direction (Tesfaye, 2023:6).

Other citizen-focused initiatives and reforms in Ethiopia such as the Financial Transparency and Accountability (FTA) and Social Accountability (SA) frameworks necessitated a shift in leadership behaviour toward inclusivity, responsiveness, and public engagement. These reforms obligated senior managers to demonstrate competencies in participatory governance, communication, and ethical accountability (MoF, 2022:8–9; World Bank, 2020:6).

Despite these progressive reforms, challenges remain, with multiple gaps in implementation of key policies and reforms, resource constraints, and political interference that continuously undermined the capacity of senior managers to fully exercise their leadership competencies in line with reform goals (Tesfaye, 2023:7–8*;* World Bank, 2013:7).

4.2.5 Lessons from the Global South to consider for a behavioural leadership framework for the SMS in the South African Public Service

Each of the frameworks from the global south, discussed in Sections 4.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.2.3 and 4.2.4. presents an overview of the efforts of the respective country's efforts to define and promote the competencies and behaviours necessary for effective public service leadership, tailored to their unique administrative contexts and development goals. There is a varied states of competency frameworks in Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Saudi Arabia that illustrate the different stages of development, implementation, and adaptation of leadership and management competencies within public service institutions.

Tanzania continues to grapple with outdated competency models that require urgent revisions to ensure alignment with contemporary administrative needs and public service reforms. Without such updates, the TPSLCF risks becoming obsolete,

limiting its effectiveness in fostering a competent and accountable senior management cadre in the Public Service (Section 4.2.3).

Ethiopia's performance management reforms highlight a mixed success in competency-based leadership frameworks. While BSC model has been integrated into the Public Service, the inconsistent implementation and lack of training and incentives have weakened its effectiveness. Evidence suggests that Ethiopia needs structured competency frameworks that align with realistic performance metrics and career development strategies to support efficient and effective public services (Section 4.2.4).

The NDP, Vision 2030 (National Planning Commission, 2011) provided a complementary, more aspirational vision of leadership. It called for a professional and capable state, underpinned by strong leadership that is developmentally focused, ethically grounded, and citizen-oriented (National Planning Commission, 2011:410-412). The NDP noted that the state requires “skilled, competent, and committed leaders” who are able to build trust, drive performance, and ensure institutional integrity (National Planning Commission, 2011:414). The articulation of leadership in the NDP remains largely at the level of vision and policy aspiration.

The instrument through which this national plan must be implemented is the SMS Competency Framework (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003), that is outdated and not realising the transformative ideals proposed in the NDP. The SMS Competency Framework (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003) defined leadership largely through core and process-related competencies such as strategic capability and leadership, people management, change management, and financial management. Each competency is linked to behavioural indicators that describe how the senior manager should function within the administrative system (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2010:5-6). While ethics and values are incorporated, it was largely expressed in terms of functional performance rather than in relation to transformational or systemic leadership (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2010:6-8). The SMS Competency (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003) reflects a predominantly operational orientation, focusing on execution and compliance over vision and transformation.

The comparison suggests that Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016) presents a more integrated and forward-looking leadership model. The Saudi Arabian framework links leadership directly to institutional change, national development priorities, and reform implementation. The NDP introduces a transformative leadership vision, but it is not yet fully embedded in the competency framework or supported by systemic development programmes at the same scale as those in Saudi Arabia. In contrast to the expectation of the NDP (National Planning Commission, 2011), the SMS Competency Framework (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003) provides a structured but functionally oriented competency system that supports administrative performance.

There is a seemingly recurring pattern in the cases presented in Section 4.2, where well-intended and well-developed policies fail to be implemented due to a lack of commitment, inadequate training and information, and insufficient financial resources to support the execution of these policy frameworks. This mirrors the challenges reported by the DPSA (2023: slide 1-12), as captured in Section 3.7.

Evidence suggests that this ongoing issue is rooted in institutional inertia, limited capacity-building efforts, and inconsistencies between policy formulation and practical implementation. Additionally, there is an overemphasis on functional competencies, such as technical skills, procedural knowledge, and compliance, while insufficient attention is given to behavioural leadership attributes, including strategic vision, ethical leadership, emotional intelligence, and adaptive decision-making. This imbalance weakens leadership effectiveness, as policies are often technically sound but lack the leadership drive and commitment necessary for successful implementation.

Furthermore, the absence of clear accountability structures and weak monitoring frameworks exacerbates the problem, leading to a cycle of policy stagnation where frameworks are developed but not effectively executed. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach that integrates political will, adequate resource allocation, continuous training, and robust oversight mechanisms. Leadership development efforts must prioritise behavioural competencies alongside functional skills, ensuring that leaders possess not only the technical expertise but also the

vision, integrity, and interpersonal capabilities necessary to drive and sustain policy implementation.

These cases underscore the importance of regularly updating competency frameworks, ensuring behavioural leadership attributes are embedded within them, and aligning them with national development goals. For South Africa, these insights validate the need for the proposed Behavioural Leadership Framework for SMS, ensuring that it is both dynamic and responsive to the realities of governance, public service delivery, and leadership effectiveness in an evolving administrative landscape of a developing South Africa. The alternative might be “a country with a zero % growth rate, and the dangers of an imploding economy” (Nealer, 2025).

The comparative cases from the Global South presented in Section 4. 2 demonstrate that without embedding behavioural leadership competencies such as ethical governance, emotional intelligence, strategic foresight, and adaptability in leadership, even the most technically sound frameworks might not result in systemic change and improved service delivery. The SMS Competency Framework (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003) remains operationally focused, lacking the transformative leadership emphasis required to fulfil the vision of the NDP. The proposed Behavioural Leadership Framework for SMS should address this gap by integrating behavioural competencies in effective public service leadership.

4.3 OTHER GLOBAL INITIATIVES

4.3.1 The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Leadership for a High-Performing Public Service

The OECD, through its Working Party on Public Employment and Management (PEM), plays a crucial role in shaping competency standards and behavioural leadership frameworks for senior public service managers. PEM promotes professionalisation through continuous learning and development, ethical standards, and integrity to ensure public trust and governance effectiveness (OECD, 2020).

Competency frameworks identified by PEM focus on strategic capability, financial management, and innovation and change management, ensuring that senior managers can navigate complex policy environments and resource allocation

effectively. Behavioural competencies, such as emotional intelligence, inclusiveness, diversity, accountability, and transparency, are integral to leadership effectiveness in the public service (OECD, 2020). These competencies align with global trends that prioritise ethics, adaptability, and data-driven decision-making to enhance public administration resilience and responsiveness.

4.3.2 UNDP Competency Framework

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Competency Framework defines competencies based on core values such as integrity, teamwork, communication, and leadership (United Nations Development Programme, 2021). This framework aligns with public service goals of ethical governance, accountability, and collaboration. It also distinguishes functional competencies related to specific roles, ensuring that leadership attributes are tailored to organisational needs.

The UNDP Competency Framework defined a coherent and values-driven approach to leadership and performance in the public service. It classified competencies into three categories: Core Values, Core Competencies, and People Management Competencies, which collectively ensured that public servants' behaviours aligned with ethical standards, organisational goals, and operational demands (United Nations Development Programme, 2021a:1–2; United Nations Development Programme, 2021b:1–3).

The Core Values included integrity, professionalism, and respect for diversity. Integrity referred to acting in accordance with moral and ethical principles and adhering to the organisation’s rules. Professionalism was defined as demonstrating subject matter expertise and a commitment to high-quality outcomes. Respect for diversity emphasised the importance of treating all individuals with dignity and acknowledging the value of differing perspectives and backgrounds (United Nations Development Programme, 2021a:2).

The Core Competencies consisted of seven behavioural areas that applied across all roles. These included achieving results, thinking innovatively, learning continuously, adapting with agility, acting with determination, engaging and partnering, and enabling diversity and inclusion. Each of these competencies supported ethical governance, responsiveness, and the ability to navigate complex and dynamic

environments. For example, "achieving results" meant focusing on outcomes and accountability, while "thinking innovatively" encouraged the generation of new ideas beyond conventional approaches (United Nations Development Programme, 2021a:3–6).

In addition to these foundational competencies, UNDP outlined specific People Management Competencies for those in leadership positions. These included managerial courage, emotional intelligence, team motivation, performance management, building capability, enabling a supportive work environment, and leading with humility. These attributes aligned with the leadership demands in the public service, such as cultivating trust, maintaining transparency, and fostering learning cultures within institutions (United Nations Development Programme, 2021b:2–6).

The framework emphasised that leadership must not only be functionally competent but also ethically grounded and behaviourally responsive to organisational needs. By tailoring leadership development to include both behavioural and functional aspects, the UNDP model aligned closely with global public service goals of accountability, citizen responsiveness, and performance excellence (United Nations Development Programme, 2021a:1; United Nations Development Programme, 2021b:1).

4.3.3 United Kingdom

The United Kingdom’s Civil Service Competency Framework (2012-2017) provides a structured and behaviourally focused approach to public service leadership that strongly aligns with global shifts toward integrated leadership development. The framework is organised into ten competencies across three clusters: Setting Direction, Engaging People, and Delivering Results. It emphasises not only the knowledge and skills required of public servants, but also the values and behaviours expected at every leadership level. These behaviours are cumulative and build progressively, with observable indicators that distinguish effective from ineffective leadership across roles and grades (UK Civil Service, 2012:1-3).

At the senior management level, the framework identifies behaviours such as “seeing the big picture”, “changing and improving”, and “making effective decisions”

as strategic competencies required for visionary leadership (UK Civil Service, 2012:3-6). These are supported by competencies in engagement and delivery, including “leading and communicating”, “collaborating and partnering”, and “delivering at pace” (UK Civil Service, 2012:3-6). Importantly, these behavioural competencies are aligned with a broader leadership philosophy outlined in the Civil Service Leadership Statement, which requires leaders to be inspiring, confident, and empowering. This holistic view positions leadership as a behavioural and ethical function rather than a merely operational one (UK Civil Service, 2012:3-6).

The UK approach demonstrates a clear commitment to professionalising leadership by embedding behaviours such as integrity, resilience, inclusivity, and a strong service ethic throughout the performance management, recruitment, and development processes. These principles reinforce the argument that leadership frameworks must cultivate behavioural capabilities that are values-driven and citizen-focused. The UK framework aligns with several principles found in African leadership philosophies, such as participatory leadership, humility, and ethical governance, offering an additional layer of relevance for the South African context (UK Civil Service, 2012:4-6).

By embedding leadership behaviours within all facets of civil service development, the UK model provides a practical example of how leadership frameworks can translate values into action. The approach offers valuable insights for the Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS proposed in this study, particularly in demonstrating how clearly defined behavioural expectations can foster accountability, inclusivity, and trust in public institutions.

4.3.4 Ireland

Ireland established the Senior Public Service (SPS) in 2011 in response to the need for a unified, competent leadership cadre at the highest levels of government. The initiative was underpinned by the Senior Public Service Leadership Development Strategy 2017-2020, which provided a roadmap for building leadership capability across departments and agencies (Government of Ireland, 2017:1-2).

At the core of the SPS model was a competency framework that guided leadership development, performance management, and succession planning. The framework

prioritised behavioural competencies and promoted continuous learning, resilience, and adaptability as central leadership attributes (Government of Ireland, 2017:6-7). Leadership development interventions included executive coaching, mentoring, 360-degree feedback assessments, and participation in cross-sectoral learning programmes tailored to the challenges of senior public service roles (Government of Ireland, 2017:8).

The SPS competency model assessed leaders on core behavioural traits such as delegation, strategic thinking, assertiveness, communication, and resilience. Standardised 360-degree feedback was employed to measure leadership effectiveness and inform development plans (Government of Ireland, 2017:7-8). These behavioural indicators were embedded in a broader performance management system, which aligned leadership capability with organisational strategy and citizen-focused outcomes.

In addition to leadership development, the SPS strategy integrated succession planning and talent mobility across the Irish civil service. The model emphasised the identification and nurturing of future leaders, enabling proactive workforce planning and promoting collaboration across departments (Government of Ireland, 2017:5-6). The competency framework also reflected a deep commitment to public service values, requiring leaders to exemplify integrity, courage, and professionalism. Strategic thinking, results orientation, stakeholder engagement, and personal development were framed as essential behaviours for senior officials (Public Appointments Service, 2013:1-3).

This holistic framework demonstrated how behavioural competencies could be systematically embedded into public service leadership models. It offered a structured approach to developing ethical, high-performing, and future-ready leaders capable of navigating increasingly complex public service environments (Government of Ireland, 2017:2–3).

4.3.5 Canada

Canada formalised its approach to public service leadership through the Key Leadership Competency Profile, which was last revised in 2015 by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (Government of Canada, 2015). This framework

outlined a set of behavioural competencies expected of executives and senior leaders across the federal public service. These competencies were used as a standard for recruitment, performance evaluation, professional development, and succession planning (Government of Canada, 2015).

The framework defined six core leadership competencies. The first, Creating Vision and Strategy, emphasised a leader's ability to provide strategic direction aligned with national priorities and departmental objectives. Leaders were expected to anticipate future trends, identify strategic opportunities, and articulate a compelling vision that inspired confidence and direction (Government of Canada, 2015).

The second competency, Mobilise People, focused on engaging, motivating, and empowering individuals and teams to achieve organisational outcomes. Leaders were expected to build trust, foster commitment, and provide clarity of purpose to their teams (Government of Canada, 2015). The third, Uphold Integrity and Respect, highlighted the importance of ethical conduct, professionalism, and inclusivity. Leaders were required to model respectful behaviour, promote diversity, and create safe, respectful work environments (Government of Canada, 2015).

Collaborate with Partners and Stakeholders was the fourth competency. It recognised the need for interdepartmental and cross-sectoral collaboration in a complex governance environment. Senior leaders were encouraged to cultivate partnerships, promote engagement, and coordinate across jurisdictions and organisations (Government of Canada, 2015). The fifth competency, Achieve Results, accountability for outcomes was emphasised. Leaders were expected to drive performance, align resources with goals, and demonstrate perseverance in overcoming obstacles to deliver measurable public value (Government of Canada, 2015). The competencies conclude with Promote Innovation and Guide Change which captured the need for public service leaders to act as change agents. This required fostering innovation, embracing continuous improvement, and leading transformative initiatives in response to emerging challenges and opportunities (Government of Canada, 2015).

Complementing this profile, the Leadership Development Framework for the Public Service of Canada placed emphasis on workplace learning, coaching, and on-the-job experience as critical components of leadership development. It underscored that

leadership learning must be continuous and closely aligned with organisational strategy and the changing expectations of citizens (Government of Canada, 2022).

4.3.6 The United States of America

The United States Senior Executive Service (SES) adopted the Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) as the principal framework for identifying, assessing, and developing senior leaders across federal departments. The ECQ framework was designed by the U. S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to ensure that federal executives demonstrated both technical capacity and behavioural leadership competencies necessary for high-level public service (United States of America Office of Personnel Management, 2012:2; 2023:online).

The ECQ framework outlined five core leadership domains: Leading Change, Leading People, Results Driven, Business Acumen, and Building Coalitions. Each domain was supported by a set of behavioural and functional competencies. For instance, Leading Change included behaviours such as resilience, flexibility, external awareness, strategic thinking, and the ability to create and communicate vision (United States of America Office of Personnel Management, 2012:6; 2023). These traits positioned public service leaders to anticipate change, embrace innovation, and guide agencies through transformation.

Leading People addressed leadership behaviours related to managing diversity, resolving conflict, developing others, and team building. It emphasised the need for inclusive, emotionally intelligent leadership that fostered engagement and collaboration (United States of America Office of Personnel Management, 2012:7; 2023:online). The Results Driven domain required executives to demonstrate decisiveness, accountability, customer service, entrepreneurship, problem-solving, and technical credibility, competencies that collectively reflected a commitment to delivering high-quality, measurable outcomes aligned with institutional goals (United States of America Office of Personnel Management, 2012:7; 2023:online).

The Business Acumen qualification involved competencies in financial management, human capital management, and technology management. Senior leaders were expected to effectively administer budgets, manage procurement, lead a diverse

workforce, and integrate technology for improved service delivery (United States of America Office of Personnel Management, 2012:7; 2023:online).

Building Coalitions represented the fifth ECQ and focused on competencies such as partnering, political savvy, and influencing/negotiating. Leaders were expected to form cross-sectoral alliances and engage constructively with stakeholders across government, civil society, and the private sector (United States of America Office of Personnel Management, 2012:8; 2023:online).

In addition to the five ECQs, the framework integrated a set of fundamental competencies that served as behavioural anchors across all domains. These included interpersonal skills, communication, integrity and honesty, continual learning, and public service motivation (United States of America Office of Personnel Management, 2012:8; 2023:online). These foundational attributes reinforced the ethical and developmental character of public service leadership.

This rigorous, behaviourally anchored approach ensured that senior managers not only possess the technical knowledge required to manage complex institutions but also the behavioural attributes necessary to lead ethically, strategically, and collaboratively in the public interest (United States of America Office of Personnel Management, 2012:9; 2023:online).

4.3.7 Australia

The Australian Public Service (APS) defined a comprehensive Leadership Capability Framework to guide the Senior Executive Service (SES) in navigating the increasing complexity of public service administration. The framework emphasised that leadership was not only about achieving outcomes but also about how those outcomes were achieved through collaboration, innovation, and influence. SES officers were expected to inspire and organise people, engaging them to innovate, collaborate, and implement change in ways that made a meaningful difference at the national level (Australian Public Service Commission, 2020:2-3).

The framework was endorsed by the Secretaries Talent Council, with the approval of the Secretaries Board and the Chief Operating Officers Committee. It was subsequently updated through the APS Workforce Strategy 2025 to embed leadership behaviours such as promoting a pro-integrity culture, adopting a citizen-

centric approach, and committing to life-long learning (Australian Public Service Commission, 2020:2).

Six core leadership capabilities were articulated, which collectively formed the foundation of the Leadership Capability Wheel. These included being visionary – demonstrating the ability to anticipate trends and provide strategic advice; influential – mobilising support and maintaining stakeholder confidence; and collaborative - building trust and cooperation across agencies and sectors. In addition, APS leaders were expected to demonstrate entrepreneurial traits by challenging traditional thinking, managing risk, and seeking out innovative opportunities (Australian Public Service Commission, 2020:3-4).

Enabling leadership was expressed through the ability to nurture talent, build team capacity, and create empowering environments, while the “delivers” capability required senior managers to lead the delivery of complex programmes and drive digital transformation to improve public service outcomes (Australian Public Service Commission, 2020:4-5).

The framework placed particular emphasis on personal attributes considered critical to effective leadership, including courage, resilience, self-awareness, citizen-centricity, and a commitment to continuous learning. These behavioural attributes provided the foundation for navigating ambiguity, maintaining integrity under pressure, and modelling values-based leadership (Australian Public Service Commission, 2020:5).

The framework provided a behaviourally anchored leadership model for the APS, aligning individual capability with national governance priorities and service excellence (Australian Public Service Commission, 2020:2-3)

4.3.8 Lessons from other Global initiatives to consider for a behavioural leadership framework for the SMS in the South African Public Service

The comparative analysis of leadership development frameworks from the OECD, UNDP, Ireland, Canada, the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom reveals a clear global trend toward embedding behavioural competencies that transcend role-specific functional requirements. These international frameworks foreground ethical leadership, emotional intelligence, inclusivity, and adaptive

capacity as essential attributes for senior public service managers. This shift represents a more human-centred and morally grounded understanding of leadership effectiveness (OECD, 2020:3; UNDP, 2021a:3-6; Government of Ireland, 2017:6-8; Government of Canada, 2015:2-4; U. S. OPM, 2012:6-8; Australian Public Service Commission, 2020:3-5; UK Civil Service, 2012:3-6). The alignment of these competencies with strategic goals, citizen responsiveness, and performance excellence confirms the importance of integrating values and behaviours into leadership models that are responsive to the contemporary challenges of public governance.

The United Kingdom's Civil Service Competency Framework places behavioural expectations at the centre of public service leadership development. It incorporates leadership behaviours such as seeing the big picture, changing and improving, leading and communicating, and delivering at pace. These are not generic ideals but observable behavioural indicators that define effective leadership at each role level, ensuring performance is measured against values and not only technical delivery (UK Civil Service, 2012:3-6). This model further reinforces leadership as a moral and behavioural responsibility, consistent with the approach adopted in Canada, the United States, and Australia.

What is particularly significant for the South African context is that these global frameworks increasingly reflect behavioural traits and leadership philosophies that are foundational in African traditions as were previously discussed in Section 2.6.1.7. Leadership values such as empathy, participative decision-making, humility, and collective responsibility, which are central to the African philosophy of *Ubuntu,* are evident in the leadership models adopted in countries such as Canada, the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom (U. S. OPM, 2012:8; Government of Canada, 2015:4-5; Australian Public Service Commission, 2020:4-5; UK Civil Service, 2012:4-6). These parallels suggest that African leadership principles are not only culturally appropriate for the South African Public Service, but also resonate with internationally recognised standards of ethical and accountable leadership. The development of a Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS of South Africa is aligned with these global shifts. It contributes to a broader movement that repositions leadership as a moral and behavioural practice, rather than one defined solely by compliance and technical performance.

The global examples reviewed confirm that leadership effectiveness increasingly depends on behavioural capabilities that are not easily captured through traditional, functionally oriented competency models. This presents a clear challenge to the existing SMS Competency Framework (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003), which, although it includes behavioural indicators, remains heavily operational and compliance-focused (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003:Chapter 5). The Professionalisation Framework (National School of Government, 2023:70) has already acknowledged this gap and advocates for the inclusion of explicit behavioural attributes as part of a revised leadership framework. The need to update the way in which senior management competencies are defined in South Africa is important, not only to enhance alignment with national development objectives, but also to reflect the realities of leadership in a post-apartheid, constitutional democracy committed to service, equity, and transformation.

Drawing lessons from these global initiatives, it becomes evident that a new Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS must place behavioural attributes at its core. Such a framework should give expression to values such as integrity, respect, humility, adaptability, and empathy, while embedding accountability and performance orientation. It should also reflect the uniquely African worldview that leadership is a collective, moral, and inclusive responsibility (Pillay *et al.,* 2013:98-108; Metz, 2020:46–52; Lerutla & Steyn, 2023:2-7). In this way, South Africa can design a framework that not only meets international standards, but also embodies the principles of *Ubuntu* and African leadership, which are essential for rebuilding trust and legitimacy in the public service.

4.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has critically examined international and Global South initiatives to strengthen public service leadership through the integration of competency-based and behavioural frameworks. From the OECD and UNDP to the leadership frameworks of countries such as Ireland, the United States, Kenya, Saudi Arabia, and the United Kingdom, there is increasing consensus that effective public service leadership depends not only on technical proficiency but on deeply embedded behavioural competencies. These competencies, emotional intelligence, ethical governance, adaptability, interpersonal sensitivity, and values-driven decision-making

are now recognised as essential for navigating the complexity, ambiguity, and relational demands of the contemporary public service environment (OECD, 2020:3; UNDP, 2021a:3-6; Mau, 2017:10-12; UK Civil Service, 2012:3-6).

A key insight from the comparative review is that behavioural leadership competencies are not auxiliary to leadership effectiveness, but foundational. In countries like Ireland and the United States, these behavioural traits are institutionalised through 360-degree assessments and performance-based leadership development systems. The U. S. ECQs, for instance, explicitly require senior executives to demonstrate inclusive leadership, interpersonal acumen, and moral integrity (U. S. OPM, 2012:6-8). Similarly, the UK Civil Service Framework integrates observable behavioural indicators into recruitment, performance management, and development processes at all leadership levels (UK Civil Service, 2012:3-6). Kenya also integrates behavioural dimensions such as ethical leadership and stakeholder collaboration into its public service frameworks.

The South African context presents a more complex and uneven picture. While the NDP articulates a compelling vision for a capable, professional, and ethical state (National Planning Commission, 2011:410-414), the operationalisation of this vision through the SMS Competency Framework (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003) remains limited by its predominantly technical and functional orientation. This misalignment between aspirational leadership discourse and actual competency frameworks is echoed in other countries across the Global South, including Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Saudi Arabia, where well-intentioned reforms often fall short due to institutional inertia, inadequate training, and weak alignment between leadership development and strategic outcomes. These trends reinforce observations by Mau (2017:16) that without clarity, context sensitivity, and adaptability, competency models risk becoming rigid, outdated, or irrelevant.

The international case studies reveal a convergence between globally endorsed behavioural leadership traits and values historically embedded in African leadership traditions, especially *Ubuntu*. Principles such as empathy, collective accountability, and participatory decision-making are now recognised globally as prerequisites for ethical and effective governance, reinforcing the cultural relevance and legitimacy of

embedding these values into a behavioural leadership framework for the South African SMS (Pillay *et al*., 2013:98-108; Metz, 2020:46-52).

Mau (2017:14-16) further cautioned that leadership competency frameworks must not adopt universalistic models at the expense of local relevance. Competency models developed without regard to national context risk neglecting the distinct governance challenges faced by countries like South Africa. Given the historical legacies, ongoing transformation, and ambitions of a developmental state, South Africa requires a leadership model that is technically sound, behaviourally competent, and value driven.

The evidence presented in this chapter clearly demonstrates the need for the proposed Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS to prioritise behavioural competencies alongside technical skills. The framework should embed leadership values such as integrity, emotional intelligence, collaboration, and accountability across all aspects of leadership. By grounding the framework in both global evidence and African leadership principles, it becomes possible to design a model that is not only internationally aligned but also locally legitimate and contextually relevant. Such a framework holds the potential to rebuild public trust, enhance service delivery, and contribute meaningfully to the ongoing professionalisation of the South African public service.

The next chapter sets out the research methodology used to develop this proposed framework. It explains the data collection methods, sampling strategies, and analytical techniques employed to ensure that the framework is not only theoretically grounded but also empirically validated and practically relevant.

CHAPTER 5
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 5 establishes the methodological foundation of this study, ensuring transparency, replicability, and alignment with academic standards. It outlines the research methodology employed to address the research questions and achieve the study's objectives. A comprehensive description of the research design, philosophical assumptions, and methodological approaches guiding the investigation is provided. The selection of research methods, data collection techniques, sampling strategies, and analytical tools is grounded in the chosen paradigm and aligned with the nature of the research problem.

This chapter outlines the research methodology adopted to guide the development of a normative, conceptual behavioural leadership framework for the SMS in the South African Public Service. The study primarily draws from conceptual and normative research traditions, supported by qualitative insights from expert interviews. This methodology aligns with the study's prescriptive aim to propose how leadership should be exercised, grounded in both theoretical reasoning and real-world insights. The chapter discusses the philosophical assumptions, research design, data sources, analytical techniques, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study.

5.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study adopted a qualitative normative research design, grounded in conceptual reasoning and supported by empirical validation through purposively selected expert interviews. Rather than following a mixed-methods approach, the study drew primarily from conceptual and normative traditions in public administration and leadership research. Normative research is concerned with prescriptive questions, focusing on what ought to be rather than what is (Van Thiel, 2014:50). Conceptual research, in this context, aimed to define and clarify constructs related to behavioural

leadership by synthesising existing theories, policy documents, and leadership frameworks (Mouton, 2001:175; Gilson, Lan & Shapiro, 2011:25).

The empirical element served to enhance the credibility, coherence, and contextual relevance of the proposed behavioural leadership framework. It did not represent a parallel methodological strand, as in a true mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018:5). Instead, the expert interviews were used to validate and refine the emerging theoretical framework, a process often employed in qualitative exploratory research (Maxwell, 2012:89; Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013:156).

The conceptual component of the research focused on in-depth analysis of academic literature, national policies, and international case studies to construct a theoretical foundation for understanding behavioural leadership in the SMS of the South African Public Service. This included a review of leadership models and ethical governance frameworks drawn from both Western and African epistemologies.

The empirical validation component involved collecting insights from a purposive sample of senior managers at the National School of Government (NSG), all of whom were engaged in leadership development, policy implementation, or the professionalisation of the public service. These interviews contributed real-world insights that enriched the conceptual framework by affirming, adjusting, or challenging key assumptions.

This qualitative normative design enabled the development of a prescriptive and context-specific behavioural leadership framework, integrating ethical foundations, transformational vision, and public service orientation as core dimensions. These dimensions responded to contemporary challenges in the South African Public Service and aligned with both global best practices and local institutional realities (De Clerq, 2023:381; Van Wart, 2013a:537).

The selected design aligned with the interpretivist and constructivist paradigms underpinning the study, allowing for a deep exploration of meaning, values, and behaviour as socially constructed phenomena within the public service context (Leavy, 2017:13; Hammersley, 2012:27; Lincoln & Guba, 2000:170).

5.3 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY AND PARADIGM

Section 5.3 presents the theoretical foundation for the study.

5.3.1 Ontological and Epistemological Positioning

The theoretical foundation of the study is based on constructivism, which extends the interpretivist framework by asserting that individuals actively construct their understanding of the world through social interactions. Knowledge is viewed as context-dependent and continually evolving. In constructivist research, reflexivity is crucial; it acknowledges that the researcher's perspectives and experiences influence the interpretation of data. This approach is especially pertinent for developing a nuanced behavioural leadership framework that takes into account the complexities of human interactions within the Public Service (Leavy, 2017:38).

From the Constructivist perspective, reality is shaped by human intelligence through interactions with real-world experiences; when human mental activity is involved in understanding reality, constructivism is embraced (Elkind, 2004:25). This approach holds that leadership is not an objective, fixed phenomenon but a dynamic and socially constructed reality (Creswell & Poth, 2018:24).

Knowledge was developed through reflection and interaction with the socio-political and institutional environment in which SMS leaders operated. This ontological stance was particularly appropriate for behavioural leadership, which is not a universally defined concept, but one shaped by context, organisational culture, historical influences, and societal values (Côté, 2023:online; Javidan, 1999:93-120). SMS leaders interpret and enact leadership based on their lived experiences, and their behaviours are informed by ongoing interactions within the public service environment. As such, meanings attached to ethical conduct, service orientation, and transformational vision are constructed contextually rather than imposed objectively.

Positioning the study within a constructivist paradigm provided the opportunity to prioritise meaning-making over measurement, in alignment with the study's normative and conceptual focus. This perspective also justified the use of empirical validation through expert interviews with senior NSG managers, who are intensely involved in the design and implementation of frameworks for the professionalisation

of the Public Service. Constructivism, which views knowledge as co-created through social engagement, validated the use of these interviews not only as a data collection method but as an interpretive process to refine the theoretical framework based on lived professional experience.

Constructivist ontology supported the normative aim of the study: to propose a prescriptive behavioural leadership framework. The research was not limited to describing current practices; rather, it aimed to present a contextually appropriate and value-based model for leadership in the public service. This reflects the constructivist perspective, which asserts that leadership should be designed and developed based on how it is experienced and understood.

Ontologically, the study accepted that reality is multiple and constructed; epistemologically, it recognised that knowledge is co-created through interaction and interpretation; methodologically, it employed conceptual reasoning and qualitative interviews; and axiologically, this approach promoted values in human-centric leadership.

5.3.2 Interpretivist paradigm – Exploring multiple realities

This study is grounded in the interpretivist philosophical tradition, which emphasises that reality is not an objective construct but is subjectively shaped by human experiences and social interactions. The study adopted an interpretivist paradigm to focus on the meanings public service leaders assign to their behaviours and experiences. This paradigm supports the exploration of multiple realities and the co-construction of knowledge between the researcher and participants (Leavy, 2017:13).

This perspective is particularly relevant in the context of public service leadership, where understanding the behaviour of SMS members necessitates a focus on their roles, experiences, and the meanings they assign to their actions in their natural environments (Leavy, 2017:13). From this interpretivist perspective, focus was placed on the meanings public service leaders assign to their behaviours and experiences. This paradigm supports the exploration of multiple realities and the co-construction of knowledge between the researcher and participants

Adopting an interpretivist paradigm allowed for an exploration of multiple realities and subjective experiences, which are essential for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The interpretivist approach prioritised the meanings individuals create through their daily interactions and the context within which these interactions occur. By focusing on how personal perceptions and social contexts influenced behaviour, the study aimed to uncover the intricate dynamics of leadership within the Public Service (Leavy, 2017:13).

The interpretivist paradigm is closely associated with qualitative research, as it seeks to delve into the subjective interpretations and lived experiences of individuals. Unlike natural sciences, which often rely on quantitative measures, qualitative methods facilitate a deeper exploration of complex social phenomena (Hammersley, 2012:26; Leavy, 2017:123). This methodology aligns with the study's aim to investigate SMS members' leadership behaviours, recognizing that the nuances of their experiences are critical for understanding the dynamics of public service leadership.

5.3.3 Axiological Stance

The research takes a normative axiological position, asserting that values such as ethics, accountability, and service commitment are central to public service leadership and should be incorporated into leadership development frameworks (Van Wart, 2013:560).

5.3 4 Holistic examination of leadership

By integrating both interpretivist and constructivist paradigms, the study aimed to provide a holistic examination of leadership behaviours within the SMS. This dual approach allowed for a comprehensive analysis of how subjective interpretations and social contexts inform leadership practices. The addition of lived experiences assisted in illuminating the challenges and opportunities SMS leaders encounter, ultimately contributing to the development of effective leadership strategies within the South African public service.

In summary, the interpretivist philosophical tradition, complemented by constructivist principles, provided a robust framework for understanding the complexities of leadership within the SMS.

5.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

The study employed a qualitative research approach that integrated normative conceptual reasoning with interpretive insights drawn from practice. This approach aligned with the constructivist and interpretivist paradigms, which emphasise understanding social phenomena through the perspectives and experiences of those involved (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012:22). Leadership, particularly within the public service, is inherently contextual and socially constructed, and a qualitative design enabled the researcher to explore subjective meanings and behavioural nuances in-depth (Creswell & Poth, 2018:24).

The normative component of the study aimed to prescribe a value-driven behavioural leadership framework, grounded in conceptual analysis of ethical principles, public service values, and international leadership practices. Normative research is particularly suitable when the goal is to answer questions about what should be, and it is essential in studies aiming to improve public leadership by promoting values such as ethical governance, accountability, and service delivery (Van Wart, 2013:553-565).

While the study was primarily conceptual in nature, it incorporated an empirical validation phase involving semi-structured interviews with senior managers at the National School of Government. This interpretive component was designed to refine the theoretical framework based on experiential knowledge from practitioners. The insights gathered served not to generate grounded theory in the classical sense, but rather to confirm, adapt, or nuance the conceptual constructs identified through literature and policy analysis.

Instead of inductively producing new theory from raw data, the empirical input was used for thematic validation of the framework. This analytic strategy allowed the researcher to align theoretical assumptions with real-world public service leadership practices (Patton, 2015:264). The constructivist orientation of the study further

supported this method, as it assumed that both researchers and participants co-construct meaning, particularly when addressing leadership behaviours embedded in a socio-political and institutional context (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011:120).

The exploratory nature of the study allowed for openness in identifying new behavioural patterns, traits, or leadership styles that may not have emerged from conceptual literature alone. This was especially relevant for understanding behavioural leadership in the complex, evolving environment of the South African Public Service, where socio-political dynamics, historical legacies, and service delivery imperatives shape leadership realities.

Overall, the research approach was both flexible and rigorous, providing a strong foundation for developing a behavioural leadership framework that is context-sensitive, normatively grounded, and practically relevant.

5.5 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

This study employed a qualitative, normative, and conceptual research design, supported by empirical validation through purposively selected expert interviews. In keeping with this design, population and sampling strategies were developed to support both the conceptual (theoretical) and empirical components of the study.

5.5.1 Conceptual Component: Literature and Policy Sources

In the conceptual phase, the population was not individuals but rather a theoretical corpus of knowledge. This included scholarly literature, policy frameworks, institutional records, and international case studies that informed the development of the behavioural leadership framework for the SMS. The “population” in this context comprised:

Academic literature: Theories and models relating to leadership, behaviour, cognition, personality, ethics, motivation, and public administration. Particular attention was given to Behavioural Public Administration, African Leadership paradigms, and Public Service Management.

Policy documents: Core national governance instruments, including the Public Service Act (1994), the SMS Handbook (2003), the White Paper on the

Transformation of the Public Service (1997), and the Professionalisation Framework (2023), were reviewed for formalised leadership expectations.

Comparative and historical frameworks: Global leadership models (e. g., OECD, UNDP, Ireland, Canada, Australia), and legacy South African public service documents were analysed to identify behavioural trends and governance shifts over time.

This theoretical population was purposefully selected to ensure comprehensive conceptual coverage and normative relevance, enhancing the rigour and credibility of the proposed framework.

5.5.2 Empirical Component: Expert Participants from the NSG

The empirical component of the study was designed to validate and refine the emerging conceptual framework through reflective insights from experienced public service leaders. The population for this component was defined as senior managers within the National School of Government (NSG), a key institution under the Ministry for the Public Service and Administration (MPSA).

A purposive, non-probability sampling strategy was employed to select eight senior managers from the NSG based on the following criteria:

Direct involvement in leadership frameworks: Participants had to have actively contributed to the development or implementation of the Professionalisation Framework (2023), including in areas of policy research, curriculum development, or strategic leadership.

Leadership experience within the SMS: Participants were required to hold current or past SMS-level positions within the Public Service, providing them with insight into leadership behaviours, competencies, and institutional culture at senior levels.

Expertise in leadership development and public service reform: Selected participants demonstrated experience in designing or delivering education, training, and capacity-building programmes focused on Public Service leadership and governance.

Willingness and ability to engage with conceptual content: Participants were open to discussing abstract leadership constructs such as behavioural traits, cognitive patterns, values, and PSM, in alignment with the interpretive and conceptual aims of the study.

The choice of the NSG as the empirical site is also historically and strategically significant in the broader context of leadership in the South African Public sService. Historically, senior Public sService appointments in South Africa were often influenced by factors such as political affiliation, years of service, or patronage networks, rather than demonstrable leadership capability or behavioural competence (Gumede, 2017a; Chipkin & Meny-Gibert, 2013:18-21). Post-1994 reforms aimed to build a more professional and meritocratic Public Service, but legacy effects still influence leadership behaviour and institutional culture. Against this backdrop, selecting participants from the NSG is strategically significant. The NSG plays a central role in confronting these historical dynamics by driving forward the professionalisation and ethical leadership agenda in the Public Service (National School of Government, 2023). Their role as custodians of change enables them to offer both retrospective insight into historical constraints and foresight into future leadership requirements, making them ideally suited to contribute to the development of a contextually grounded behavioural leadership framework. The NSG was purposefully chosen as the institutional site for empirical data collection because of its dual role as both a policy contributor and a lead implementation agent of the professionalisation agenda in South Africa (National School of Government, 2023). As such, senior managers at the NSG were uniquely positioned to offer credible and contextually grounded insights into leadership behaviour and competency development in the SMS.

This sampling approach aligns with qualitative standards of data depth, relevance, and expertise, rather than statistical representativity (Patton, 2015:264). The selected participants brought rich, practical knowledge that strengthened the validity and applicability of the proposed Behavioural Leadership Framework.

5.6 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

This qualitative, normative, and conceptual study focused on developing a Behavioural Leadership framework for the SMS. The data collection methods addressed both the theoretical development of the framework through conceptual analysis and its empirical validation through expert interviews.

5.6.1 Conceptual component

The conceptual component of this study was grounded in a comprehensive, interdisciplinary investigation that synthesised theoretical, policy, and comparative perspectives to inform the development of a behavioural leadership framework for the SMS of the South African Public Service.

Data collection for this component involved four key strategies:

- **Systematic Literature Review**: A rigorous literature review was conducted, focusing on global and local academic sources related to behavioural leadership, ethics, cognition, thinking styles, motivation, personality, emotional intelligence, and public service management. The review drew extensively on foundational and contemporary knowledge in Public Administration (Basheka, 2019; Thornhill, 2006; Bryson, Crosby & Bloomberg, 2014), Behavioural Public Administration (Tummers *et al.,* 2016; Grimmelikhuijsen *et al.,* 2017; Kasdan, 2020), and leadership theory (Northouse, 2016; Bass & Riggio, 2006). Cognitive theories such as Neethling's Thinking Style Model (Neethling, 2005), Sternberg's theory of Mental Self-Government (Sternberg, 1999), and the Five-Factor Model of personality (McCrae & Costa, 2008) were also explored to underpin a behavioural understanding of leadership within the SMS.
- **Policy and Document Analysis**: Key South African legislative and strategic policy documents were examined, including the Public Service Act, the SMS Handbook (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003), the Professionalisation Framework (National School of Government, 2023), and reports from the Public Service Commission. These documents were analysed to extract prescriptive expectations of leadership behaviour, ethical

norms, and developmental standards expected of SMS members (National Planning Commission, 2011; National School of Government, 2023). The analysis revealed significant gaps between policy expectations and leadership behaviours in practice, supporting the need for a context-specific behavioural leadership framework.

- **Comparative Case Analysis**: Leadership competency models from international organisations and countries, including the OECD, UNDP, Canada, Ireland, Australia, and selected Global South contexts, were systematically reviewed. The purpose was to identify common trends, behavioural attributes, and structural differences in leadership development frameworks. Particular attention was paid to how these models emphasise ethical leadership, public service values, emotional intelligence, and adaptive capacity (Hatami, Sneader & Singhal, 2020; OECD, 2020; UNDP, 2021). This comparative analysis was essential for situating the proposed framework within global best practice while adapting it to the South African socio-political context.
- **Archival Research**: Historical records, government reports, and legacy public service frameworks were analysed to trace the evolution of administrative leadership in South Africa, including the impact of colonial, apartheid, and democratic transitions on institutional behaviour and governance norms (Cameron, 2008; Hanyane, 2016; Matsiliza, 2020). This analysis also incorporated literature on the decolonisation of Public Administration, highlighting the importance of integrating African values such as *Ubuntu,* ethical leadership, and collective responsibility into leadership models (Nussbaum, 2003; Nzewi & Maramura, 2021; Mantzaris & Pillay, 2023).

The conceptual data sources were accessed through the North-West University's academic library databases, including JSTOR, Scopus, EBSCOhost, ProQuest, Emerald Insight, ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, SAGE Journals, Taylor & Francis Online, and Wiley Online Library. These databases provided access to scholarly journal articles, books, dissertations, case studies, and government publications across leadership studies, behavioural sciences, psychology, and public management.

This integrative approach to conceptual data collection ensured that the emerging behavioural leadership framework was not only theoretically grounded but also contextually responsive. It incorporated psychological constructs (e. g., cognition, personality, emotional intelligence), institutional theory, and ethical considerations, thereby laying a robust foundation for empirical validation and future application in leadership development within the South African Public Service.

5.6.2 Empirical component

To validate and refine the conceptual behavioural leadership framework, empirical data were collected through semi-structured interviews with a purposively selected group of eight senior managers from the NSG. This decision was based on their unique and strategic involvement in the development, implementation, and institutionalisation of the Professionalisation Framework (National School of Government, 2023), as well as their leadership in public service education, training, and capacity-building initiatives in the Public Sector of the Republic of South Africa as a whole.

The NSG forms part of the Ministry for the Public Service and Administration (MPSA) and holds a mandated role in supporting, guiding, and capacitating the public service that includes the Public Service to meet the requirements of the Professionalisation Framework. The NSG has not only played a lead role in the design and drafting of the Framework but also remains at the forefront of its ongoing implementation, policy translation, and training delivery. This positions the NSG as the primary institutional custodian of professionalisation efforts within the public service.

The selected senior managers were directly involved in either:

- developing the National Framework, contributing to its conceptual foundations, policy structure, and implementation roadmap;
- leading education and training initiatives that embed legal frameworks, public service values, and leadership principles in practice;
- or both.

The participation of the purposively selected sample in this study was not incidental but substantively linked to the objectives of the research. The study aimed to validate

a behavioural leadership framework that aligns with the policy direction of professionalising the public service through ethical, transformational, and service-oriented leadership. Given their dual role as both architects and implementers of the professionalisation agenda, NSG senior managers were uniquely positioned to reflect critically and experientially on leadership behaviours required of the SMS in South Africa.

Selecting participants from the NSG enhanced the theoretical-practical coherence of the study. As the institution responsible for translating leadership policy into practice through learning programmes, strategic advisory, and developmental interventions, the NSG represents a critical interface between policy intent and behavioural implementation. Their perspectives provided credible, contextually informed, and policy-aligned insights, which were crucial for refining the conceptual framework proposed by this study.

Although the sample was institutionally bounded, it was methodologically sound and aligned with the principles of purposive sampling in qualitative research, which prioritise depth, relevance, and insight over broad representativity (Patton, 2015:264). This approach was particularly appropriate given the normative and conceptual nature of the study, which sought expert validation of a theoretical model rather than empirical generalisation.

The decision to engage only senior managers from the NSG was strategically deliberate and ensured that the empirical insights were anchored in the most relevant institutional setting, reflected first-hand leadership knowledge, and contributed to the refinement and contextual validation of the behavioural leadership framework in alignment with national public service priorities.

This qualitative data collection is consistent with the study's interpretivist and constructivist paradigms, which emphasise understanding leadership behaviour as socially constructed and context-dependent (Creswell & Poth, 2018:24; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011:120).

5.7 INSTRUMENTATION AND TOOLS

The instrumentation and tools used in this study were carefully designed to support the two distinct but complementary components of the research: the conceptual development of a behavioural leadership framework and its empirical validation through expert input. In line with the study's qualitative and constructivist orientation, the tools focused on generating rich, nuanced, and contextually grounded data, both from theoretical sources and from the lived experiences of practitioners within the SMS in South Africa.

5.7.1 Conceptual component

The conceptual phase of the study was driven by a systematic approach to the collection, analysis, and synthesis of existing knowledge. Three primary tools were employed in this phase:

5.7.1.1 Literature Review

The literature review served as a foundational tool in the conceptual development of the framework. A structured and critical review of both international and local academic literature was undertaken to identify key theories, frameworks, and constructs related to behavioural leadership, cognitive and personality theory, ethics, motivation, and public administration. Sources included scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, dissertations, and reports. The literature was categorised and analysed thematically to extract relevant behavioural constructs and identify theoretical gaps specific to the SMS context. This process enabled the development of a coherent conceptual base, drawing on relevant paradigms informing leadership behaviour.

5.7.1.2 Policy and Document Analysis

Legislative and policy documents were analysed to understand the expectations, standards, and ethical frameworks governing leadership behaviour within the South African Public Service. The policies that were analysed for this purpose included among others the Public Service Act, the SMS Handbook (2003), the Professionalisation Framework (2023), and other relevant legislative and policy provisions issued by the South African Public Service. The purpose of using

document analysis as a tool was to extract behavioural expectations and normative values embedded within the legal-institutional environment in which SMS members operate daily.

5.7.1.3 Archival Research

To provide a historical perspective on leadership in the public service, archival research was conducted using government reports, historical frameworks, and institutional records. This tool was used to trace the evolution of public service leadership, offering insight into how administrative values and leadership models have shifted across different political and policy eras in the South African Public Service, considering the changes from an apartheid government, to the post-1994 democratic government and Public Service. Considering both the relevant historical information, and the current realities of the Public Service in South Africa, facilitated with situating the conceptual framework within a broader context as leadership expectations have changed over time.

Data was sourced using the North-West University's library and academic databases, including JSTOR, EBSCOhost, Scopus, ProQuest, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, Taylor & Francis Online, SAGE Journals, Wiley Online Library, and Google Scholar, and Perlago. These platforms enabled access to high-quality, peer-reviewed research across leadership studies, behavioural sciences, public management, and policy.

5.7.2 Empirical Component

To support the empirical validation of the conceptual framework developed in this study, a semi-structured interview guide was used as the primary data collection tool. This tool was designed in alignment with the study's interpretivist and constructivist paradigms, which prioritise the subjective experiences and meaning-making processes of individuals operating within complex social and institutional environments (Creswell & Poth, 2018:24; Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011:120).

The interview guide was carefully structured to ensure that there was coherence with the conceptual themes identified during the theoretical phase of the study. These themes included leadership attributes, behavioural aptitudes, thinking styles, and service-oriented values relevant to the SMS in the South African Public Service.

The semi- structured interview was selected because of the flexibility it provides, offering a structured framework for the interviews while allowing participants to explore and reflect on topics in ways that revealed deeper insights into their lived leadership experiences (Adams, 2015:493).

The guide comprised a series of open-ended questions, which were thematically grouped into the following core areas:

Critical attributes for success in SMS leadership: Participants were invited to reflect on the key values, personal qualities, and professional competencies that they considered essential for success in their roles.

Ideal leadership styles and working methods: These questions elicited perspectives on how effective leadership is enacted in the public service, and how leadership and working methods affect and impact teams, institutions, the State and the Citizen.

Key behavioural aptitudes and personality traits: The interviews explored traits perceived as indispensable for ethical, accountable, and transformational leadership, with particular attention to behaviours aligned with public service values.

Cognitive and emotional attributes of SMS leaders: Questions probed participants' understanding of the preferred thinking styles, decision-making tendencies, and emotional intelligence profiles required to lead effectively in complex, value-driven environments.

Misconceptions about SMS roles: Participants were asked to identify common misunderstandings or unrealistic expectations associated with their roles, offering insight into leadership tensions, challenges, and institutional contradictions.

These focus areas were derived from and aligned with the study's conceptual framework, ensuring that the empirical tool was not only thematically relevant but also analytically consistent. These themes constituted the initial coding framework and were applied as a priori codes during the data analysis phase (Section 6.6.6). The open-ended format allowed for rich elaboration, with follow-up questions and probing used to deepen understanding and surface emergent insights.

To enhance the validity of the instrument, the interview guide was pilot tested with two senior public service professionals prior to full implementation.

Prior to data collection, each participant was provided with a detailed informed consent form, which outlined the study's objectives, confidentiality protocols, and ethical safeguards. Participants were assured of their right to withdraw at any point without penalty. These procedures adhered to ethical standards prescribed by the Ethics Committee of North-West University (ethics clearance number: NWU-01167-22-A7) and complied with the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) (Republic of South Africa, 2013).

Participants received the interview guide in advance of their scheduled sessions, giving them time to prepare and reflect. Allowing participants to engage with the questions prior to the interviews allowed for a more thoughtful engagement during the interviews and supported the co-construction of meaning, which is a key tenet of constructivist inquiry (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012:31).

Interviews were conducted either in person or via secure online platforms, depending on the participants' availability and preference. All interviews were recorded with informed consent. For in person sessions, audio recordings were used; in online interviews, video recordings were also employed with consent of the participant.

The use of a well-designed, pilot-tested semi-structured interview guide that was supported by ethical protocols ensured that the empirical tool was fit for purpose. Robust, contextually relevant data was collected to validate and refine the framework, strengthening both the credibility and applicability of the proposed behavioural leadership framework for the SMS.

5.8 DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

The analysis of data in this study followed a systematic, multi-layered approach designed to ensure coherence between the conceptual foundations and the empirical insights. As a qualitative, normative, and conceptually driven study, the focus of the analysis was on identifying recurring behavioural, cognitive, and ethical leadership patterns, and integrating these into a behavioural leadership framework for the SMS in the South African Public Service.

Data analysis techniques were selected based on their appropriateness for interpretive and conceptual inquiry and comprised three interlinked strategies discussed in sections 5. 8. 1, 5. 8. 2 and 5. 8. 3.

5.8.1 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis served as the primary analytic method for the empirical validation component. This technique was well suited to the constructivist design of this study, as it allowed for the identification of patterned meaning across the qualitative data gathered while also accommodating the interpretive flexibility that was necessary to understand contextually embedded leadership behaviours (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014:10; Braun & Clarke, 2013:175).

Interview transcripts were reviewed and coded manually to identify recurring themes aligned with the core constructs identified in the conceptual phase. These included, but were not limited to:

- Ethical and value-based leadership;
- Thinking styles and cognitive diversity;
- Emotional intelligence and personality profiles;
- Public Service Motivation;
- Transformational leadership practices; and
- Misconceptions about SMS roles.

The coding process was both deductive and inductive: while a priori codes were drawn from the conceptual framework, space was also created for emergent themes that reflected participants' lived experiences and interpretations. Thematic categories were iteratively refined and cross-checked for internal consistency and conceptual clarity.

5.8.2 Content Analysis

To complement the thematic coding of interview data, content analysis was applied to key public policy documents, legislative frameworks, and leadership competency models, including the following:

- The Public Service Act (1996);
- Public Serv Riceegulations (2016);
- The SMS Handbook (2003);
- The SMS Competency Framework (2008);
- The National Framework toward the Professionalisation of the Public Sector (2023); and
- Relevant documents from the OECD, UNDP, and Commonwealth governance bodies.

This analysis focused on identifying prescriptive expectations, behavioural norms, and competency language used to describe effective leadership in public service. Content categories included ethical obligations, leadership values, service orientation, skills development, and accountability mechanisms. By examining the discourse and framing in these documents, the study captured how public institutions define and promote desirable leadership behaviours for the SMS of the Public Service in the Republic of South Africa.

5.8.3 Conceptual Synthesis

The most critical phase of the analysis involved the synthesis of conceptual, documentary, and empirical findings into a unified behavioural leadership framework. This process aligned with the normative aims of the study, which sought not only to describe existing practices but to propose a value-driven and contextually grounded framework for leadership development.

Using an integrative logic, the study drew connections between the following:

- Theoretical constructs from the literature review (Chapter 2).
- Institutional expectations embedded in legal and policy frameworks (Chapter 3).
- International Perspectives (Chapter 4).
- Empirical insights generated through senior manager interviews (Chapter 6).

This synthesis enabled the formulation of four core dimensions of the proposed framework:

- Dynamic Leadership – reflecting adaptability, agility, and thinking diversity.
- Ethical Foundations – encompassing integrity, accountability, and public interest orientation.
- Transformational Vision – emphasising future-oriented, inclusive, and developmental leadership.
- Service Orientation – affirming values of *Ubuntu,* humility, responsiveness, and citizen-centred governance.

This integrative approach ensured that the framework was both theoretically coherent and empirically validated, rooted in leadership experiences while also aligned with institutional and public expectations.

5.8.4 Triangulation

To enhance the trustworthiness and credibility of findings, data triangulation was applied across all three data sources: scholarly literature, public policy documents, and interview transcripts. Triangulation allowed for the cross-verification of themes and helped to identify convergence or divergence in expectations and practices of SMS leadership (Flick, 2018:37; Leedy & Ormrod, 2020:111).

The methodological triangulation added depth to the framework and mitigated the risk of researcher bias or overreliance on a single source of evidence. It also strengthened the alignment between the conceptual model and practical realities, which was central to the study's aim of producing a behavioural framework that is both normatively sound and operationally relevant.

5.9 VALIDITY, TRUSTWORTHINESS AND RESEARCH INTEGRITY

The study is grounded in conceptual reasoning and empirical validation. For this reason, traditional criteria of validity and reliability were adapted to reflect the standards of qualitative and interpretive research.

The study does not seek statistical generalisability, but rather credibility, dependability, and trustworthiness in the interpretation of leadership experiences and in the refinement of the proposed behavioural leadership framework for the senior

manager in the South African Public Service (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:301; Leedy & Ormrod, 2020:111).

Methodological triangulation was the primary strategy to enhance the validity of the study. The study used multiple data sources and perspectives to confirm emerging findings. Insights derived from interview data were systematically cross-referenced with the conceptual themes from the literature review, the normative expectations from policy and legislative documents, and cross-participant perspectives during analysis.

This triangulation process helped to identify convergence and divergence across data sources and reinforced the internal consistency and coherence of the final framework (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017:779; Flick, 2018:37).

5.9.1 Member Checking

To maximise the credibility of interpretations, a member checking process was conducted. Interview summaries and preliminary findings were shared with participants, allowing them to confirm the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations or offer clarifications where necessary. This feedback loop not only validated the analysis but also supported the constructivist emphasis on co-creating knowledge with participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018:262).

5.9.2 Reflexivity

Throughout the research process, the researcher maintained reflexive awareness of their own assumptions, positionality, and influence on data interpretation. Reflexive notes were kept, recording analytic decisions, personal reflections, and evolving theoretical insights. As described by Maxwell (2012:123) and Berger (2015), this reflective stance enhanced the study's transparency and minimised the potential for bias in the synthesis of conceptual and empirical data.

5.9.3 Data Saturation

Although the study was not designed for statistical representativity, it adhered to the principle of data saturation, ensuring that no new themes emerged during the final interviews. To contribute to the theoretical robustness and contextual relevance of the final framework (Saunders *et al.,* 2018), the saturation point indicated that the

dataset was sufficiently comprehensive to capture the behavioural patterns, cognitive styles, and leadership challenges relevant to the SMS context.

5.9.4. Ethical Safeguards and Confidentiality

Ethical integrity was maintained through strict confidentiality protocols. All interview recordings were securely stored on password-protected devices. Identifiable information was removed from transcripts and replaced with pseudonyms or numeric codes. Access to data was restricted to the researcher.

Participants were fully informed of their rights and signed informed consent forms prior to participation, in line with the North-West University's ethical clearance guidelines (NWU-01167-22-A7) and the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA, 2013).

These safeguards ensured that participants felt secure in sharing authentic and reflective insights and was a necessary condition for generating valid and trustworthy qualitative data.

5.10 LIMITATION OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN

While the research design adopted in this study was methodologically rigorous and conceptually robust, it is important to acknowledge several limitations that may affect the transferability or generalisability of the findings.

5.10.1 Conceptual and normative focus

The study was primarily conceptual in nature, grounded in theoretical synthesis and normative analysis rather than empirical generalisation. This focus limited the ability to produce statistically generalisable findings. The theoretical constructs developed through literature and policy review, although well-substantiated, may not fully account for the diversity of leadership behaviours across all institutional contexts of the public service. This limitation is inherent in the philosophical foundations of conceptual-normative research and is not considered a methodological flaw. Normative and conceptual research does not aim to produce statistically generalisable results; instead, it seeks to inform, prescribe, and guide practice through logical synthesis, values-based reasoning, and expert-informed judgement

(Creswell & Poth, 2018:24; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012:38). Within the interpretivist-constructivist paradigm, findings are evaluated based on internal coherence, contextual applicability, and normative strength, criteria which this study meets through its integrative design and alignment with public service leadership development priorities.

5.10.2 Limited sample size for empirical validation

The empirical component of the study was designed to validate and refine the conceptual framework using purposively selected senior managers from the NSG. While the selection of eight (8) participants may limit broader representativity across the full spectrum of SMS leadership in South Africa, this decision was strategically justified (see Section 5.6.2). The NSG, as an entity of the MPSA, played a lead role in developing and continues to lead implementation of the Professionalisation Framework. The selected participants were not only directly involved in the design of this national framework, but also serve as key implementers through education, training, and institutional support initiatives in the Public Service and the Public Sector as a whole. Their insights were uniquely positioned to inform and validate the proposed behavioural leadership framework. While not statistically generalisable, the depth and relevance of their experience ensured the validity of the empirical insights within the scope and purpose of this conceptual study.

5.10.3 Reliance on self-reported data

As is common in qualitative interview-based studies, the empirical data was based on self-reported experiences and perceptions. This introduces the possibility of response bias, including the risk of idealised or socially desirable responses. Even so, strategies were employed to mitigate this risk, including triangulation with conceptual and policy data, member checking to confirm the accuracy of interpretations, and probing questions during interviews to elicit deeper, more authentic insights.

5.10.4 Analytical complexity of integrating conceptual and empirical components

Although the integration of conceptual reasoning with empirical insights enriched the study, it also posed analytical challenges. Balancing normative constructs with

practice-based reflections required careful interpretation to avoid conflating descriptive and prescriptive elements. This challenge was addressed through clear analytical boundaries, thematic synthesis, and reflexive engagement with the data.

5.10.5 A solid foundation for future research

Despite the limitation recorded in sections 5. 10. 1 to 5. 10. 4, the study maintained strong methodological and analytical integrity. Triangulation, thematic analysis, member validation, and reflexivity collectively strengthened the credibility, trustworthiness, and coherence of the findings. The contextual relevance and conceptual clarity of a proposed behavioural leadership framework for the SMS, offer a meaningful and academically defensible contribution to leadership development in the South African Public Service.

The study provides a solid foundation for further research, particularly for testing or adapting the framework in varied departmental or provincial contexts. The findings of this study further offer practical value to institutions responsible for leadership development, training, and policy implementation within the South African Public Service.

5.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical conduct was central to maintaining the integrity, transparency, and trustworthiness of this study. Given the dual nature of the research that required both conceptual and empirically validation, ethical principles were applied throughout all phases in accordance with the research protocols for post graduate students of the North-West University.

5.11.1 Conceptual Component

Although the conceptual component of the study did not involve human participants, ethical standards were still strictly applied to uphold academic honesty, transparency, and intellectual rigour. The literature review, document analysis, and comparative framework synthesis were conducted with careful attention to accurate citation and attribution of all sources, avoidance of misrepresentation, misquotation, or selective referencing, and mitigation of theoretical bias through the inclusion of diverse scholarly perspectives and the use of triangulation to enhance balance and analytical

fairness. These measures align with the ethical responsibilities outlined by De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2013:114) who underscore the importance of maintaining conceptual integrity in theoretical and normative research.

5.11.2 Empirical Component

The empirical validation phase involved human participants, requiring the application of ethical protocols to protect participant rights and well-being. The following principles were adhered to:

Informed consent was obtained from all participants: Each participant received a clear explanation of the research objectives, procedures, and their rights that included the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Written consent forms were signed prior to participation in the study

Voluntary participation was ensured: There was no coercion or obligation.

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained: All interview data were anonymised using pseudonyms or numeric identifiers, and any potentially identifiable information was removed from transcripts and reports.

Data security protocols were implemented: Audio and video recordings were stored on password-protected devices accessible only to the researcher. Transcriptions were encrypted and handled in compliance with the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), 2013, ensuring participants' privacy and data protection.

Interviews were conducted in a manner respectful of participants' roles and experiences: The researcher exercised reflexivity to avoid imposing interpretations and remained sensitive to the dynamics of power and positionality during the data collection process.

5.11.3 Institutional Oversight

Ethical clearance was granted by the Basic and Social Science Research Ethics Committee (BaSSREC) of North-West University under the ethics clearance number NWU-01167-22-A7, prior to data collection. The study complied fully with the

institutional ethical requirements for research involving human subjects and secondary data.

5.12 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the methodological framework guiding the development of a behavioural leadership framework for the SMS. Through a combination of conceptual synthesis and empirical validation, the study integrated theoretical reasoning with real-world insights. Rigorous literature analysis, comparative case study review, and purposively selected expert interviews provided a robust foundation for constructing a prescriptive leadership framework aligned with South Africa's public service needs.

In the next chapter (Chapter 6), the analysis of the data collected is presented, and recommendations based on the findings are offered.

CHAPTER 6
EMPIRICAL FINDINGS AND THEMATIC ANALYSIS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The study employed a qualitative research approach that integrated normative conceptual reasoning with interpretive insights drawn from practice with an empirical component to validate and refine the emerging conceptual framework through reflective insights from experienced public service leaders (Sections 5.4 and 5.5.2). Chapter 6 presents the findings from the empirical component of the study and integrates these findings with the conceptual and documentary analyses undertaken in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. The chapter explores the perspectives of the purposively selected participants from the NSG who were directly involved in either developing the Professionalisation Framework (National School of Government, 2023) and/or who have been leading education and training initiatives that embed legal frameworks, public service values, and leadership principles in practice for the Public Service (Section 5.6.2). The insights gained from the participants contributed to the development and refinement of the proposed Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS in the South African Public Service.

Thematic analysis was employed as the primary analytic approach, with codes derived both deductively (based on the synthesis of the findings of the in-depth analysis of literature (Chapter 2), the legal and regulatory requirements and expectations (Chapter 3), and analysis of international perspectives, including perspectives from the Global South (Chapter 4)) and inductively (the identifying of emergent themes from participant interviews (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014:10; Braun & Clarke, 2013:175). Data triangulation with documentary and policy reviews ensured internal coherence and conceptual saturation.

Chapter 6 builds on the theoretical framework proposed in Section 2.6, which identified key behavioural, cognitive, and ethical constructs relevant to SMS

leadership. The analysis of institutional and regulatory leadership expectations in Chapter 3 and the case-based exploration of global public service leadership frameworks in Chapter 4 further shaped the conceptual framework. These sources together provided a multi-layered conceptual foundation, which is here further validated and refined through empirical insights from senior managers directly involved in the professionalisation of the South African Public Service.

The chapter opens with a brief overview of the data collection process, followed by the presentation, interpretation, and analysis of data gathered through semi-structured interviews with purposively selected participants. It then undertakes a comparative analysis that triangulates the empirical findings with three core components: the theoretical constructs explored in Chapter 2, the gaps and limitations identified in Chapter 3 concerning the legal and competency frameworks governing the SMS, and the international case studies examined in Chapter 4. These comparative insights allowed for a contextualised understanding of how behavioural leadership is experienced and enacted in the South African public service. By aligning theoretical foundations, international benchmarks, and real-world experiential data, this chapter contributes to the refinement of the strengthened Behavioural Leadership Framework, which is introduced in Chapter 7.

6.2 BACKGROUND

As discussed in Chapter 2, emerging global and African scholars increasingly acknowledge the behavioural, ethical, and cognitive dimensions of leadership (McAdams & Pals, 2006; Pillay, 2023). As the South African Public Service continues to evolve under the post-apartheid transformation agenda, while implementation of several governance frameworks such as the Constitution (1996), the Public Service Act (1994), and the Professionalisation Framework (National School of Government, 2023) contribute to improved governance in South Africa, leadership remains a central lever for responsive and ethical governance in the country (McLennan, 2017:37-58; Nelufule, 2021:23-45).

Chapter 3 revealed gaps in the current SMS Competency Framework, particularly in addressing emotional intelligence, ethical agility, and future-orientated leadership. From the review and analysis of legal frameworks (Chapter 3), it became clear that

while these frameworks provide a solid foundation for structuring leadership roles and responsibilities in the South African Public Service, they fall short in addressing the behavioural and emotional competencies required for modern leadership. The legal frameworks emphasise compliance, performance, and accountability but do not adequately cover the behavioural dynamics or ethical leadership that are crucial for driving transformative governance in the public service.

Chapter 4 provided a comparative analysis of international leadership frameworks from the OECD, UNDP, Australia, Ireland, Canada, and the Global South and identified several trends that align with the behavioural shift in leadership including adaptability, emotional intelligence, ethical orientation, and service commitment. These global models helped shape the conceptual foundation for the proposed Behavioural Leadership Framework presented in Chapter 7.

In Chapter 3 key shortcomings in the current SMS Competency Framework were highlighted, including a lack of emphasis on behavioural dynamics, emotional intelligence, ethical leadership, people-centric approaches, and the operationalisation of ethics in leadership practice. The SMS Competency Framework was found to be limited in its responsiveness to the complex and evolving demands of public service leadership in South Africa and only focused on behaviours related to selected functional competencies.

The paragraphs to follow extend the insights, findings and arguments from Chapters 2, 3, and 4. It presents and analyses the empirical evidence derived from semi-structured interviews with senior managers from the NSG who are actively involved in the design and implementation of leadership development and professionalisation initiatives across the South African Public Service (see Chapter 5, Section 5.6.2). These lived experiences provided a valuable reflection on the theoretical model and helped to shape the proposed Behavioural Leadership Framework for the Senior Management Service in the South African Public Service.

6.3 PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW AND METHODOLOGY RECAP

Following the extensive literature review and the development of an extended theoretical baseline in Chapter 2, Section 2.6.3, additional data was collected through semi-structured interviews, as outlined in Chapter 5. The analysis of

international case studies in Chapter 4 and the review of legal and policy frameworks in Chapter 3 further shaped the conceptual framework. These chapters together provided a comprehensive understanding of both the regulatory expectations and global trends in public service leadership.

The framework that emerged from this conceptual phase identified key behavioural, ethical, and cognitive leadership constructs relevant to the SMS in the South African Public Service. The semi-structured interviews were then conducted with eight purposively selected senior managers from the National School of Government (NSG), as detailed in Chapter 5. These interviews were designed to evaluate the relevance, applicability, and resonance of the proposed constructs in a real-world leadership context.

The aim of this empirical phase was to validate, refine, and expand the initial conceptual framework to ensure it accurately reflects the expectations, experiences, and leadership practices within the SMS. By triangulating findings from literature, legal and competency frameworks, international comparative models, and empirical insights, this chapter contributes to the refinement of a context-sensitive behavioural leadership framework that is both theoretically grounded and practically applicable in the South African Public Service.

Following an extensive literature review and theoretical analysis, additional data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using an open-ended guide that allowed participants to reflect on leadership behaviour, cognitive orientation, emotional intelligence, and ethical commitments. Interviews were transcribed, anonymised, and coded manually.

The theoretical framework outlined in Section 2.6.3, together with the contextual insights gained from the analysis of policies and legal frameworks in Chapter 3 and the international case studies examined in Chapter 4, provided the foundational basis for identifying and structuring the key ideas, constructs, and theories relevant to behavioural leadership within the SMS of the South African Public Service. These chapters collectively informed a preliminary conceptual framework that captured the cognitive, ethical, and behavioural dimensions of leadership. To validate and refine this framework, semi-structured interviews were conducted with purposively selected

senior managers, as detailed in Chapter 5. The empirical component served to test the applicability of the theoretical constructs in a real-world context and to incorporate practical perspectives from experienced SMS leaders. This process enabled the framework to be enriched and adjusted based on lived leadership experiences, thereby enhancing its contextual relevance, validity, and practical utility within the evolving public service landscape.

The semi-structured interviews provided rich, contextually grounded insights into the behavioural, cognitive, and ethical dimensions of senior management leadership within the South African Public Service. The purposive selection of experienced NSG managers who were directly involved in the design and implementation of the Professionalisation Framework ensured that the empirical data reflected both strategic and operational perspectives. Their contributions played a critical role in validating and refining the emerging behavioural leadership constructs, helping to ensure the framework is not only theoretically robust but also practically relevant to the South African Public Service context.

6.4 DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

The data collected through semi-structured interviews were manually analysed using thematic analysis, as outlined in Chapter 5. This method aligned with the study's qualitative, interpretive, and normative-conceptual design, which aimed not to generate generalisable findings but to refine a prescriptive leadership framework based on expert validation and contextual relevance.

The analysis followed a combination of deductive and inductive reasoning: initial codes were derived from the theoretical and conceptual framework developed in Chapters 2 to 4 and further refined through engagement with participant insights. Transcripts were read holistically, with attention to how leadership behaviours, values, and cognitive traits were expressed and experienced by SMS leaders.

A structured coding process was used to identify and group data into core thematic categories. These included ethical foundations, service orientation, cognitive attributes, and dynamic leadership practices. Patterns across interviews were analysed not for frequency, but for their depth, normative significance, and resonance with the proposed constructs.

This approach reflected the constructivist ontology of the study and supported the overarching goal of producing a context-sensitive, value-based leadership framework for the South African Public Service.

The data collected through semi-structured interviews were analysed using thematic analysis, as outlined in Chapter 5. This method aligned with the study's qualitative, interpretive, and normative-conceptual design, which aimed not to generate generalisable findings, but to refine a prescriptive leadership framework based on expert validation and contextual relevance.

6.5 THE INTERVIEW GUIDE

An interview guide was developed in alignment with the research objectives set out in Chapter 1 and informed by the extended theoretical baseline established in Chapter 2, Section 2.6.3. It was further shaped by the review of legal and policy frameworks in Chapter 3. These chapters collectively provided a comprehensive foundation for identifying critical leadership constructs, behavioural expectations, and competency gaps relevant to the SMS in the South African Public Service.

The questions were designed to explore the theoretical constructs and behavioural dimensions outlined in Chapter 2 (see Table 6.1), including emotional intelligence, ethical orientation, cognitive agility, service commitment, and transformational vision. Simultaneously, they reflected key themes and limitations identified in the SMS legal and competency frameworks (Chapter 3).

The semi-structured format allowed for a balance between structured inquiry and open-ended reflection, ensuring that participants could provide context-rich insights based on their lived experiences. This approach ensured alignment with the study's objectives while creating space for the emergence of new themes, thereby contributing to the validation and refinement of the conceptual framework.

The interview questions were carefully structured to avoid leading participants, allowing for open-ended responses that would provide deeper insights into how these constructs manifest in practice. This approach ensured that the interviews remained neutral and encouraged participants to reflect on their own experiences

and interpretations, rather than simply confirming pre-existing assumptions or biases. The following questions were recorded on the interview guide:

Interview Question 1. When you think about your role as a member of the SMS in the South African Public Service, what are your views on the most important attributes that you require to be successful in your role?

Interview Question 2. What would you describe as the ideal working style of the SMS as a leader in the South African Public Service to ensure projects are completed and objectives are achieved?

Interview Question 3. What are the main behavioural aptitudes that you regard as indispensable for a South African Public Service senior manager?

Interview Question 4. What are your views on the preferred cognitive profile for SMS members in the South African Public Service when you think about leadership style, thinking style preference and personality style?

Interview Question 5. In your view, what are the biggest misconceptions that SMS members have about their role and responsibilities as a leader in the South African Public Service?

These questions served as the foundation for the interviews and guided the discussions to ensure a structured exploration of key themes related to leadership behaviours, challenges, and strategies within the SMS in the South African Public Service.

Table 6.1 Matrix depicting interview questions and their alignment with theoretical constructs (Section 2.5.3)

Interview Question	Cognitive Flexibility	Emotional Intelligence	*Ubuntu* Leadership	Transfor-mational Leadership
1. When you think about your role as a member of the SMS in the South African Public Service, what are your views on the most important attributes that you require to be	✓	✓	✓	✓

Interview Question	Cognitive Flexibility	Emotional Intelligence	*Ubuntu* Leadership	Transfor-mational Leadership
successful in your role?				
2. What would you describe as the ideal working style of the SMS as a leader in the South African Public Service to ensure projects are completed and objectives are achieved?	✓	✓	✓	✓
3. What are the main behavioural aptitudes that you regard as indispensable for a South African Public Service senior manager?	✓	✓	✓	✓
4. What are your views on the preferred cognitive profile for SMS members in the South African Public Service when you think about leadership style, thinking style preference and personality style?	✓	-	-	✓
5. In your view, what are the biggest misconceptions that SMS members have about their role and responsibilities as a leader in the South African Public Service?	✓	✓	-	✓

(Source: Researcher's construct, 2025).

6.6 DATA ANALYSIS

In understanding the key attributes for success in the SMS of the South African Public Service, participants were asked to reflect on their personal experiences and insights. The feedback highlighted various qualities essential for leadership success, including adaptability (Heifetz *et al.,* 2009:62-69; Nöthel *et al.,* 2023:1-16; McAdams & Pals, 2006:204), resilience, and strategic thinking.

6.6.1 Interview Question 1

When you think about your role as a member of the SMS in the South African Public Service, what are your views on the most important attributes that you require to be successful in your role?

Participants identified adaptability (Heifetz *et al.,* 2009:62-69; Nöthel *et al.,* 2023:1-16; McAdams & Pals, 2006:204) and resilience as the most essential attributes for success in the SMS (Heifetz, *et al., 2009:62-69*; Nöthel *et al.,* 2023:1-16; McAdams & Pals, 2006:204). This adaptability is vital in a public service environment where frequent changes in legislation, technology, and external factors require leaders to stay flexible. For instance, Participant 2 noted, *"You need that resilience, to be able to sustain when there is turbulence in the system,"* emphasising the need for endurance through challenges. Similarly, Participant 6 stressed innovation (Ravet-Brown *et al.,* 2023:496), explaining that *"being innovative will guide people in the right way in terms of achieving what they're supposed to achieve,"* illustrating the growing need for creative problem-solving (Le Deist & Winterton, 2005:27-46; McAdams & Pals, 2006:204) in the face of technological advancements like digitisation and artificial intelligence.

In addition to resilience (Heifetz *et al.,* 2009:62-69), relationship-building was frequently highlighted. Successful leadership in the public service relies on strong interpersonal skills, as pointed out by Participant 3: *"You have to build relationships. The only way you get things done is through building relationships."* This sentiment was echoed by other participants who stressed the importance of managing people effectively to meet organisational objectives. Several respondents also emphasised the role of ethical leadership (Van Wart, 2014:143-159; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015:83) and strategic vision (Bass & Riggio, 2006:76, 102, 129-130 & 138-139; Shahid, 2024:3806), with Participant 7 noting, *"Strategic vision, the ability to define and understand the long-term goals of the department, is very important*", further underscoring the need for both personal integrity and forward-thinking to steer government departments toward success. This highlights the complexity of the environment within which SMS leaders function and as a result, public service managers face considerable difficulties in setting clear expectations, monitoring performance, ensuring all role players remain responsive, determining responsibility,

assigning blame, and navigating complex systems of accountability where multiple oversight mechanisms are in play (Romzek and Ingraham 2000, 241-42).

Some other responses from participants included the following:

Interview 1 emphasised interpersonal competence: *"A key attribute would be how you relate to others, so managing people, the ability to communicate, and think through problems that arise from working with people."*

Interview 2 highlighted the importance of resilience: *"You need to have that resilience, to be able to sustain when there is turbulence in the system."* This insight resonates with Heifetz et al., (2009), who underscore resilience as a critical quality for adaptive leadership during periods of instability.

Interview 3 reinforced the significance of collaboration and influence: *"You have to build relationships. The only way you get things done is through building relationships."*

Interview 7 pointed to strategic leadership capacities: *"Strategic vision, the ability to define and understand the long-term goals of the department, is very important."* This aligns with Bass and Riggio's (2006) portrayal of visionary leadership as a core element of transformational leadership.

6.6.2 Interview Question 2

What would you describe as the ideal working style of the SMS as a leader in the South African Public Service to ensure projects are completed and objectives are achieved?

Participants predominantly advocated for a participatory and visionary working style (Northouse, 2016:440). Many rejected outdated, hierarchical leadership models in which senior managers remained distant from daily operations. Instead, they emphasised that effective leaders should maintain active involvement in operational matters to foster accountability, responsiveness, and team cohesion. For instance, Participant 3 stressed, *"You have to be much more involved in operational issues; otherwise, you're going to lose the plot,"* highlighting the need for SMS members to

maintain awareness of on-the-ground activities. This participatory approach allows leaders to adjust their management style depending on the strengths and weaknesses of their teams, aligning with the concept of situational leadership (Blanchard *et al.,* 2013:13; Northouse, 2016:103).

Several respondents also emphasised the need for consultation with team members while maintaining the ability to make swift decisions when necessary. Participant 4 stated, "The best style would be participatory (Northouse, 2016) but also decisive when the decision is made," reflecting the balance required between inclusivity and decisiveness. In this model, leaders seek input from their teams but are prepared to make difficult decisions quickly when needed to ensure progress and prevent delays.

Some other responses from participants included the following:

Interview 1 described effective leadership as situationally responsive: *"A quality leader will know who they are working with and choose the appropriate response for a particular objective."*

Interview 3 highlighted the need for hands-on engagement: *"You have to be much more involved in operational issues; otherwise, you're going to lose the plot."*

Interview 5 advocated for a people-centred approach: *"An SMS employee should use a visionary or transformational leadership style, so employees feel part of the team."* This view aligns with transformational leadership theory, which emphasises inspiring a shared vision and fostering inclusive team dynamics (Bass & Riggio, 2006:440; Shahid, 2024:3806).

Interview 8 endorsed a collaborative leadership approach: *"Consultative working style is ideal... you acknowledge you don't know everything, so consulting the team is critical."* This perspective supports participative leadership models, which prioritise inclusive decision-making and shared expertise (Northouse, 2016:365; Harris, 2008:31-34).

6.6.3 Interview Question 3

What are the main behavioural aptitudes that you regard as indispensable for a South African Public Service senior manager?

Participants consistently agreed that problem-solving and decision-making are vital behavioural aptitudes for senior managers in the Public Service. The complexity of their roles often requires quick thinking and evidence-based decision-making. Participant 2, for instance, emphasised that "*problem-solving is critical,*" while Participant 4 added that "*the style must be decisive,*" underscoring the need for managers to act swiftly and effectively to navigate daily challenges (Le Deist & Winterton, 2005:27-46; McAdams & Pals, 2006:204).

In addition to problem-solving (Le Deist & Winterton, 2005:27-46; McAdams & Pals, 2006:204), emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998; Munawar *et al.,* 2024:online) was frequently cited as an indispensable aptitude. Several respondents stressed the importance of empathy, conflict resolution, and motivation. Participant 5, for example, listed "empathy, conflict resolution, time management, emotional intelligence, and assertiveness" as key aptitudes, emphasising the need for senior managers to maintain emotional balance and communicate effectively with their teams, especially during difficult times.

Some other responses from participants included the following:

> **Interview 2 emphasised the importance of analytical and adaptive thinking:** *"Problem-solving is critical. You also need to become a critical thinker and think outside the box."*
>
> **Interview 4 pointed to the necessity of adaptable leadership:** *"The style must be decisive... situational leadership, depending on the complexity and urgency of the matter at hand."* This aligns with the Situational Leadership model, which advocates for flexibility based on context (Blanchard *et al.,* 2013:13; Northouse, 2016:103).
>
> **Interview 5 identified essential behavioural aptitudes:** *"Empathy, conflict resolution, time management, emotional intelligence, and assertiveness are key*

aptitudes." These are extensively discussed in Goleman's emotional intelligence framework, which highlights the value of interpersonal and self-management skills in leadership (Goleman, 1998:108-113, 191-192, 261-262; see also Munawar *et al.,* 2024:online).

Interview 6 reflected on the relational dimension of leadership: *"It's all about people skills and leadership ability - being able to cultivate relationships and inspire your team."*

6.6.4 Interview Question 4

What are the main behavioural aptitudes that you regard as indispensable for a South African Public Service senior manager?

The participants described the preferred cognitive profile for SMS members as one that balances strategic thinking with cognitive flexibility (Diamond, 2013; Heifetz *et al.,* 2009). SMS members must be able to navigate both high-level strategic initiatives and day-to-day problem-solving (Le Deist & Winterton, 2005; McAdams & Pals, 2006:204). Participant 1 explained that leaders need "parallel processing ability, thinking strategically while managing operational issues," highlighting the need for multitasking at various levels.

Furthermore, adaptability (Heifetz *et al.,* 2009:62-69; Nöthel *et al.,* 2023:1-16; McAdams & Pals, 2006:204) in thinking style was emphasised as critical. Given the fast-changing legislative environment, SMS members need to adjust their approach quickly and be capable of innovative thinking. Participant 7 highlighted this by advocating for evidence-based decision-making paired with adaptability: "Inclusive leadership style is essential, explaining decisions and allowing for input while making evidence-based decisions".

Some other responses from participants included the following:

Interview 1 highlighted the cognitive demands of senior leadership: *"A senior manager needs to have parallel processing ability, thinking strategically while managing operational issues."*

Interview 2 stressed the value of mental agility: *"You need cognitive flexibility, adapting quickly to legislative and situational changes, and thinking critically."* This aligns with the work of Diamond (2013:135-168) and Heifetz et al. (2009:62-69), who both emphasise adaptability and critical reasoning as essential leadership capabilities in complex environments.

Interview 6 described an ideal leadership style as both principled and inclusive: *"You should be transformational and democratic, leading by example and including people in decision-making."*

Interview 8 advocated for both visionary and collaborative leadership: *"A consultative approach and visionary thinking are necessary to motivate teams and develop long-term goals."*

6.6.5 Interview Question 5

In your view, what are the biggest misconceptions that SMS members have about their role and responsibilities as a leader in the South African Public Service?

The interview findings revealed a prevalent misconception among SMS members: the belief that their roles are predominantly about wielding "power. " Participant 5 noted as follows: “SMS members sometimes think that they are not accountable and do not take responsibility for their actions. They should not be power hungry and ‘abuse’ or mistreat their subordinates." This perspective emerged as a key theme mentioned in different ways, but with nearly all participants highlighting that many SMS members tend to view leadership through the lens of authority and control. This misinterpretation often results in behaviours focused on exerting influence rather than fulfilling the core responsibilities of public service leadership. Participants suggested that this power-centric mindset may hinder collaborative efforts, compromise ethical leadership (Van Wart, 2014; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015:83), and detract from the service-oriented nature expected of SMS members.

Another common misconception raised by participants was that some SMS members believe they can remain detached from operational details while focusing exclusively on high-level strategy. Participant 1 noted, "*Some SMS members think*

they can stay removed from operational issues, but they need to engage at all levels," underscoring the importance of hands-on involvement to ensure effective leadership. This view was echoed by Participant 4, who emphasised that leadership is not just about overseeing but about being actively involved and setting an example for others to follow.

A further misconception mentioned by multiple participants is the belief that being liked by subordinates is more important than maintaining discipline. Participant 2 highlighted, "*There's a misconception that you need to be popular and friendly with subordinates, who can weaken discipline*. " Several respondents stressed that this approach undermines the SMS members' ability to lead effectively. Participant 6 added that many senior managers avoid making hard decisions for fear of losing popularity, but being decisive is crucial to successful leadership. Accountability was another important issue raised, as some SMS members mistakenly believe they can delegate responsibility without maintaining oversight, which can lead to poor service delivery outcomes.

Some other responses from participants included:

Interview 1 challenged the notion of detachment in senior roles: *"Some SMS members think they can stay removed from operational issues, but they need to engage at all levels."*

Interview 2 addressed a common misunderstanding in leadership dynamics: *"There's a misconception that you need to be popular and friendly with subordinates, which can weaken discipline."*

Interview 3 reflected on accountability in leadership: *"Delegation doesn't mean you abdicate responsibility; you must still be accountable for the outcomes."*

Interview 6 corrected another widespread assumption that senior management tend to avoid making difficult decisions: *"The misconception is that senior managers avoid making hard decisions, but they must be decisive to lead."*

6.6.6 Finding codes and themes in the data

The codes and categories emerged through the analysis of the interview transcripts, identifying codes, and organising codes into clusters based on similar and interconnected ideas or concepts. With sixty (60) codes emerging from the analysis of the interview transcripts, the ultimate outcome of the analysis of the dataset resulted in interpretive concepts or propositions that described and explained the various facets of the data. By examining and refining the codes identified, comparing between and within the different interview transcripts, eight (8) distinctive categories or themes were recognised (Table 6.2):

Table 6.2 Behavioural Leadership Categories and Codes Derived from In-Depth Analysis of Interview Data

Initial codes and emerging themes/ categories	**Code**		**Description**	
A – Interpersonal Relationships	People oriented	1.	Ability to relate to others with empathy and understanding.	Goleman, 1998:113-114; Chapter 6 interview findings.
A – Interpersonal Relationships	Respect for self and others	2.	Being respectful to subordinates, seniors, and citizens.	Northouse, 2016:342; Chapter 6 ethical behaviour themes.
A – Interpersonal Relationships	Ability to relate to others	3.	Being able to connect well with others and create networks to support teams and deliver results.	Harris, 2008:31-34; *Ubuntu* values in Chapter 2; Chapter 6 interviews.
A –	Team Player	4.	Works well within a team	Northouse,

Initial codes and emerging themes/ categories	Code		Description	
Interpersonal Relationships			environment and contributes to collective outputs.	2016:295; Harris, 2008:31-34; Chapter 6 distributed leadership.
B – Leadership Style	Adaptive leadership	5.	Ability to adjust leadership approach based on situational demands and evolving contexts.	Heifetz *et al.,* 2009:26-69; Northouse, 2016:261-293; Chapter 6.
B – Leadership Style	Change manager	6.	Ability to lead through transitions and respond constructively to political and organisational change.	Kotter, 1996; Chapter 6 findings; Northouse, 2016:159-160.
B – Leadership Style	Coach/Mentor	7.	Nurturing growth through coaching and mentoring team members.	Goleman, 1998:153-155; Northouse, 2016:305; Chapter 6.
B – Leadership Style	Conflict management	8.	Ability to address tensions constructively and act ethically under pressure.	Goleman, 1998:254-255; Northouse, 2016:243-245; Chapter 6.

Initial codes and emerging themes/ categories	Code		Description	
B – Leadership Style	People empowerment	9.	Creating a growth-oriented environment where team members can thrive.	Kouzes & Posner, 2012:231-235; Chapter 6 and 7.
B – Leadership Style	Directive	10.	Taking command in complex or high-stakes situations to ensure delivery and clarity.	Northouse, 2016:83-84; Chapter 6.
B – Leadership Style	Lead for results	11.	Outcome-driven leadership ensuring accountability and performance focus.	Hatami *et al.,* 2020; Chapter 6; NDP, 2011.
B – Leadership Style	Lead from within	12.	Leading alongside others with visibility, empathy, and presence.	Goleman, 1998; Northouse, 2016:333; Chapter 6.
B – Leadership Style	Motivator	13.	Inspiring and energising team members through meaningful engagement.	Goleman, 1998:25, 153; Munawar *et al.,* 2024; Chapter 6.
B – Leadership Style	Participatory leader	14.	Encouraging collaborative decision-making and shared ownership.	Northouse, 2016:440; Harris, 2008:31-34; Chapter 6.
B – Leadership Style	Servant leader	15.	Prioritising the needs of the team while remaining actively	Greenleaf, 1977; Northouse,

Initial codes and emerging themes/ categories	Code		Description	
			engaged and responsive.	2016:225-226; Chapter 6.
B – Leadership Style	Adjust to the situation	16.	Using context-sensitive strategies to lead effectively.	Blanchard *et al.,* 2013:13; Northouse, 2016:103; Chapter 6.
B – Leadership Style	Transformational leadership	17.	Leading with a forward-looking, change-oriented vision that empowers growth.	Bass & Riggio, 2006:440; Shahid, 2024:3806; Chapter 7.
B – Leadership Style	Visionary	18.	Sharing a compelling long-term institutional vision to mobilise support and guide efforts.	Bass & Riggio, 2006:76, 102; Chapter 7.
B – Leadership Style	Team management (know the team)	19.	Using team members' individual strengths to optimise collaboration and output.	Northouse, 2016:295-296; Chapter 6.
C – Personal Style / Behavioural Attributes	Adaptability	20.	Ability to work effectively across diverse settings and expectations.	Northouse, 2016:288-289; Chapter 6.
C – Personal Style / Behavioural	Agile	21.	Responds quickly to needs and adapts processes when circumstances change.	Diamond, 2013; Chapter 6.

Initial codes and emerging themes/ categories	Code		Description	
Attributes				
C – Personal Style / Behavioural Attributes	Authentic	22.	Demonstrates honesty, consistency, and self-awareness in leadership.	Northouse, 2016:333; Chapter 6.
C – Personal Style / Behavioural Attributes	Networker	23.	Builds and maintains relationships that enhance knowledge, collaboration, and effectiveness.	Northouse, 2016:295; Chapter 6.
C – Personal Style / Behavioural Attributes	Emotionally intelligent	24.	Understands and manages emotions for effective interpersonal interactions.	Goleman, 1998:108-113, 191-192; Munawar *et al.,* 2024; Chapter 6.
C – Personal Style / Behavioural Attributes	Influential	25.	Positively influences decisions and organisational direction.	Northouse, 2016:316-317; Chapter 6.
C – Personal Style / Behavioural Attributes	Innovative	26.	Generates creative solutions to complex public service challenges.	OECD, 2020; Chapter 7.
C – Personal Style / Behavioural Attributes	Life-long learner	27.	Demonstrates ongoing commitment to personal and professional growth.	Northouse, 2016:19; Chapter 6.
C – Personal Style / Behavioural	Openness	28.	Maintains open communication and transparency in leadership approach.	Northouse, 2016:343-344; Chapter

Initial codes and emerging themes/ categories	Code		Description	
Attributes				6.
C – Personal Style / Behavioural Attributes	Organisational skills (self and others)	29.	Effectively manages own tasks and coordinates others to deliver results.	Chapter 6 participant reflections.
C – Personal Style / Behavioural Attributes	Risk taker	30.	Willing to make informed decisions in uncertain or complex contexts.	Chapter 6 empirical themes.
C – Personal Style / Behavioural Attributes	Self-aware	31.	Understands own limitations, strengths, and behavioural triggers.	Goleman, 1998:55-56; Chapter 6.
C – Personal Style / Behavioural Attributes	Self-motivated	32.	Acts with internal drive and personal accountability.	Chapter 6 and 7 integration of ethical leadership.
D – Values System	Making ethical choices and decisions and not be influenced otherwise	33.	Ability to make principled decisions and remain independent in the face of pressure.	Northouse, 2016:342; Chapter 6 ethical decision-making.
D – Values System	Telling the truth and not being deceitful	34.	Openly communicates and avoids dishonest practices in leadership interactions.	Northouse, 2016:343; Chapter 6 ethical leadership.
D –	Being a person of	35.	Demonstrates unwavering	Goleman,

Initial codes and emerging themes/ categories	Code		Description	
Values System	high integrity to not fluid and make decisions that are right		integrity and consistency in decision-making.	1998:66–68; Chapter 6 values-based behaviour.
D – Values System	Being committed and available to deliver to citizens	36.	Demonstrates dedication to service delivery and accessibility to public needs.	Chapter 6; NDP, 2011; Public Service Charter.
D – Values System	Live the values of the Constitution of RSA	37.	Embeds constitutional values in all actions and decisions.	DPSA, 2023; Chapter 6 and 7 on ethical foundations.
E – Work Style	Purpose-driven towards the achievement of goals	38.	Focuses effort and leadership on achieving clearly defined objectives.	Chapter 6 performance orientation; Hatami et al., 2020.
E – Work Style	Function effectively within the ecosystem of the Public Service as an organisation	39.	Understands systems and processes within the public service to enhance delivery.	Chapter 6; OECD, 2020 public service capabilities.
E – Work Style	Being able to analyse and solve complex problems	40.	Breaks down complex problems and creates context-relevant solutions.	Sternberg, 1999; Chapter 6 problem-solving ability.

Initial codes and emerging themes/ categories	Code		Description	
E – Work Style	Being able to manage projects and programmes in a structured way towards success	41.	Applies project management principles to deliver public value outcomes.	Northouse, 2016:143–144; Chapter 6 structured leadership.
F – Situational Responsiveness	Finding solution in the actual reality of the moment	42.	Responds to present challenges with practical, context-sensitive solutions.	Chapter 6 responsive-ness; Northouse, 2016:103.
F – Situational Responsiveness	Being able to change thinking style, approach, or response depending on a specific situation	43.	Demonstrates flexibility in leadership style to meet situational demands.	Heifetz et al., 2009:55–58; Chapter 6 adaptive practices.
F – Situational Responsiveness	Not having a 'one size fits all' approach but being able to respond to a specific situation in a relevant way	44.	Applies diverse approaches rather than relying on fixed solutions.	Northouse, 2016:103; Chapter 6 context-driven leadership.
G – Cognitive Competence	Strong analytical abilities	45.	Critically evaluates information to make informed decisions.	Chapter 6 strategic reasoning themes.
G – Cognitive Competence	Being able to communicate effectively across	46.	Adapts communication strategies to diverse stakeholder environments.	Northouse, 2016:302–304; Chapter

Initial codes and emerging themes/ categories	Code		Description	
	levels, ecosystems, with public servants, legislatures and citizens			6 communicati on themes.
G – Cognitive Competence	Being able to critically analyse situations and make independent decisions	47.	Engages in critical reflection and autonomous decision-making.	Sternberg, 1999; Chapter 6 cognitive independenc e.
G – Cognitive Competence	Being able to not just align to a single thinking style preference, but move beyond the natural preference and consider this whole, holistic thinking	48.	Integrates multiple cognitive approaches beyond default preferences.	McAdams & Pals, 2006; Chapter 6 flexible cognition.
G – Cognitive Competence	Being innovative and creative to do less with more	49.	Thinks creatively to improve outcomes with limited resources.	OECD, 2020; Chapter 7 behavioural capabilities.
G – Cognitive Competence	Having intelligence to approach public service challenges and solutions; ability to function as a	50.	Applies specialist and systemic thinking to address complex issues.	Chapter 6 and 7; leadership depth and role clarity.

Initial codes and emerging themes/ categories	Code		Description	
	specialist and not just a generalist			
G – Cognitive Competence	Being able to deal with multiple complex issues at the same time	51.	Manages simultaneous challenges with clarity and composure.	Chapter 6 multitasking and resilience.
G – Cognitive Competence	Being strategic in orientation and response	52.	Thinks and plans with long-term goals in mind.	Bass & Riggio, 2006; Chapter 7 strategic vision.
G – Cognitive Competence	Consider the complete complex system to ensure quality and cost-effective services are delivered in time	53.	Considers all variables in a system to deliver optimised results.	OECD, 2020; Chapter 7 design thinking.
H – Environmental Awareness	Understanding the unique and complex public service environment and the relationship with politics and interfaces with public service and civil society	54.	Navigates political-administrative relationships and policy complexity.	Chapter 6; OECD, 2020 public service complexity.
H – Environmental Awareness	Being aware of what is expected for a successful	55.	Anticipates future needs and aligns leadership accordingly.	Chapter 7 future-ready leadership;

Initial codes and emerging themes/ categories	Code		Description	
	future and not just the here and now			DPSA, 2023.
H – Environmental Awareness	Have an in-depth understanding of the Public Service system	56.	Possesses institutional knowledge of the public service landscape.	Chapter 6 system familiarity and delivery structures.
H – Environmental Awareness	Remaining relevant (e. g., 4IR, 5IR, changing politics)	57.	Adapts to socio-technical shifts and global changes.	Chapter 6 and 7 adaptive foresight.
H – Environmental Awareness	Being knowledgeable about own work environment and requirements for delivery	58.	Understands delivery mandates and contextual service needs.	Chapter 6 performance clarity and workplace awareness.
H – Environmental Awareness	Having a Citizen-centred and service delivery orientation	59.	Places the citizen at the centre of public service outcomes.	Chapter 6 and 7; NDP, 2011; Public Service Charter.
H – Environmental Awareness	To be a conduit for service delivery and public service delivery	60.	Acts as a link between the state and the citizen in delivering value.	Chapter 6 role clarity; DPSA, 2023.

(Source: Researcher's construct, 2025)

The participants' insights were well aligned with and validated the theoretical constructs outlined in the conceptual framework (Section 2.10). Data gathered

through the semi-structured interviews provided unexpected and valuable additional perspectives, such as the critical importance of a leadership style that is flexible and supportive while the leader evolves through continuous learning while navigating the complexities of public service. These unique complexities highlight the dynamic and evolving nature of SMS leadership in the South African Public Service.

The themes emerging from the interviews were systematically checked against the constructs and concepts arising from the literature review (Section 2.5.3) to check for alignment and consistency. At the same time the systematic analysis of the interview data identified new emerging concepts and constructs.

Reflecting on the alignment with concepts and constructs identified in Section 2.5.3, the following was noted:

Cognitive flexibility: Cognitive flexibility, and the ability of a leader to adapt their thinking and public decision-making approaches depending on changing circumstances was a recurring theme in the interviews. In the conceptual framework, this construct was expected to manifest through behaviours such as problem-solving (Le Deist & Winterton, 2005:27-49; McAdams & Pals, 2006:204), multidimensional thinking, and adjusting thinking styles. From the interview data, several codes emerged that aligned closely with this construct. For example, participants frequently mentioned the importance of analytical thinking and being able to switch between strategic thinking and practical problem-solving, particularly when dealing with unpredictable challenges. The code "Apply mind according to task expectations" and "situational response" further emphasised the requirement that SMS leaders need to adjust their approach based on the situation. Participants reflected on cognitive flexibility (Diamond, 2013:135-168; Heifetz *et al.,* 2009:62-69) from different perspectives:

Participant 1 stated: *“The job requires… a senior manager… the role is not static, it's dynamic, it changes. So, you need someone who can adapt to new situations, to changes in the environment, because legislation changes, and what we might think is still relevant now might no longer be relevant.”* This comment highlights the need for adaptability (Heifetz *et al*., 2009:62-69; Nöthel *et al*., 2023:1-16; McAdams &

Pals, 2006:204) and cognitive flexibility (Diamond, 2013:135-168; Heifetz *et al*., 2009:62-69) to respond effectively to evolving conditions and legislative shifts.

Participant 2 responded: *"You need to have that adaptive character… because what I've realised is that there's too much that is expected of us as senior managers. You need to be resilient and to manage the turbulence, changes, and frustrations that come with the job."* This reflects the demand for cognitive flexibility and resilience (Diamond, 2013:135-168; Heifetz *et al*., 2009:62-69) to manage ongoing turbulence and the unpredictability inherent in senior management roles.

Participant 7 noted: *"It is important to be able to adapt, manage change, and remain focused under pressure. You must know that there will be difficult days, but you need to stay composed,"* emphasising the need for SMS members to maintain mental agility and composure in high-pressure environments.

Emotional intelligence: The theoretical analysis identified Emotional intelligence (EI) as central to effective leadership, particularly in terms of self-awareness, relationship management, and empathy. Interviewees confirmed this construct by frequently highlighting the importance of people-oriented leadership and managing interpersonal relationships. Codes such as "*Emotionally Intelligent*", "*Self-aware*", and "*Respect for others*" were often cited by participants when discussing the behavioural aptitudes necessary for success in the SMS. Leaders described how their ability to manage emotions in high-pressure environments and foster a respectful, empathetic workplace was critical to team cohesion and overall effectiveness. This alignment between the conceptual framework and the interview findings validates the role of Emotional Intelligence as a key leadership construct for the SMS.

Participant 6 reflected: *"I'm not sure whether a person can be trained in emotional intelligence or if it's a skill you acquire or are born with. But yes, I think emotional intelligence is crucial."* This quotation underscores the perceived importance of emotional intelligence, even while raising questions about its developmental nature. This aligns with the work of Goleman (1998) and recent findings by Munawar et al., (2024:online), who emphasised that emotional intelligence, while partly innate, can be enhanced through reflective leadership development.

Participant 1 similarly noted: *"I think also it's a deep level of emotional intelligence and the ability to self-manage, manage others, and manage relationships. I'm of the view that one of the key things missing in the Public Service is almost an awareness,"* thereby reinforcing the argument for improved self-awareness and relationship management. This corresponds with the foundational framework on emotional intelligence developed by Goleman (1998) and expanded in contemporary public leadership contexts (Munawar *et al*., 2024:online).

Participant 7 raised the matter of empathy, stating: *"You must be empathetic and understanding about the people that you work with… For me, one of the best things that I have done for myself was… being deployed at Costa Hospital… that gave me an understanding and an empathy of the context in which public services are rendered."* This reflection highlights how direct exposure to service delivery contexts can cultivate empathetic understanding - an essential component of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998; Munawar *et al*., 2024:online).

These excerpts underscore the critical role of emotional intelligence in SMS leadership. They illustrate the importance of self-regulation, empathy, and interpersonal awareness in responding effectively to the complex realities of public service delivery (Goleman, 1998; Munawar *et al*., 2024:online).

African Leadership: Collective Well-being and Ethical Responsibility African Leadership, grounded in African values, emphasises collective well-being, empathy, and ethical responsibility. The thematic analysis revealed a strong alignment with this construct through codes like "Respect for others", "Team player", and "Service Orientation". Participants often mentioned the importance of community-oriented leadership and emphasised that public service should prioritise the well-being of the community over individual interests. The code "Servant Leader" further highlights *Ubuntu* (Nussbaum, 2003:45-47; Mkhize & Nkosi, 2021:210)'s core principles, where participants described leadership as both serving and leading by example. These themes strongly support the inclusion of African Leadership in the conceptual framework, validating its importance for SMS leadership in the South African Public Service context.

Reflecting on African Leadership principles, participants reiterated the following:

Participant *6* stated: *"You recognise the value of other people… and your people must know that this person is a human being like yourself. And then you respect that person the way you respect yourself and treat that person the way you would like to be treated."* This reflection highlights the core values associated with the *Ubuntu* philosophy - mutual respect, the recognition of shared humanity, and the importance of dignity in human relations. These principles are central to African ethics as described by Nussbaum (2003:45-47) and Mkhize and Nkosi (2021:210).

In a subsequent reflection, the same participant added: *"…it's broad. It's about doing your work excellently because there are people that must benefit from the work that you are doing. As an African or South African, you must have Ubuntu as part of your attributes in life because, in that way, you will see life differently."* This statement emphasises the collective responsibility embedded in *Ubuntu*, where leadership is understood as a service to others and a commitment to excellence for communal benefit. This resonates with Nussbaum (2003:45-47) and Mkhize and Nkosi (2021:210) who interpreted *Ubuntu* as a moral framework grounded in relationality and human-centred responsibility.

Participants integrated the concept of *Ubuntu* into their understanding of public leadership. They reinforced a vision of leadership that promotes respect, mutual value, and a collective service orientation (Nussbaum, 2003:45-47; Mkhize & Nkosi, 2021:210).

Transformational Leadership: Transformational Leadership in the conceptual framework was anticipated to involve inspiring teams, fostering innovation (Ravet-Brown *et al.,* 2023:496), and driving change. The interview findings confirmed this, particularly through codes like "Visionary", "Lead for Results", and "Motivator". Many participants emphasised the need for SMS leaders to inspire their teams through a clear vision and a commitment to long-term goals. Codes such as "Transformational Leadership" and "Motivator" reflect the expectation that leaders should not only manage day-to-day operations but also drive continuous improvement and inspire their teams to exceed expectations. This confirms the relevance of Transformational Leadership as a core construct in the framework.

Reflections from participants included the following:

Participant *3* remarked: *"You must be transformational and then be participative and be able to work with the people as well. And they lead by example."* This reflection illustrates the dual emphasis on transformational leadership, driving change, and participative leadership, which centres on collaboration and modelling behaviour.

Participant *6* elaborated on the challenge of influencing team behaviour: *"The role of the manager is to transform people to be target-oriented… You have to make sure that these people transform to that level, but it's not easy because you must get a buy-in from them so that they are also target-oriented in a way."* This highlights the behavioural effort required to align team values with organisational goals, a key characteristic of transformational leadership.

Participant *8* echoed this sentiment, stating: *"It's important to inspire the team to carry on the work with diligence… Even though sometimes it's not easy to achieve, that inspiration or motivational attribute is key. It impacts directly on the people we lead and gives them the enthusiasm to help us carry out our duties."* Here, the emphasis is on inspirational motivation, which is one of the core components of transformational leadership.

Together, these excerpts emphasise the importance of **inspiring others, securing buy-in, modelling behaviour**, and **fostering a shared vision**, all of which are central to transformational and participative leadership theories (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Van Wart, 2014).

These excerpts illustrate how transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Shahid, 2024:3806) is perceived as a critical attribute, focusing on inspiring meaningful change within teams and institutions.

Critical thinking: Participants frequently emphasised the need for SMS members to engage in critical analysis, particularly focusing on the concept of critical thinking (Sternberg, 1999) as outlined in Section 2.5.3). Critical thinking emerged as a fundamental competency for SMS leaders, enabling them to assess complex situations, evaluate multiple perspectives, and make well-informed decisions in a dynamic public service environment. The ability to analyse problems, challenge assumptions, and consider long-term implications is crucial for SMS leaders, who

often face high-stakes decisions with significant social, political, and economic ramifications. The interview data highlighted that critical thinking in the Public Service context involves more than just problem-solving (Le Deist & Winterton, 2005; McAdams & Pals, 2006:204); it requires strategic foresight and the capacity to weigh different options while navigating uncertain and evolving circumstances. This aligns with the theoretical discussion in Chapter 2, where critical thinking was identified as a key leadership attribute that empowers leaders to adapt to diverse and challenging situations.

Participant 4 noted that *"As senior managers, as people who are in decision-making positions, there's a time where you must decide. . . without having considered all other aspects. You cannot forever be mulling over issues without coming to a conclusion".*

Participants emphasised that SMS leaders must continually challenge existing norms, anticipate future challenges, and devise innovative solutions to serve the public effectively. This perspective aligns with Van Wart (2014:143-159) who conceptualised ethical leadership in various styles, such as virtuous, authentic, moral, and transformational leadership, each of which require leaders to engage in critical reflection and ethical decision-making processes. Furthermore, Denhardt and Denhardt (2015:549-559) advocated for a citizen-centric approach in public administration, urging that leaders should think strategically and act democratically. This approach necessitates critical thinking to balance practical considerations with ethical imperatives, ensuring decisions uphold public interest and integrity

Participants shared the following:

Participant 4 reflected that SMS leaders are sometimes required to *"never [to] question some things because by doing so you are questioning a political party. No, I'm not. I am questioning our government processes, and therefore we could improve them because my role is to also [to] improve them."*

The same participant also noted that "It's important to not stagnate and continuously look on [forward]. How can you improve what you are doing, and how can you be innovative in what you are doing?"

Comments highlight the need for constant questioning, improvement and innovation (Ravet-Brown *et al.,* 2023:496), encouraging leaders to rethink their approaches and challenge existing practices.

This emphasis on critical analysis is particularly relevant in the South African Public Service, where leaders are tasked with addressing complex, often interconnected issues, from socio-economic inequality to public service delivery. Participants stressed that effective leadership requires a willingness to engage in deep, reflective thought, moving beyond surface-level solutions to tackle root causes and systemic problems. This dynamic, multidimensional thinking allows SMS members to remain agile and responsive, ensuring that they can balance short-term deliverables with long-term institutional growth and sustainability.

Analytical thinking: The interview data collected in this study confirmed the relevance of analytical thinking as a critical competency for SMS, aligning with the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2. Participants frequently highlighted the importance of an evidence-based approach to decision-making, which requires the ability to critically assess information, identify patterns, and synthesise data to inform strategic initiatives. Participant 8 noted that "*Particularly as a manager, when we approach things logically, you get to understand and appreciate the entire view of things. What does one action lead to? What is the consequence of a particular action?" "Doing things interactively. . . recognising that things are interconnected. . . and knowing how different parts align is essential to effective thinking*. "

Other comments made included the following:

"The ability to analyse problems, identify solutions, take appropriate action, and resolve conflicts using independent judgment and decision-making. " (Participant 5); and

"It's crucial to think through problems that arise from working with people. " (Participant 1).

This confirms the theoretical premise that analytical thinking is not only essential for addressing complex problems but also for developing innovative solutions in the public service. In particular, participants emphasised that effective leaders must be

capable of breaking down complex situations, evaluating various potential outcomes, and making informed decisions that take into account both immediate and long-term implications. This reflective and deliberate thought process supports the notion that analytical thinking is a foundational skill that enables SMS members to navigate the complexities of public administration and policymaking.

The analysis found that participants view analytical thinking as crucial for adapting to the rapidly changing environment of the Public Service, where challenges such as technological advancements, policy shifts, and evolving citizen expectations require constant assessment and strategic foresight. The insights gathered from the interviews reinforce the theoretical construct presented in Chapter 2, affirming the importance of analytical thinking as a key behavioural competency within the SMS.

6.6.7 Emerging dimensions of a behavioural leadership framework for the SMS

Continuing with the iterative process inherent in a conceptual study and a grounded theory approach, the thematic findings were analysed to identify potential gaps in the theoretical findings (Section 2.5.3) and new insights obtained from the interviews, enabling further refinement of what a behavioural leadership framework for the SMS would entail. From this further analysis, four specific dimensions that extended beyond the understanding of the theoretical constructs (Section 2.5.3) were identified:

Service orientation:

From the analysis of the interviews, a clear and unique theme relating to service orientation developed. In the context of the South African Public Service, the role of SMS members extends beyond mere administrative or managerial functions; they are seen as custodians of public trust, tasked with ensuring the effective delivery of essential services to citizens. This responsibility is deeply embedded in a commitment to service, not only to the public but also to the teams and institutions they lead. The interview data underscored the belief among SMS leaders that they serve as the bridge between the government and the people, with their ultimate goal being to improve the well-being of South Africa’s citizens and residents.

Some reflections from participants were the following:

"For me, if you have that citizen-centred approach in the back of your mind, everything that you do leading up to that will fall into place. " (Participant 7).

"Your leadership style in managing the people in your unit, department, and public service at large is like a pebble thrown into water, it always goes wider. " (Participant 7).

The metaphor of a pebble dropped in a pool of water reflects the cascading effect of leadership actions, indicating how service orientation should extend from internal teams to the broader public service and ultimately benefit citizens.

Participant 4 reflected that *"You are not just there to complete tasks; you need to guide and mentor your team while contributing to the department's strategic goals and ensuring citizens receive quality services",* emphasising the interconnected responsibilities SMS leaders have toward their teams, institutions, and the public.

This multi-dimensional responsibility, toward the citizen, the team, and the institution, requires a unique service orientation characterised by a deep sense of empathy and people orientation. In the South African context, where public service is both politically charged and operationally complex, SMS leaders are expected to display emotional intelligence and the ability to navigate the diverse needs and expectations of their peers, subordinates, and the public. As one participant mentioned, "*Leaders must relate to others [peers, seniors, leaders, citizens] with empathy and understanding,"* demonstrating a connection that goes beyond professional interactions to build trust and foster collaboration.

This service [to the people] orientation is crucial in the South African Public Service, where SMS members often face socio-economic challenges, political instability, and high public expectations. The high levels of empathy and emotional intelligence required by SMS leaders allow them to respond effectively to these challenges by building strong relationships and understanding the human impact of their decisions. This is particularly significant given South Africa's complex socio-political landscape, where public servants are not only administrators but also key role players in promoting social equity and addressing historical inequalities.

Participants shared the view that the SMS leader is not only in service of the citizens but also in service of their team and the institution they serve. SMS leaders should lead by serving, a continuous service to others by empowering and motivating their teams. In this way the SMS leader could ensure that individuals contribute effectively to institutional goals. This aligns with the *Batho Pele* Principles of putting people first, a primary guide to public service in South Africa. By putting people first, an emphasis is placed on transparency, accountability, and a citizen-centric approach. Moving beyond external service delivery, the internalisation of the *Batho Pele* Principles within the South African Public Service is equally critical. SMS members should take ownership of *Batho Pele* Principles within the workplace. With such an approach a culture of collegiality, mutual respect, and ethical leadership is fostered and a work environment where public servants are not only accountable to the citizens but also to one another is forged. Such an introspective application of *Batho Pele* would strengthen SMS leadership effectiveness and cultivate a public service ethos that would uphold both institutional integrity and a commitment to service excellence.

The SMS leader's ability to build personal connections and relate to others with empathy is critical for creating an environment where trust, collaboration, and accountability flourish. High levels of emotional intelligence enable SMS members to manage their own emotions while responding sensitively to the emotions and concerns of others, whether they are colleagues, superiors, or the public. This personal connection becomes even more essential in the South African Public Service, where leaders are tasked with balancing the immediate needs of citizens with long-term institutional goals in an often resource-constrained environment.

The data reflects a strong consensus among SMS members that their role is fundamentally about service, to the people, the team, and the institution. This requires a leadership approach that combines empathy, emotional intelligence, and a strong commitment to ethical and effective public service delivery. Such a model of leadership is not only vital for addressing the pressing socio-economic challenges in South Africa but also for fostering a public service that is responsive, accountable, and oriented toward the common good.

Transformational Vision:

The data offers deep insights into the essential leadership behaviours for SMS members, emphasising the need for the SMS leader to be visionary, transformational, and proactive in guiding their teams towards success. A significant takeaway from the analysis is that SMS members must continuously inspire others by leading through example and fostering a culture of motivation within their teams. This includes cultivating an environment where team members feel empowered and driven to achieve their objectives, which is critical in a high-stakes public service environment.

"It's important to be visionary first. . . the role that you come into. . . is to bring about change, efficiency, and betterment. " Participant 8.

Championing innovation and growth also emerged as a vital component of SMS leadership. As the political and technological landscapes evolve, particularly with the advent of the Fourth and Fifth Industrial Revolutions, SMS leaders must not only adapt but actively promote innovation. This means encouraging creative problem-solving and new ways of thinking to enhance the effectiveness of public service delivery. By fostering a climate that encourages innovation, SMS leaders ensure that their teams remain agile and responsive to future challenges.

Furthermore, SMS leaders are tasked with striving for excellence in all aspects of their work. This involves not only meeting current expectations but continuously raising the bar for performance. As the data suggests, the ideal SMS leader pushes for transformational leadership, aiming for sustained institutional and individual growth. This forward-thinking approach ensures that leaders are not just reacting to change but actively shaping the future direction of public service. They must share the institution's vision with their teams, inspiring them to take ownership of this vision and work collaboratively towards long-term goals.

Key attributes like adaptability and agility ensure that SMS leaders remain flexible in navigating complex environments. Leaders are expected to pivot when situations require it and handle the pressures of constant change, such as political instability or technological disruption.

The data also points to the importance of situational and multidimensional thinking. SMS members are expected to adjust their leadership approach to specific contexts while also taking a broader, systems-thinking approach that considers the long-term impacts of their decisions. This cognitive flexibility, coupled with a focus on systems thinking, positions leaders to address complex public service challenges in a holistic and strategic manner. The data highlighted that effective SMS leaders must not only adapt to the demands of public service but also inspire, innovate, and strive for excellence. These leadership behaviours, paired with a deep commitment to transformational growth and visionary thinking, are essential for leading public service institutions towards a more effective and responsive future.

Ethical foundations:

From the data collected in the interviews, there is a clear and direct relationship between the leadership and expected behaviour of the SMS and their vision. Central to the ethical leadership expected of SMS members, particularly in their role as public servants committed to justice and equality, this leadership behaviour or approach is embedded in a deep commitment to values and ethics, and an understanding of accountability. Quotes reflecting ethical foundations, included the concepts of accountability, values, integrity, and respect:

Participant 7: *“For me personally, integrity and ethics are very important. I would like people to know that what they see is what they get. . . my integrity and ethics are non-negotiable”.*

Participant 1: *“Ultimately, we are there to ensure that the Public Service works. It’s about making sure the organisation is looked after, and that requires resilience, personal ethics, and a strong moral code”.*

Participant 1 also reflected: *"If your personal values don’t align with constitutional values and principles, your behaviour won’t align either…Respect is non-negotiable, you must treat others, whether subordinates, peers, or citizens, with dignity. It’s not just about compliance but genuine care".*

These excerpts underscore the significance of ethics, transparency, and accountability in SMS leadership, demonstrating that values such as integrity,

respect, and alignment with constitutional principles are critical to an effective public service.

The interview data also underscores the critical importance of respect for others, indicating that SMS leaders must maintain respect towards subordinates, peers, and citizens alike. This respect extends beyond formal leadership to ensure genuine care for the well-being of others. Values such as integrity, honesty, transparency and alignment with constitutional values emerged as foundational principles for the SMS leader.

A dynamic leadership response:

A dynamic leadership response is critical for SMS in the South African Public Service. As participants highlighted in the data, SMS leaders must be adept at employing multiple leadership styles depending on the specific realities and demands they face. This necessity extends beyond the traditional framework of situational leadership, where leaders adapt their approach based on the context or people involved. Instead, SMS leaders are required to dynamically shift between several leadership styles, such as participatory, directive, and transformational leadership, within the same institutional environment. This ensures that their leadership is both contextually relevant and strategically sound, responding effectively to shifting political, social, and operational challenges.

Unlike conventional situational leadership models, which suggest that leaders adjust to the demands of a particular moment, the role of SMS leaders in South Africa requires a far more complex and fluid approach. In practice, this means that SMS leaders must demonstrate an inherent flexibility and versatility, shifting between leadership styles as the situation evolves. For example, in times of stability, a participatory or consultative leadership style might be most effective, encouraging collaboration and innovation from team members. In contrast, during times of crisis or urgency, a more directive approach may be necessary to ensure quick decision-making and action. In both cases, the leader must be able to quickly assess the context, the needs of their team, and the demands of their institution to choose the most effective leadership style. Participant emphasised the importance of flexibility and versatility in leadership styles and among others commented that:

"The job requires. . . a senior manager. . . the role is not static, it's dynamic, it changes. So, you need someone who can adapt to new situations, to changes in the environment because legislation changes, and what we might think is still relevant now might no longer be relevant". (Participant 2).

"As a leader, you must read the environment and adjust. In some cases, you might need to push harder and be directive to achieve urgent targets, but at other times, it's essential to consult and bring the team along with you". (Participant 4).

"We need to be participative and inclusive, but at the same time, decisive when the situation calls for it. Endless consultation can sometimes delay important decisions, so you must strike the right balance". (Participant 5).

These quotations demonstrate how SMS leaders in South Africa must navigate complex environments by adopting multiple leadership styles, moving fluidly between consultation, participation, and directive decision-making as needed.

This leadership flexibility is vital because of the diverse and evolving challenges within the South African Public Service. From navigating political instability to addressing pressing socio-economic concerns, public service leaders face complex realities that cannot be solved by a single leadership approach. For example, during periods of political uncertainty or during the rollout of large-scale public projects, transformational leadership may be required to motivate the team and instil a shared vision for institutional growth and improvement. At the same time, the ever-present need to deliver on service-oriented goals demands leaders who can balance visionary leadership with a practical focus on achieving measurable results.

Ultimately, the dynamic leadership approach required of SMS members highlights their need to be proactive, adaptable, and responsive and solve complex problems, as reported by Participant 7: "*I personally believe in a consultative working style, but not everything can be decided by consultation. At times, you need to take the lead and make a quick call*".

A leader who rigidly adheres to a single leadership style risks being ineffective in situations that require a different approach. As public service institutions face mounting pressures, the ability to move seamlessly between styles becomes crucial

for achieving organisational objectives and meeting public expectations. This dynamic approach not only fosters team cohesion but also ensures that the Public Service remains adaptable, resilient, and effective in addressing the needs of South African citizens in an increasingly complex governance landscape.

“As a senior manager. . . the role is not static, it's dynamic, it changes. So you need someone who can adapt to new situations, to changes in the environment. ” (Participant 2).

“I think it's about agility. . . you know, being able to adapt but again within the constraints or the confines of the Public Service”. (Participant 3).

“Sometimes you have to change your leadership style to suit the specific context. There are situations where you can consult, but other times you need to be more directive to get things done”. (Participant 7).

The conclusive insights gleaned from the thematic analysis of the empirical findings reinforce the well-defined parameters that outline how the competencies, behaviours, personality traits, and leadership style preferences of a SMS leader in the Public Service were perceived by the participants in the data collection phase of the research.

The behavioural dimensions confirmed through the empirical data analysis, namely dynamic leadership response, ethical foundations, transformational vision, and service orientation resonate with the McAdams and Pals framework (2006:204) on personality development. This theoretical model underscored leadership as a dynamic construct, shaped by the interaction of personality traits, identity narratives, and socio-cultural experiences over time. These findings were further substantiated by recent studies that identify adaptability (Nöthel *et al.,* 2023:1-16), emotional intelligence (Munawar *et al.,* 2024:online), and transformational capacity (Shahid, 2024:3806-3822) as critical traits for contemporary public service leaders. This alignment validates the integration of both personal and contextual factors as essential for a nuanced understanding of SMS leadership behaviour

6.7 REFINED PROPOSAL: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this section a synthesised conceptual framework is presented considering the theoretical, policy-legislative, comparative, and empirical foundations that inform the development of a Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS in the South African Public Service. Insights from the in-depth literature review (Chapter 2), legal framework underpinning public service leadership in South Africa (Chapter 3), international perspectives and perspectives from the Global South (Chapter 4), and the empirical validation of the conceptual review (Chapter 6, were consolidated into a coherent conceptual logic model that underpins the proposed framework presented in Chapter 7 (Figure 6.1).

The proposed conceptual framework draws on four foundational sources, each contributing unique and interrelated dimensions as recorded in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3 Integrated Source Base for the Conceptual Framework

Source Chapter	Contribution to Framework
Chapter 2: Literature Review	Core behavioural leadership theories: transformational leadership, emotional intelligence, cognitive flexibility, ethical/value-based leadership, African leadership, public service leadership theory.
Chapter 3: Legislative and Policy Frameworks	Provides the normative context, the legal mandates, public administration principles, and national strategies (e. g., the Constitution, NDP 2030, Public Administration Management Act, and the SMS Framework) that define expectations for leadership behaviour.
Chapter 4: Comparative Global Initiatives	Highlights best practices from the OECD, UNDP, Canada, Australia, Ireland, and the USA, as well as a selection of countries from the Global South, confirming a global shift toward people-centred, adaptive, and values-driven public leadership.
Chapter 6: Empirical Evidence	Validates and supplements theoretical constructs with real-world insights from senior NSG managers involved in the professionalisation of the public service. New dimensions such as dynamic leadership, ethical foundations, and service orientation emerged.

(Source: Researchers construct, 2025).6.7.1 Key Dimensions in the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework consists of five interrelated domains, each derived from the source chapters presented in Table 6 and substantiated by empirical findings from Chapter 6. These domains collectively articulate the behavioural leadership capabilities required for the Senior Management Service (SMS) in the South African Public Service (Figure 6.1).

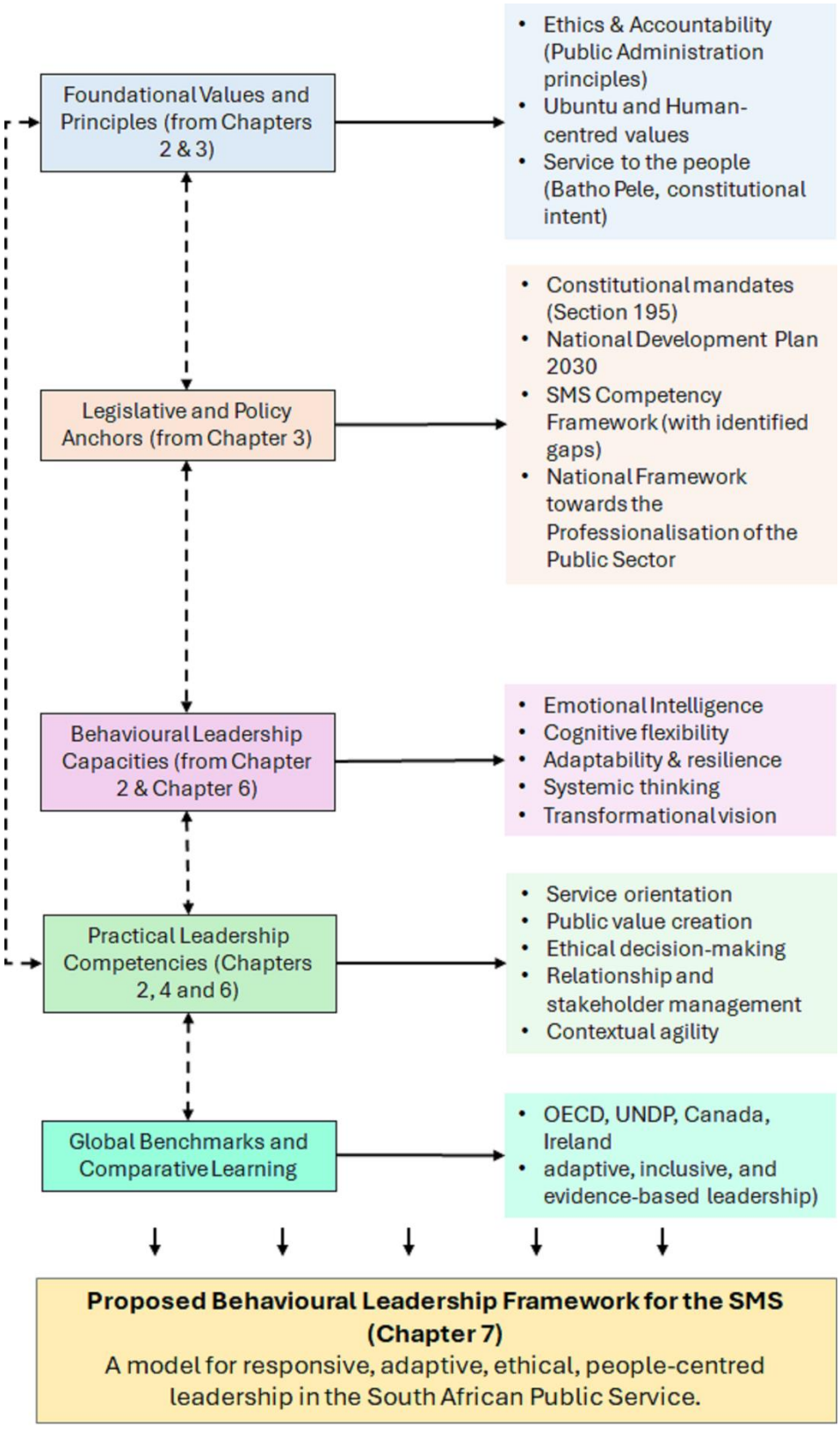

Figure 6.1 Core Domains of the Conceptual Framework for Behavioural Leadership in the SMS of the South African Public Service

Source: Researcher's construct, 2025, Adapted from Chapters 2-4 and validated by empirical findings in Chapter 6.

Foundational Values and Principles: Drawn from Chapters 2 and 3, this domain captures the normative and ethical underpinnings of public service leadership. Included are the principles of ethics and accountability, as articulated in Public Administration theory and practice. Embedded in the normative and ethical underpinnings are the values of *Ubuntu,* and other human-centred values that emphasise compassion, dignity, and collective responsibility. The foundational values and principles herein reinforce the principle of service to the people, rooted in the *Batho Pele* framework and the broader constitutional intent of people-centred leadership.

Legislative and Policy Anchors: The domain of Legislative and policy anchors provided the legal and strategic scaffolding that shapes leadership behaviour in the South African Public Service. Key constitutional mandates, particularly the values and principles contained in Section 195 of the Constitution are included in this domain. The National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 (National Planning Commission, 2011) is also central to this domain and provides a long-term developmental goal that guide leadership vision and priorities. The SMS Competency Framework (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003 & 2008) was also considered, especially in light of the gaps identified in section 3. 7, also contextualised in the Professionalisation Framework (National School of Government, 2023) and where the agenda for leadership development and accountability in the South African Public Sector, and thus also the Public Service, is set.

Behavioural Leadership Capacities: Informed by theoretical insights from Chapter 2 and validated by empirical evidence in Chapter 6, this domain focuses on the personal and interpersonal capabilities that enable effective leadership. The capabilities include emotional intelligence, which enables leaders to manage themselves and others with empathy and awareness; cognitive flexibility, which supports adaptive thinking in complex environments; and the capacity for resilience and adaptability in the face of change. Systemic and strategic thinking is also essential, as is the ability to articulate and enact a transformational vision that aligns with public value objectives.

Practical Leadership Competencies: Derived from comparative examples in Chapter 4 and further validated in Chapter 6, the Practical Leadership Competencies domain represents the application of behavioural capacities in real-world leadership contexts. Reflected in this domain are service orientation as a commitment to delivering quality public services, and the capacity to create public value through innovation and responsiveness. Ethical decision-making is highlighted as a critical competency, alongside stakeholder and relationship management, which is necessary for collaborative governance. Contextual agility and implementation competence are also essential for translating strategy into action in diverse and dynamic Public Service environments.

Global Benchmarks and Comparative Learning: This final domain was informed by the comparative global review presented in Chapter 4. The international shift towards behavioural leadership, with particular emphasis on competency frameworks such as those of the OECD that prioritise values-driven, people-centred leadership informed the perspective. Included in this domain is adaptive and transformational leadership practices (Chapter 2), as well as norms of inclusive and participatory leadership that promote legitimacy and trust, similar to the principles found in African Leadership (Chapter 2). Evidence-based policy leadership remains relevant in countries such as Canada and Ireland, where data and public engagement guide decision-making processes.

The conceptual framework presented here integrates theoretical, legal-policy, comparative, and empirical insights, offering a behavioural logic model that informs the proposed Behavioural Leadership Framework presented in Chapter 7.

6.8 CONCLUSION

The empirical insights presented in this chapter provide robust validation for the theoretical constructs outlined in earlier chapters and confirm the contextual relevance of a behavioural leadership approach within the SMS of the South African Public Service. The alignment across interview responses highlighted a shared understanding of the critical leadership traits necessary for effective public service: emotional intelligence, cognitive agility, ethical conduct, adaptability, participatory leadership, and a deep commitment to service delivery. These attributes strongly

resonate with the behavioural, cognitive, and ethical dimensions articulated in the extended theoretical baseline (Section 2. 6. 3), thereby substantiating the proposed conceptual foundations of this study.

The data revealed emergent leadership dimensions not sufficiently addressed in current legal and competency frameworks, including environmental awareness, dynamic responsiveness, systems thinking, and public service advocacy. These findings demonstrate that SMS leadership in South Africa demands more than managerial competence, it requires values-based, emotionally intelligent, and future-oriented leadership that embodies the constitutional principles of public service. The thematic coherence between conceptual and empirical findings affirms the need for a refined framework that goes beyond technical capabilities to encompass behavioural fluency and ethical leadership practice.

Drawing from the triangulation of literature, policy, case study analysis, and empirical evidence, this chapter contributes to the formulation of a context-sensitive, normatively anchored, and academically sound conceptual framework. This Strengthened Behavioural Leadership Framework, grounded in both theoretical rigor and lived public service experience, forms the outcome of Chapter 6 and directly informs the prescriptive model introduced in Chapter 7. It provides a foundational blueprint for transforming public leadership culture in the Public Service of South Africa, reinforcing the professionalisation agenda through behaviourally aligned, ethically driven, and future-ready SMS leadership.

The next chapter presents the proposed Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS in the South African Public Service, synthesising the conceptual insights and empirical findings into a coherent and contextually grounded framework.

The novice Behavioural Leadership Framework presented in Chapter 7 responds to the contextual demands of the South African public service and addresses limitations identified in the current SMS Competency Framework. This framework lays the foundation for a more adaptive, values-driven, and people-centred approach to public service leadership.

CHAPTER 7
A BEHAVIOURAL LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK FOR THE SENIOR MANAGEMENT SERVICE IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC SERVICE

In the heart of South Africa's Public Service, leadership is not merely a position of authority but a dynamic commitment to ethical governance, visionary transformation, and unwavering service to the people. True leadership in this space requires the agility to navigate complexity, the integrity to uphold accountability, and the foresight to inspire a future where every action serves the greater good of the nation.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter (Chapter 6) presented a thematic analysis of empirical evidence, validating the conceptual constructs explored throughout this study and consolidating these into a context-sensitive behavioural framework for leadership within the South African Public Service. The findings demonstrated a convergence between theoretical insights (Chapter 2), legal and policy expectations (Chapter 3), international comparative experiences (Chapter 4), and the lived perspectives of senior managers at the National School of Government (NSG), as detailed in Section 6. 6.

Chapter 7 builds directly on the foundations in Chapter 6 by presenting a novel Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS in the South African Public Service. The proposed framework responds to well-documented leadership challenges in the South African Public Service, including the absence of relevant and clearly defined behavioural competencies in the current SMS Competency Framework that responds to the character and behavioural expectations for senior managers in the Public Service (see Section 3. 6), the limited operationalisation of African leadership values (Section 2. 5), and the growing demand for emotionally intelligent, adaptive,

and ethically grounded leadership in complex governance environments (McAdams & Pals, 2006:204-217; Munawar *et al.,* 2024:online; Jarbandhan, 2019:123-145).

In alignment with the philosophical and methodological orientation of this study (see Sections 4. 3. 1 and 5. 6. 6), the proposed framework is rooted in both theory and practice. It draws from core behavioural constructs, including emotional intelligence, cognitive flexibility, transformational vision, and service orientation, as well as *Ubuntu*-inspired African leadership, and constitutional imperatives outlined in Section 2. 6. 3 and further validated in Section 6. 4.

Chapter 7 begins by outlining the conceptual foundations for the proposed behavioural leadership framework, and the integration of theoretical and empirical dimensions. The proposed novel framework is then presented visually, and each construct, and its behavioural indicators are explained in practical, context-relevant terms. Practical implications for leadership development and policy alignment are examined, particularly with reference to the Professionalisation Framework (National School of Government, 2023), as previously discussed in Section 3. 5.

The chapter concludes by reflecting on the contribution of the proposed Behavioural Leadership Framework to leadership theory, public service practice, and Behavioural Public Administration (see Section 2. 4). The proposed framework offers a shift from compliance-driven leadership to a human-centred, ethically anchored, and future-focused approach to SMS leadership. In doing so, the framework positions behavioural leadership as central to building a capable, ethical, and developmental state, a goal articulated in the National Development Plan 2030 (National Planning Commission, 2011), echoed by the Professionalisation Framework (National School of Government, 2023).

7.2 CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW OF THE FRAMEWORK

Figure 7.1 presents the core constructs that underpin the proposed behavioural leadership framework for the SMS (Human-Centred Inspired Public Leadership). These constructs that encompass cognitive flexibility, emotional intelligence, analytical thinking, and critical thinking, along with African and Transformational Leadership styles, served as the building blocks for the ultimate design of the behavioural leadership Framework for the SMS.

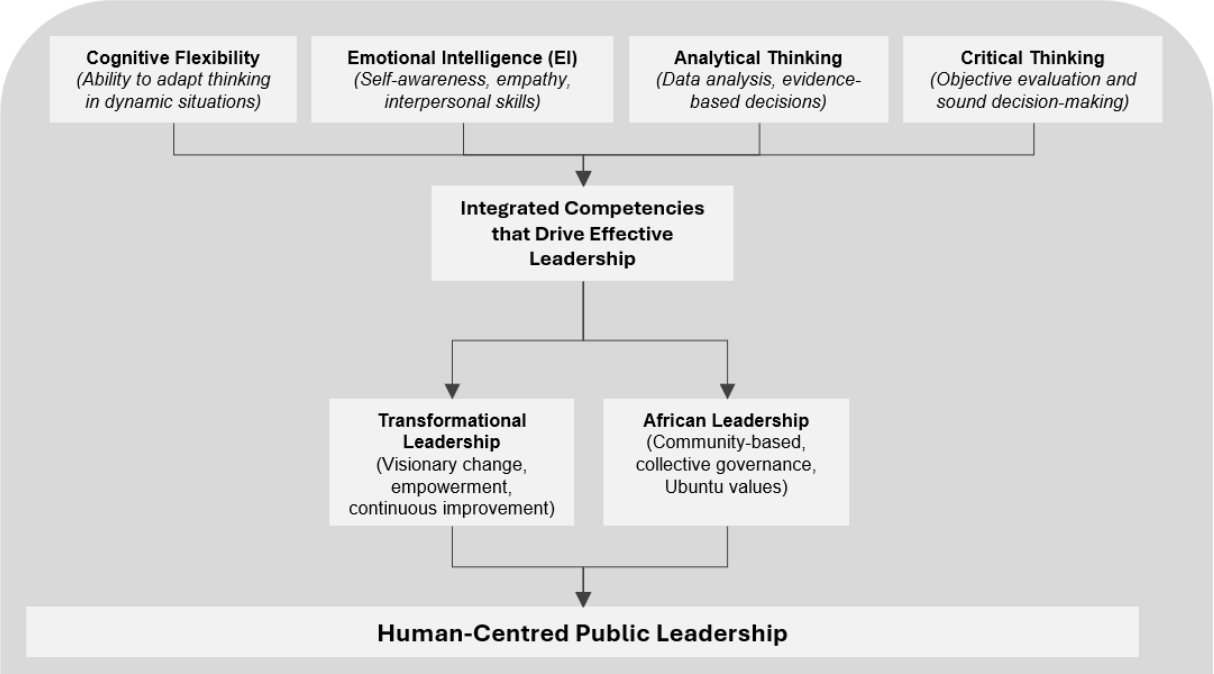

Figure 7.1 Human-Centred Inspired Public Leadership
(Source: Researcher's construct, 2025).

The development of the proposed Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS drew on an iterative engagement with empirical data and theoretical constructs. Grounded in a constructivist and interpretivist paradigm (see Sections 4. 3. 1 and 5. 6. 6), the research employed constant comparison to refine and expand the initial theoretical framework developed in Chapter 2, Section 2. 9.

This detailed and iterative analysis of literature (Chapter 2), legal frameworks (Chapter 3), and international perspectives (Chapter 4), as well as the empirical data analysis (Chapter 6), revealed critical contextual and behavioural dimensions that influence SMS leadership in the South African Public Service. The specific dimensions included not only fundamental competencies such as cognitive flexibility and emotional intelligence, but also systemic challenges such as political complexity, socio-economic inequality, and diverse team environments, all these themes which were consistently emphasised during the interviews with senior public service leaders.

These intricate dynamics are captured in the Leadership Ecosystem discussed in Section 7.3.3 and illustrated in Figure 7.2.

7.3 SYNTHESIS OF EMPIRICAL INSIGHTS INFORMING THE BEHAVIOURAL LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK

The evolution of leadership competencies within the South African Public Service reflects the nation's socio-political transitions and the ongoing imperative to enhance public administration effectiveness. Following the 1994 democratic transition, South Africa required a fundamental redefinition of public service leadership to align with democratic values, constitutional principles, and global public service trends (Jarbandhan, 2019:123-145; Jonck, 2024:78-90). +

Early assessments, such as the 2000 Baskin Report (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2000), highlighted significant leadership deficiencies, including the absence of clearly defined competencies. This gave rise to competency-based leadership frameworks. As recent scholars show, traditional models have often failed to keep pace with the behavioural, ethical, and contextual demands facing public service leadership today (De Clercq & Sedibe, 2022:112-130; Jonck, 2024:78-90).

Modern leadership within the South African public service emphasises strategic foresight, ethical conduct, emotional intelligence, and transformational capacity. These behavioural dimensions are fundamental to cultivating trust, leading responsive teams, and managing institutional complexity (Haricharan, 2022:123-140; Munawar, Chaudhry & Munir, 2024). Senior managers must navigate multifaceted responsibilities with empathy, self-awareness, and adaptability. Emotional intelligence remains vital to interpersonal effectiveness and relational leadership (Munawar *et al.,* 2024; Klasmeier, *et al.,* 2025:10008-10009).

To remain relevant, competency frameworks must evolve alongside shifts in governance, technology, and public expectations (Agazu, Kero & Debela, 2025). Comparative benchmarking against international frameworks such as the OECD's Public Leadership Capability Framework and the UNDP's behavioural competencies underscores the need for adaptive, emotionally intelligent leadership in complex state institutions (UNDP, 2021a; OECD, 2020; Jonck, 2024).

These arguments reinforce the value of this study's proposed Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS, which responds directly to such competency gaps. The framework embeds ethical governance, adaptability, and public value

creation at its core. It integrates behavioural competencies into leadership development, moving beyond compliance-based management toward a people-centred, responsive model of leadership. The Behavioural Leadership Framework is therefore aligned with both the strategic goals of the National Development Plan (National Planning Commission, 2011) and the character expectations articulated in the Professionalisation Framework (National School of Government, 2023).

The study is grounded in a constructivist philosophy (Section 4. 3. 1) and an interpretivist paradigm, embracing the multiplicity of experiences and meanings attributed to leadership within the South African Public Service. This philosophical orientation enabled a rich qualitative exploration of leadership behaviours in their institutional, cultural, and socio-political contexts.

A grounded theory methodology (Section 5. 6. 6) facilitated constant comparison and iterative engagement between theory and data. This allowed for the emergence of new behavioural insights, validated against theoretical constructs and contextual realities. The design ensured that the Behavioural Leadership Framework proposed in this study is both academically robust and operationally relevant for the complex realities of public service leadership.

7.3.1 Theoretical underpinnings

The framework builds on the foundational behavioural constructs of cognitive flexibility, emotional intelligence, critical thinking, and analytical reasoning, as conceptualised in Chapter 2 and adapted in Figure 6.1. These behavioural domains enable evidence-based, emotionally grounded decision-making in high-stakes leadership environments (Grant & McCann, 2025:2-4).

This theoretical base is reinforced by two dominant leadership paradigms: Transformational Leadership, which emphasises visionary change and empowerment (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Agazu *et al.,* 2025), and African Leadership, which prioritises collective governance, social equity, and community orientation (Chetty & Price, 2024:1-10; Mahlati, 2024:1-10).

The theoretical framework developed from the literature review in Chapter 2, (Figure 2.3) integrated key behavioural competencies and leadership styles to inform a

comprehensive behavioural leadership framework for the SMS in the South African Public Service. The theoretical framework referenced four critical behavioural constructs: Cognitive Flexibility, Emotional Intelligence (EI), Analytical Thinking, and Critical Thinking. These constructs and related competencies formed the foundation for effective and human centred public leadership (Figure 6.1) by enabling adaptive, emotionally grounded, and evidence-based decision-making in complex public service environments. This theoretical framework (Figure 6.1) served as the conceptual foundation for guiding leadership behaviour for the SMS and demonstrated how these competencies aligned with two prominent leadership styles namely transformational leadership and African leadership.

Transformational Leadership emphasised the expectations from the SMS for visionary change, empowerment, and continuous improvement, expecting that SMS leaders be equipped to inspire and motivate others toward achievement of long-term goals.

African leadership, grounded in *Ubuntu* values, emphasises collective governance, community involvement, and the promotion of unity within diverse teams, qualities that are typically expected of SMS leaders in the South African public service.

The theoretical starting point was augmented by a review of legal frameworks as they relate to SMS leadership in the South African Public Service.

7.3.2 Gaps identified in the SMS Competency Framework

The SMS Competency Framework (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003a:Chapter 5, 2008) provides essential guidance for leadership development within the country's Public Service. While the SMS Competency Framework (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003a:Chapter 5, 2008) offers technical guidance for leadership development, it exhibits several key limitations (Table 7.1) that inhibits its effectiveness in fully addressing the leadership challenges within the South African Public Service as reflected upon in Chapter 3 (Section 3. 6). The SMS Competency Framework does not make provision for the changing demands of leadership, the socio-cultural context, and the behavioural expectations of SMS leaders in modern public administration.

Table 7.1 Gaps in the SMS Competency Framework (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003, 2008)

Aspect	Gap in SMS Competency Framework
Ethics and Integrity	Limited guidance for complex ethical decision-making.
Emotional Intelligence	Underrepresented relative to technical skills.
Adaptability and Innovation	Focuses on routine competencies rather than real-time responsiveness.
Communication and Transparency	Recognises communication, but neglects the strategic role of transparency.
Decision-Making and Accountability	Lacks operational strategies for accountability beyond basic compliance.
Service Orientation	Procedural emphasis overshadows behavioural leadership tied to public value.
Holistic Leadership Competence	Weak emphasis on agility, resilience, and interpersonal leadership behaviour.

(Source: Researcher's construct, 2025)

The proposed Behavioural Leadership Framework addresses these deficiencies by embedding ethics, empathy, agility, and *Ubuntu* principles into leadership behaviour. It aligns with the emphasis placed on integrity, responsiveness, and service excellence in the Professionalisation Framework (National School of Government, 2023). **The Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS in the South African Public Service proposed in this thesis, aims to augment existing policy and competency requirements for the SMS and foster a more inclusive and ethical public service, and strengthening the capacity of public service leadership toward effective and responsive governance in the South African Public Service.**

7.3.3 Empirical Validation of the Framework

The semi-structured interviews with senior NSG leaders yielded rich qualitative data that validated the theoretical assumptions of this study. Grounded theory allowed these themes to emerge organically through inductive reasoning, highlighting the

dynamic interplay between leadership behaviours, institutional contexts, and public expectations.

The Leadership Ecosystem presented in Figure 7. 2 offers a visual representation of this alignment, showing how environmental complexity, personality traits, and strategic behaviours coalesce in effective public leadership. The interrelatedness of leadership behaviours and public service dynamics, policy fluidity, and institutional diversity result in outcomes such as ethical foundations, transformational vision, and a service-oriented approach. The ecosystem reinforces the need for SMS leaders to engage not only with what they do, but with how and why they lead, and in this way grounding their leadership in responsiveness, public value, and contextually sensitive practice. Figure 7. 2 presents the broader constellation of leadership behaviour, contextual influences, individual attributes, and leadership outcomes required for effective service delivery and ethical governance in the South African Public Service context.

The empirical findings confirmed the significance of adaptability, ethical foundations, visionary thinking, and service orientation, as proposed in the conceptual framework (Section 6.7.1).

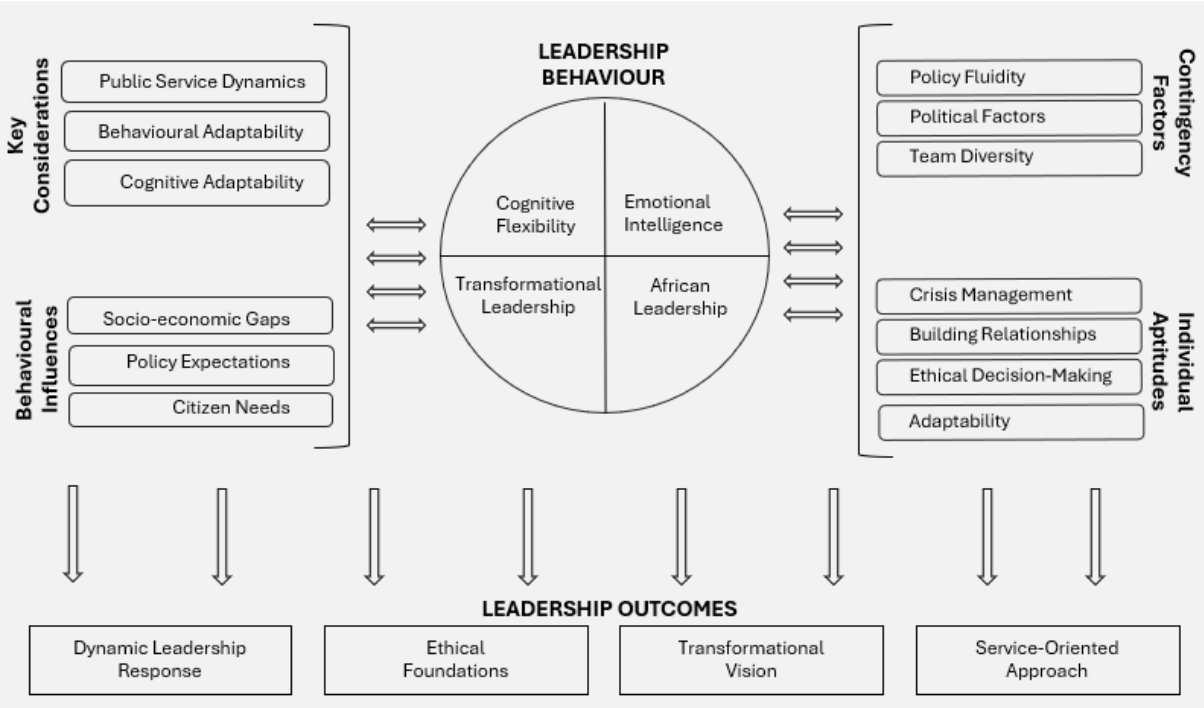

Figure 7. 2 Leadership Ecosystem
(**Source:** Researcher's construct, 2025).

The leadership ecosystem (Figure 7. 2) offers a comprehensive overview of the unique environment and leadership challenges, as well as expected behavioural responses required for SMS leaders in the South African Public Service to meet challenges effectively. This ecosystem is grounded in the theoretical constructs (Figure 6.1), augmented by empirical findings, and provides a structured approach to understanding how the environment, leadership behaviours and cognitive responses collectively contribute to SMS leadership effectiveness within the South African Public Service.

The ecosystem in Figure 7.2, connects key consideration, behavioural influences, contingency factors, and individual aptitudes that play a role in leadership outcomes and within which SMS leaders must navigate to perform effectively in complex, politically dynamic, and socio-economically diverse environments.

Building on the theoretical findings, the empirical analysis reinforced the integrative nature of SMS leadership by demonstrating how competencies, behaviours, and leadership styles must align with the contextual realities and complexities of the South African Public Service for effective leadership. The insights from the empirical analysis of interview data further informed the development of the behavioural leadership framework for the SMS, ensuring that the final behavioural leadership framework reflects adaptive, contextually relevant, and practical leadership behaviours required to meet the evolving demands of both institutional performance and public service delivery in the South African Public Service.

7.4 SYNTHESIS OF THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL FOUNDATIONS

The Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS offers a behavioural perspective that enhances existing policy and strengthens the DPSA Competency Framework for SMS. By integrating Dynamic Leadership, Ethical Foundations, Transformational Vision, And A Service-Oriented Approach**,** the Behavioural Leadership Framework provides SMS leaders with practical behavioural indicators**.** These indicators describe leaders who are not only public policy-driven but who are also aligned with the nuanced, ethical, and adaptive demands of public service. This integration supports more effective leadership development**,** ultimately improving

public service delivery (Bass & Riggio, 2006:9; Chetty & Price, 2024:6; Jarbandhan, 2019:130; Mahlati, 2024:3; NPC, 2011:412; Shahid, 2024:3806-3822).

The Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS bridges theory and practice by addressing both individual and collective dimensions of leadership, providing a structured approach to developing leadership within the SMS. The Behavioural Leadership Framework emphasises that leaders require more than technical skills but must exhibit behavioural and emotional competencies essential for effective leadership in the South African Public Service.

The McAdams and Pals framework offers critical theoretical reinforcement for the behavioural dimensions identified in the empirical phase (2006:204-217). Their life-span model integrates dispositional traits, characteristic adaptations, and narrative identity (Mc Adams & Pals, 2006:204-217), which align closely with the observed traits of SMS leaders in this study. While the Mc Adams and Pals Framework offered rich theoretical insights, critiques by Epstein (2007:59-60) highlighted its limited operational applicability in organisational contexts. This critique substantiates the need for a context-specific, practice-oriented framework tailored to South Africa's Public Service. The behavioural leadership framework proposed in this study seeks to bridge this gap by integrating validated constructs into a model that is both theoretically sound and pragmatically implementable.

7.5 A BEHAVIOURAL LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK FOR SMS

Building on theoretical insights and empirical findings, this study presents a behavioural leadership framework for SMS leaders, extending beyond accepted leadership theory, and addressing the gaps in the DPSA Competency Framework.

7.5.1 Developing a contextually relevant framework

The Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS offers practical behavioural tools and places equal emphasis on adaptability, service orientation, and ethical leadership, the proposed framework provides a holistic model that aligns with the realities of public service in South Africa. The proposed framework ensures that SMS leaders can adapt dynamically to changing demands, embrace culturally grounded practices, and empower teams while maintaining alignment with public service

values and regulatory frameworks. Ultimately, the Framework promotes leadership development that is adaptive, ethical, and strategically aligned, equipping SMS leaders to foster transformational change and deliver citizen-centred services effectively within a challenging public service landscape.

The Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS (Figure 7.3) integrates four core dimensions (Dynamic Leadership Response, Ethical Foundations, Transformational Vision and Service Orientation), that align theory with practice, contextualising leadership for the unique socio-political and operational landscape of the South African Public Service (Bass & Riggio, 2006:4, 9; Chetty & Price, 2024:6; Haricharan, 2022:132; Jarbandhan, 2019:130; Jonck, 2024:78; Mahlati, 2024:3; Munawar *et al.,* 2024:12; Nöthel *et al.,* 2023:1-16; RSA, 2011:412; RSA, 2023:22; Shahid, 2024: 3806-3822).

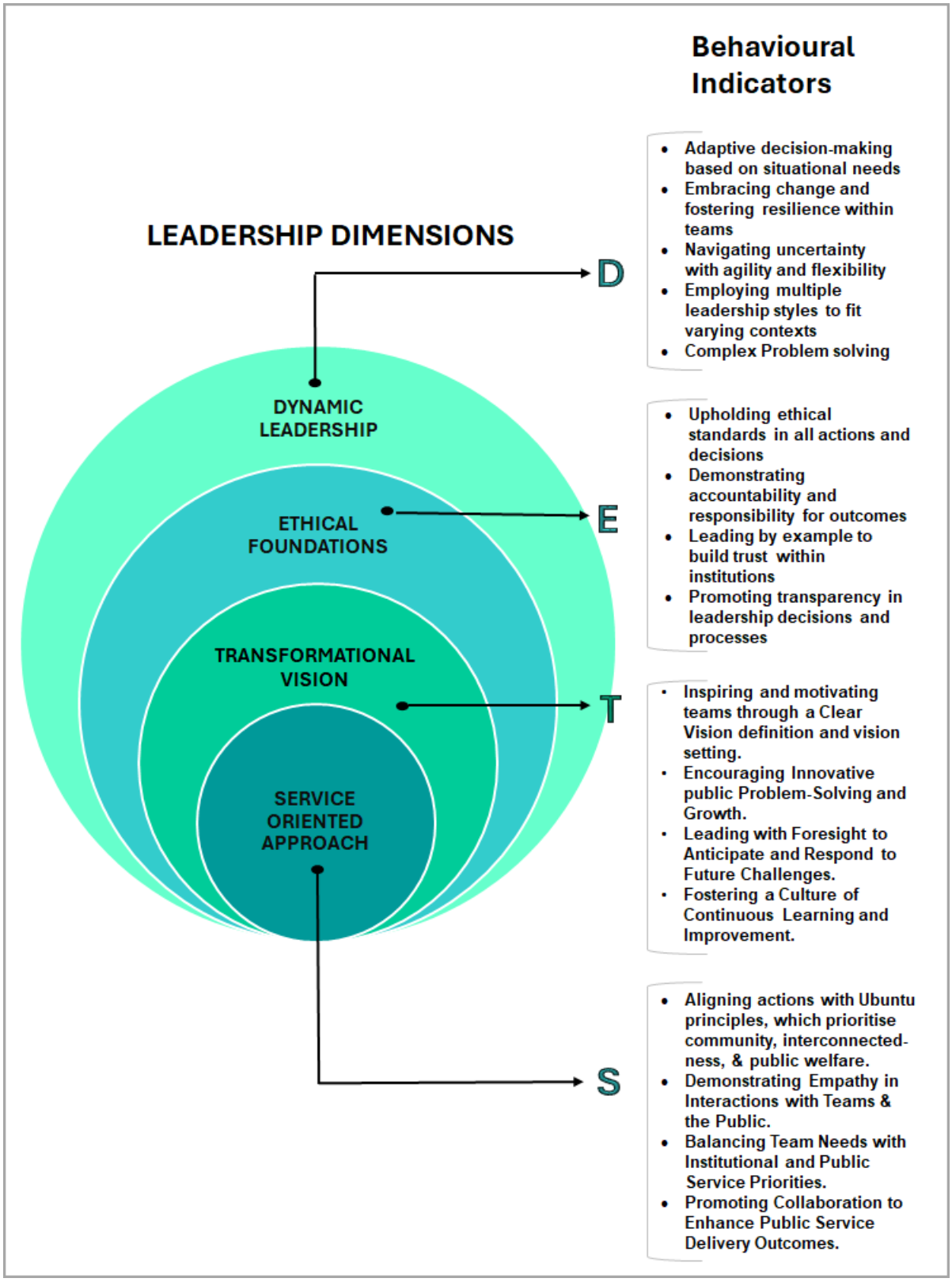

Figure 7.3 A Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS in the Public Service
(**Source:** Researcher's construct, 2025).

The leadership dimensions in the proposed framework (Figure 7.3) reflect the complexity and fluidity of public service leadership in South Africa, offering a framework that integrates both practical realities and theoretical principles to guide the development of competent, adaptable, and values-driven leaders in the SMS.

The four dimensions not only complement existing leadership models but also introduce new knowledge, contributing to the evolving field of public service leadership.

7.5.1.1 Dimension 1 – Dynamic Leadership Response: A Fluid, Adaptive Leadership Strategy

This Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS, drawing on situational leadership theory (Bass & Riggio, 2006:4) and behavioural adaptability in public service leadership (Jonck, 2024:78; Nöthel *et al*., 2023:1-16), introduces Dynamic Leadership Response, a concept that extends situational leadership theory by recognising the need for fluid, real-time adaptation across multiple leadership styles and approaches. Leaders are expected to pivot between multiple approaches and methods, depending on the context, timing, and demands of the environment

In the Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS, Dynamic Leadership refers to a leadership approach that is constantly evolving, active, and responsive. It describes leadership that can adapt and respond effectively to changing conditions or emerging developments. It emphasises energy, progress, and evolution, focusing on movement and flexibility rather than stagnation, ensuring that leaders can pivot seamlessly to meet the demands of shifting contexts within the Public Service.

While Transformational leadership emphasises visionary change, the Dynamic Leadership response presented in this study surpasses the standard or accepted leadership actions by embedding real-time adaptability, enabling leaders to respond fluidly to evolving public service challenges.

Dynamic leadership transcends a single leadership style, reflecting the ability to shift approaches based on the needs of the situation. In the South African Public Service, where SMS leaders face unpredictable political-, social-, and operational challenges,

dynamic leadership ensures adaptability. Leaders are required to pivot between leadership strategies as circumstances demand.

Dynamic leadership is not rigid, but a flexible response to the ever-evolving demands of the South African Public Service. SMS leadership cannot be confined to a single approach; instead, it requires leaders to operate in a continuous state of focussed flux, pivoting seamlessly between leadership approaches. SMS leaders are expected to possess a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of leadership, including the theoretical foundations, practical applications, and contextual implications of what it means to lead effectively within the Public Service. SMS leaders must be able to adapt flexibly to situational demands by shifting between leadership approaches. This versatility ensures resilient and responsive leadership, enabling leaders to navigate the politically- and operationally complex environment of the Public Service effectively.

Table 7.2 explains each behavioural indicator relevant to the Dynamic Leadership Response dimension:

Table 7.2 Behavioural Indicators Dimension 1: Dynamic Leadership Response

Behavioural Indicator	Description	Practical Application	Value Contribution
Adaptive public decision-making based on situational needs.	Adaptive public decision-making requires leaders to assess the specific context in which decisions are made, weighing multiple variables such as political, social, and operational factors. SMS leaders must be able to quickly determine the most appropriate course of action, even with limited information, balancing short-term needs with long-term outcomes.	SMS Leaders should shift from collaborative consultation in stable situations to directive leadership during crises and pivot to various points between these two extremes continuously.	This skill ensures that SMS leaders are responsive and effective in navigating the complexities of public service delivery, and ensuring strategic alignment with institutional goals.

Behavioural Indicator	Description	Practical Application	Value Contribution
	Adaptive public decision-making involves situational awareness, emotional intelligence, and the ability to pivot based on changing dynamics.		
Embracing change and fostering resilience within teams.	Embracing change involves actively seeking opportunities for improvement, encouraging innovation, and guiding teams through transformation processes. This behavioural indicator reflects the ability of SMS leaders to create a positive environment during transitions, promoting mental and emotional resilience in their teams. Leaders must support employees in managing change fatigue, empowering them to adapt while staying focused on public service objectives.	SMS Leaders should implement a new public policy directive by supporting the team in adjusting their routines while promoting innovative ways to enhance public service delivery.	Building resilience ensures that public service teams remain productive and engaged, even amid political or operational changes.
Navigating uncertainty with agility and flexibility.	Public service environments are inherently unpredictable, requiring leaders to swiftly adapt to unexpected challenges. SMS leaders must cultivate agility, the ability to switch strategies or	When a crisis, such as a public health crisis arises, an SMS Leader should redirect priorities and reallocate resources while maintaining	Agility enables SMS leaders to stay ahead of disruptions, ensuring continuity in public service delivery, even during crises or public policy

Behavioural Indicator	Description	Practical Application	Value Contribution
	approaches when situations shift, and flexibility in managing resources and expectations. This behavioural indicator emphasises staying calm under pressure and maintaining focus on objectives despite ambiguity.	morale within the team.	shifts.
Employing multiple leadership strategies to fit varying contexts.	The dynamic nature of public service requires leaders to employ different leadership strategies and styles depending on the situational demands of the environment. This flexibility ensures that leaders engage with their teams effectively while also meeting institutional goals. Leaders must recognise when to consult and collaborate and when to take decisive action.	SMS Leaders should use a participatory style during planning phases to gather input from team members and switch to a directive approach during implementation to ensure deadlines are met.	This ability ensures that leadership practices are both inclusive and goal-oriented, promoting team engagement and accountability.
Solving Complex Problems.	Complex problem-solving is a critical competency that enables SMS leaders to analyse multifaceted challenges and devise effective solutions. It requires critical thinking, creativity, and systems thinking to address issues that span across	SMS Leaders should resolve a budget shortfall while ensuring that essential public services are maintained, requiring creative solutions such as multi-party	This skill ensures that SMS leaders can proactively manage challenges, align solutions with institutional goals, and maintain public trust through effective problem resolution.

Behavioural Indicator	Description	Practical Application	Value Contribution
	multiple domains, such as economic policy, public service delivery, and social equity. Leaders must be able to anticipate potential obstacles and develop innovative strategies to overcome them.	partnerships or innovative cost-saving measures.	

(**Source:** Researcher's construct, 2025).

Drawing on situational leadership theory (Bass & Riggio, 2006:4) and behavioural adaptability in public service leadership (Jonck, 2024:78; Nöthel *et al.,* 2023:1-16), each behavioural indicator reflects a critical aspect of a dynamic leadership response, providing SMS leaders with the tools needed to navigate a complex and evolving public service environment. Together, these indicators foster adaptable, innovative, and effective leadership, equipping leaders to manage change, solve complex problems, and respond to diverse challenges with agility.

A Dynamic Leadership Response ensures that SMS members can handle the complexities of the Public Service environment. With ever-changing political landscapes and socio-economic challenges, their ability to shift strategies fosters institutional resilience and responsiveness to public service delivery expectations, adapted from situational leadership theory (Bass & Riggio, 2006:4) and behavioural adaptability in Public sService leadership (Jonck, 2024:78; Nöthel *et al.,* 2023:1-16)

The dynamic response model reflects the political- and operational complexity of public service in South Africa, ensuring that leaders remain versatile, responsive, and resilient.

The Dynamic Leadership Response dimension augments existing theory, these elements were informed by behavioural adaptability (Jonck, 2024:78), dynamic leadership theory (Nöthel *et al.,* 2023:1-16), and foundational leadership models

(Bass & Riggio, 2006:4), and the DPSA SMS Competency Framework that presents leadership in static terms, failing to account for the dynamic nature of the Public Service sector. This behavioural leadership framework presents leadership as context-driven, where leaders are required to balance collaborative and decisive styles to meet changing demands.

While dynamic leadership ensures that leaders are adaptable in real-time and responsive to complex challenges, this agility must be guided by a strong ethical foundation. Without ethical principles, dynamic responses risk becoming inconsistent or misaligned with public trust and constitutional values.

7.5.1.2 Dimension 2 – Ethical Foundations: Operationalising Values-Driven Leadership

In the Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS, ethics represents a deeply rooted commitment to integrity, accountability, and fairness, guiding leadership actions and decisions beyond mere compliance with rules. It embodies a leader's moral responsibility to align personal values with institutional- and constitutional principles, and fostering trust and transparency within teams and communities. Ethics in this context emphasises the importance of respect, empathy, and social equity, ensuring that leadership practices serve the public good while addressing complex socio-political challenges with honesty and accountability.

Building on African leadership theory's emphasis on community and values (Metz, 2020:46; Pillay, *et al.,* 2013:82, 98), the ethical foundations in this framework incorporate structured accountability and practical behavioural indicators, aligning relational ethics with operational efficiency.

Ethical foundations highlight the importance of integrity, accountability, and values-based leadership. SMS leaders are expected to lead with transparency and respect, upholding both personal- and professional ethics in their interactions with colleagues, teams, and the public.

This dimension proposes that ethical leadership within the SMS extends beyond basic ethics, encompassing deep-rooted value systems grounded in integrity, accountability, and alignment with constitutional values. Respect for subordinates,

peers, and citizens, together with personal ethics, emerged as non-negotiable components of effective leadership. These foundational principles ensure that SMS leaders act with transparency, fairness, and moral responsibility, fostering trust and reinforcing their commitment to the public good. Specific behavioural indicators are explained in Table 7.3:

Table 7.3 Behavioural Indicators Dimension 2: Ethical Foundations

Behavioural Indicator	**Description**	**Practical Application**	**Value Contribution**
Upholding Ethical Standards in all actions and decisions.	This indicator focuses on consistently acting in accordance with **institutional-, legal-, and constitutional values**, ensuring all decisions and actions align with **integrity, fairness, and justice**. It emphasises ethics not as compliance but as **deep-rooted principles** guiding leadership.	SMS Leaders should ensure public decision-making processes remain free from **bias or unethical influences**. SMS Leaders should promote **equity and fairness** in the allocation of public resources. SMS Leaders should ensure that staff management practices are fair, transparent, and merit based.	Upholding ethical standards fosters **public trust** in government institutions. This ensures that public service leaders serve as role models, creating **transparent, honest environments** that encourage ethical behaviour across all spheres of governance.
Demonstrating accountability and responsibility for outcomes.	Accountability involves **owning actions and decisions**, ensuring that both positive and negative outcomes are addressed.	SMS Leaders should publicly acknowledge **errors** and outline solutions for future improvement.	Accountable leadership strengthens **institutional credibility** and

Behavioural Indicator	Description	Practical Application	Value Contribution
	Leaders must show **commitment to delivering on promises** and taking corrective actions when necessary, reinforcing a culture of **responsibility**.	SMS Leaders should develop clear performance metrics to **track leadership effectiveness** and public service outcomes.	promotes **team confidence**, ensuring that outcomes align with both public expectations and internal strategic goals.
Leading by example to build trust within institutions.	This indicator emphasises the importance of **modelling the desired behaviours and values**, showing subordinates what is expected through personal conduct. By embodying the principles of *Ubuntu* and ***Batho Pele*** (People First), leaders foster a sense of **community and trust**.	SMS Leaders should actively participate in collaborative efforts and show **consistency between words and actions**. SMS Leaders should uphold **ethical and performance standards**, even when no one is watching.	By leading through example, SMS leaders cultivate **trust, loyalty, and cohesion** within their teams. This motivates employees to **uphold standards of excellence** and fosters **greater engagement** at all levels of the institution.
Promoting transparency in leadership decisions and processes.	Transparency involves **openly communicating the rationale** behind decisions, ensuring stakeholders, whether internal to the team, the institution, leadership or the public, are aware of **how leadership processes operate**. This builds **trust and reduces corruption risks** by	SMS Leaders should incorporate stakeholders in strategic discussions from the outset, ensuring that decisions are co-owned and reflect diverse inputs. SMS Leaders should	This advanced approach to transparency in leadership decisions and processes ensures that SMS leaders align decisions with public expectations and institutional goals,

Behavioural Indicator	Description	Practical Application	Value Contribution
	holding leadership accountable.	proactively communicate potential risks, challenges, and uncertainties during the public decision-making process, fostering trust and collaborative problem-solving. SMS Leaders should establish clear feedback loops to inform stakeholders of the status of leadership actions, ensuring timely communication on progress or setbacks.	building trust through openness and encouraging accountability at all levels. It supports collaborative governance, enhancing public trust by making the public decision-making process visible, participatory, and reflective of shared values.

(Source: Researcher's construct, 2025).

In a governance context like the South African Public Service where public trust is crucial, ethical leadership ensures alignment with constitutional values and promotes a culture of accountability. The SMS leader with strong ethical foundations inspire trust among employees and citizens alike, fostering public confidence in public service delivery.

Incorporating behavioural indicators into the Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS ensured that public service leaders are equipped to navigate complex environments ethically and transparently, thereby fostering trust, resilience, and service excellence throughout the South African Public Service.

In this Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS, ethical leadership is operationalised by integrating personal values such as integrity, accountability, and respect with constitutional values to guide Public Service behaviour. The framework emphasises that ethical leadership is not just about compliance but requires leaders to consistently demonstrate their values through their actions. Public servants are called to serve with integrity and uphold the principles of good governance, creating a better life for the citizens of the country. Important to note is that the SMS leader's personal values must then never be in conflict with those of the South African Public Service. As is enshrined in the Constitution the SMS leader's values and actions must always be to "Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person" (Republic of South Africa, 1996:Preamble). When personal and institutional values are aligned, leaders are better equipped to foster a culture of ethical decision-making, professionalism, and public trust.

While the DPSA framework references ethics, it lacks practical guidelines for ethical public decision-making in complex scenarios. This study fills that gap by presenting concrete strategies for aligning individual- and institutional values.

The concept of ethical leadership in the South African Public Service goes beyond abstract theory, focusing on the behaviours and principles that foster trust, accountability, and social equity.

Ethical foundations anchor leadership actions in values such as integrity and accountability, creating a framework of trust within which leaders can inspire transformational change. Transformational vision (Section 6. 4. 1. 3) builds on these principles by driving innovation and motivating teams toward long-term goals, ensuring that change is both sustainable and value driven.

7.5.1.3 Dimension 3 – Transformational Vision: Innovating Beyond Traditional Models of Leadership

The dimension of Transformational Vision in this Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS refers to the intentional process of change and innovation that enhances both institutional performance and public service outcomes. Transformation in this context is not limited to operational improvements but involves systemic shifts in practices, mindsets, and leadership approaches to address current and future socio-

political challenges. In this sense the term transformation includes and emphasises continuous growth and adaptation, ensuring that public institutions remain relevant and resilient in a dynamic environment.

Vision, in alignment with transformational goals, refers to the leader's ability to articulate a compelling future state that inspires and motivates teams towards achieving long-term strategic objectives. It goes beyond setting goals by aligning personal and institutional efforts with the broader mission of public welfare and national development. Vision within the SMS leadership framework integrates innovation, foresight, and adaptability, guiding leaders to proactively shape the future rather than merely responding to change.

Together, transformation and vision reflect the proactive leadership mindset required to lead continuous improvement and innovation in the Public Service. Transformation ensures the institution evolves and grows, while vision ensures that this growth is aligned with strategic goals and public value creation, embodying principles such as *Ubuntu* and *Batho Pele* in public service delivery. This integrated approach equips SMS leaders to motivate teams, embrace innovation, and drive institutional excellence while maintaining focus on citizen-centred outcomes.

More than simply embodying transformational leadership, SMS leaders are expected to inspire their teams toward innovation, growth, and institutional and socio-economic transformation. Inspiring others is a valuable trait in a complex and ever evolving RSA Public Service. The SMS leader’s role involves leading through change by fostering a culture of creative public problem-solving and adaptability. This includes embracing and responding to technological advances, such as those brought by the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the Public Service workplace and others, to ensure the effectiveness and relevance of public service for now and in the future.

Table 7.4 presents the detailed description of behavioural indicators in this dimension.

Table 7.4 Behavioural Indicators Dimension 3: Transformational Vision - extending the foundations of transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006:9), foresight capabilities (Shahid, 2024: 3806-3822), and state development goals (Republic of South Africa, 2011:412)

Behavioural Indicator	Description	Practical Application	Value Contribution
Inspiring and motivating teams through a Clear Vision definition and vision setting.	This indicator highlights the leader's ability to articulate a compelling and actionable vision that connects day-to-day efforts with long-term institutional goals. A clear vision provides a sense of purpose and alignment; ensuring teams remain engaged and motivated. Effective vision-setting involves not just communicating the desired future state but also inspiring commitment by connecting individual contributions to broader public value creation.	SMS Leaders should align institutional goals with personal and team aspirations, creating a shared purpose. SMS Leaders should ensure that the vision is embedded in daily operations, ensuring that each task connects with the larger mission. SMS Leaders should give regular feedback and hold feedback sessions to ensure the vision remains visible and relevant throughout projects.	By inspiring and motivating through vision, leaders foster engagement, resilience, and alignment. This ensures the team remains focused and goal-driven despite external pressures, such as political instability or resource constraints, contributing to effective public service delivery.
Encouraging Innovative public Problem-Solving and Growth.	This indicator emphasises the importance of fostering creativity and a proactive approach to addressing challenges. SMS leaders must create an environment where experimentation and non-traditional solutions are encouraged, even in	SMS Leaders should empower teams by providing opportunities for experimentation and calculated risk-taking. SMS Leaders should encourage teams are encouraged to challenge outdated practices and explore	Promoting innovative problem-solving enables leaders to future-proof institutions by developing adaptive and agile responses. This ensures public services remain relevant and effective

Behavioural Indicator	Description	Practical Application	Value Contribution
	resource-limited or politically complex situations. Innovation is not just about new ideas but about creating value through smarter, more efficient public service processes.	alternative ways to improve public service delivery. SMS Leaders should reward innovative thinking and celebrate lessons learned, even when experiments don't succeed as planned.	despite emerging challenges or technological shifts, such as those introduced by the Fourth and Fifth Industrial Revolutions.
Leading with Foresight to Anticipate and Respond to Future Challenges.	Foresight requires leaders to anticipate emerging trends, risks, and opportunities, ensuring that institutions can respond proactively rather than reactively. It involves scanning political, social, and technological environments and integrating long-term planning into leadership decisions. Foresight-driven leadership enables public service institutions to stay ahead of disruptions and maintain relevance.	SMS Leaders should develop scenarios and contingency plans to address potential future challenges. SMS Leaders should leverage data analytics, stakeholder insights, and environmental scanning tools to make informed strategic decisions. Policies and processes are designed to remain adaptable to shifting socio-economic or political realities.	Leading with foresight ensures that SMS leaders navigate complex environments strategically, positioning public institutions for sustainable growth and continuous improvement. It also helps build public trust, as leaders are seen to be proactive in meeting citizen needs and adapting to emerging challenges.
Fostering a Culture of Continuous Learning and Improvement.	Continuous learning involves cultivating a mindset where teams and leaders are committed to growth, development, and adaptation. This indicator reflects the need for	SMS Leaders should establish systems for feedback and knowledge-sharing across teams and departments. SMS Leaders should	A culture of continuous learning ensures that public service teams are agile and resilient, capable of adapting to evolving public

Behavioural Indicator	Description	Practical Application	Value Contribution
	leaders to embrace change as an opportunity for personal and institutional improvement, promoting learning through reflection, feedback, and shared knowledge.	promote participation in professional development programmes, workshops, and learning networks. SMS Leaders should facilitate regular team reflections on successes and challenges are encouraged, embedding a growth mindset.	policy and operational requirements. It strengthens institutional capacity by promoting innovation and preventing stagnation, enabling leaders to respond effectively to changing public needs.

(**Source:** Researcher's construct, 2025).

In the RSA's Public Service, the dimension of Transformational Vision enables SMS leaders to champion long-term, strategic goals, comply with legal requirements, while ensuring their teams remain innovative and proactive. This dimension extends the foundations of transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006:9), foresight capabilities (Shahid, 2024:3806-3822), and state development goals (Republic of South Africa, 2011:412), as it addresses the need for leadership that drives both individual and institutional growth.

This Transformational Vision dimension extends the foundations of transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006:9), foresight capabilities (Shahid, 2024:3806-3822), and state development goals (Republic of South Africa, 2011:412)**,** emphasising that SMS leaders must not only inspire their teams but also drive institutional innovation and proactively manage change, and advance the realities and requirements for full commitment to technological advancement, and the need for leaders to embrace technology and foster creative public problem-solving.

While the DPSA framework touches on leadership roles, it lacks emphasis on innovation and long-term transformation. The Behavioural Leadership Framework for

the SMS introduces Transformational Vision as a forward-looking leadership mindset that encourages continuous growth and strategic foresight, that ranges beyond the foundations of transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006:9), foresight capabilities (Shahid, 2024:3806-3822), and state development goals (Republic of South Africa, 2011:412). The dimension of Transformational Vision highlights the interplay between adaptability and vision, showing that SMS leaders must shape the future of public institutions by anticipating challenges and cultivating resilience and innovation within their teams. While Transformational Vision focuses on setting strategic, future-oriented goals, the service-oriented approach (Section 6. 4. 1. 4) ensures that these ambitions remain aligned with the immediate needs of citizens and communities. This connection ensures that visionary leadership translates into practical, people-centred public service delivery, promoting both institutional growth and public welfare.

7.5.1.4 Dimension 4 – Service Orientation: Expanding Leadership to People-Centred Public Service: responding to citizen-centred service models and emotional intelligence-based governance (Haricharan, 2022:132; Munawar et al., 2024:12; RSA, 2023:22)

In this behavioural leadership framework for the SMS, public service refers to a purpose-driven commitment to meet the needs and expectations of citizens, teams, and institutions through empathetic, accountable, and value-aligned actions. Service in this context transcends mere task execution by prioritising public trust and fostering relationships built on transparency and collaboration. Service in this Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS embodies the principles of *Ubuntu* and *Batho Pele*, emphasising that effective leadership requires empowering others, addressing socio-economic needs, and driving meaningful impact for the common good of society. Aligning with *Batho Pele* Principles (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003b:8), transparency, accountability, and citizen-centric service is promoted; alignment with *Ubuntu*, highlights the importance of community, interconnectedness, and the dignity of all people. This alignment reflects the commitment of the SMS leader to public welfare, ensuring that their leadership extends beyond operational tasks to benefit citizens, teams, and institutions alike.

African leadership theory provides a foundation for relational governance. This Service-Oriented approach goes further by aligning empathy and public welfare with measurable public service delivery outcomes.

SMS leaders are regarded as custodians of public trust and are entrusted with citizen-centred public service delivery and the empowerment of their teams. The leadership approach of the SMS leaders must be deeply rooted in empathy and emotional intelligence, which are essential for navigating the complex socio-political landscape of the Public Service.

Table 7.5 describes behavioural indicators in this dimension:

Table 7.5 Behavioural Indicators Dimension 4: Service Orientation – responding to citizen-centred service models and emotional intelligence-based governance (Haricharan, 2022:132; Munawar *et al.,* 2024:12; RSA, 2023:22)

Behavioural Indicator	**Description**	**Practical Application**	**Value Contribution**
Aligning actions with *Ubuntu* principles, which prioritise community, interconnectedness, and public welfare.	This indicator emphasises grounding leadership actions in the *Ubuntu* philosophy, which reflects the values of community, interconnectedness, and mutual respect. SMS leaders are expected to prioritise people-first approaches in their decisions and ensure their leadership contributes to the well-being of citizens and teams, fostering	SMS Leaders should act with compassion and accountability**,** considering the social impact of decisions on the public and staff. SMS Leaders should incorporate inclusive practices by engaging with communities and stakeholders when making public service delivery decisions. SMS Leaders' actions should be	Integrating *Ubuntu* principles empowers public leaders to foster unity, trust, and collective responsibility, establishing a culture deeply rooted in collaboration, equity, and mutual respect. This human-centred approach reinforces the importance of interconnectedness and shared well-being, inspiring leaders and teams to work cohesively toward common goals. By embracing *Ubuntu,*

Behavioural Indicator	Description	Practical Application	Value Contribution
	collective responsibility.	geared toward building relationships within institutions, civil society, private sector and with citizens, focusing on shared success and well-being.	public service leadership not only strengthens internal cooperation but also builds stronger partnerships with communities and stakeholders, ensuring that public service delivery reflects the needs and values of the people it serves. This alignment promotes inclusive governance and social cohesion, laying the foundation for sustainable public service delivery that is both resilient and responsive in meeting societal challenges.
Demonstrating Empathy in Interactions with Teams and the Public.	Empathy is a critical aspect of African leadership, requiring leaders to build meaningful connections by understanding the needs and emotions of others. Leaders who demonstrate empathy foster inclusive and respectful environments, ensuring that staff and citizens	SMS Leaders should actively engage in two-way communication with all stakeholders validating their concerns and insights. SMS Leaders should adopt an emotionally intelligent approach, balancing compassion with	Empathy fosters trust, morale, and deep engagement, creating an environment where individuals feel valued, respected, and motivated to contribute their best efforts. By empowering teams through understanding and emotional intelligence, empathetic leadership builds resilient, high-performing

Behavioural Indicator	Description	Practical Application	Value Contribution
	feel valued and heard.	practical public decision-making. SMS Leaders should adjust strategies based on feedback, demonstrating sensitivity to the socio-economic realities faced by their teams and the public.	work cultures. This approach not only strengthens internal collaboration but also enhances public confidence in leadership by demonstrating genuine care for the needs of both employees and citizens. Empathy enables SMS leaders to cultivate strong, sustainable relationships across diverse groups, bridging differences and fostering unity. Ultimately, empathetic leadership ensures that public service delivery is compassionate, responsive, and aligned with the well-being of the people it serves, reinforcing the principles of *Ubuntu* and social equity.
Balancing Team Needs with Institutional and Public Service Priorities.	This indicator reflects the importance of balancing individual team needs with broader institutional goals and public service priorities.	SMS Leaders should promote personal and professional development within their teams while ensuring these	Balancing team needs with service priorities cultivates cohesive, high-performing teams that are fully aligned with institutional missions and public service goals.

Behavioural Indicator	Description	Practical Application	Value Contribution
	Ubuntu principles encourage leaders to nurture their teams while maintaining focus on delivering value to citizens. This requires aligning staff development with public service mandates to ensure institutional success.	efforts align with institutional priorities. SMS Leaders should engage teams in public decision-making processes, ensuring alignment between personal, organisational, and public outcomes. SMS Leaders should foster shared accountability by ensuring individual contributions support broader public service delivery goals.	Such alignment fosters a culture of shared responsibility, where each team member understands their role in contributing to both institutional success and citizen-centric outcomes. High-performing teams, driven by a sense of collective accountability, ensure that public service remains responsive, adaptable, and efficient, even in the face of evolving challenges and complex demands. This synergy between individual, team, and institutional priorities strengthens trust, morale, and engagement, driving sustained excellence in public service delivery.
Promoting Collaboration to Enhance Public Service Delivery Outcomes.	Collaboration in the context of *Ubuntu* involves working together toward collective success, fostering partnerships that strengthen public service outcomes. Leaders must build	SMS Leaders should facilitate collaborative problem-solving across teams, promoting the sharing of ideas and resources. SMS Leaders	Collaboration ensures that public service institutions operate efficiently and effectively, addressing societal needs through synergistic efforts. It also fosters trust and social cohesion, aligning with

Behavioural Indicator	Description	Practical Application	Value Contribution
	strong networks within and beyond their institutions, recognising that cooperation and shared knowledge are essential to solving complex public challenges.	should build external partnerships with other government entities, private organisations, and civil society to co-create sustainable solutions. SMS Leaders should foster inclusive networks to exchange knowledge and best practices, ensuring continuous public service delivery improvement.	*Ubuntu*'s core principles of interconnectedness and shared well-being.

(**Source:** Researcher's construct, 2025).

The Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS redefines public service delivery as a behavioural dimension, aligned with citizen-centred service models and emotional intelligence-based governance (Haricharan, 2022:132; Munawar *et al.,* 2024:12; RSA, 2023:22) and embedding citizen-centred leadership that reflects empathy, emotional intelligence, and team empowerment. Unlike task-oriented frameworks, Service Orientation integrates *Ubuntu* principles, emphasising community, interconnectedness, and collective well-being for public accountability.

The refined behavioural indicators in dimension 4 reflect the *Ubuntu* philosophy, aligning leadership actions with community-centred values, empathy, and collaboration. The behavioural indicators offer a comprehensive framework **f**or SMS leaders, ensuring that public service delivery **is** not only effective but also rooted in human-centred leadership. The dimension Service Orientation responds to and

augments the limited focus on relational leadership within the current SMS Competency Framework by expanding public service delivery into a holistic, people-first approach. The focus shifts from procedural compliance to behavioural impact, with leaders acting as bridges between government and citizens, ensuring that their actions promote public welfare and empower teams.

7.5.2 Synthesis: A Behavioural Leadership Framework Rooted in Theory, Context and Practice

This Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS synthesises theoretical concepts from the literature review with practical insights derived from empirical findings, ensuring a comprehensive approach that aligns with the unique demands of public service leadership in South Africa.

The framework offers a behavioural perspective that not only complements existing public policy but also strengthens the DPSA Competency Framework for the SMS. By incorporating key elements such as dynamic leadership, ethical foundations, transformational vision, and a service-oriented approach, it provides SMS leaders with practical behavioural tools. These tools ensure that leadership extends beyond being policy-driven, aligning instead with the ethical, adaptive, and nuanced realities of the South African public service.

Both the individual and collective dimensions of leadership are addressed and in this way this framework for SMS leadership behaviour effectively bridges theory and practice. The framework offers a structured approach for leadership development within the SMS, highlighting that technical competencies alone are insufficient. Instead, it highlights the critical importance of behavioural and emotional competencies, which underpin an agile leadership response, ethical decision-making, transformational vision, and a service-oriented mindset.

The Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS integrates competencies, behaviours, and leadership approaches to develop leaders who are adaptive, ethical, and service-oriented, fostering effective governance and responsive public service delivery. The framework enables leaders to navigate the socio-political complexities inherent in the South African Public Service, fostering both institutional resilience and public trust. It ensures that SMS leaders are equipped with the necessary tools to

inspire teams, promote ethical governance, and deliver public services aligned with citizen needs. By balancing individual performance with collective accountability, the framework supports continuous learning and leadership development, ultimately contributing to more sustainable public service delivery.

In essence, this Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS in the South African Public Service offers a holistic, contextually relevant behavioural model for SMS leadership, ensuring that leadership practices are not only adaptive and strategic but also grounded in ethical foundations. This integration of theory, context, and practice positions the behavioural leadership framework as a catalyst for leadership excellence, enabling the public service to meet both current challenges and future demands effectively.

By anchoring the framework in the psychological and socio-cultural principles similar to those articulated by McAdams and Pals (2006), this study ensures theoretical congruence with modern understandings of behavioural leadership. The Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS offers deeper insight into how personal history and contextual learning shape leadership in complex institutional environments such as the South African Public Service. This synthesis reinforces the need for leadership development approaches that are holistic, lifelong, and responsive to both internal (cognitive and emotional) and external (institutional and social) dynamics.

7.5.3. Alignment of the proposed Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS with the Professionalisation Framework

The dimensions of the proposed Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS align closely with the goals and pillars of the *Professionalisation Framework* (Republic of South Africa, 2023:2). This alignment is evident in the emphasis on dynamic leadership, ethical foundations, transformational vision, and a service-oriented approach, each of which corresponds to key objectives outlined in the National Framework, as reflected upon below.

Dynamic leadership reflects the Professionalisation Framework's focus on fostering a responsive and agile public service. The Professionalisation Framework highlights the necessity of a public service that can adapt to changing circumstances, incorporate innovation, and effectively respond to complex challenges (Republic of

South Africa, 2023:14). In this context, dynamic leadership is characterised by cognitive flexibility, adaptability, and the ability to navigate uncertainty. Leaders who demonstrate these qualities are better positioned to drive change and promote resilience within the Public Service.

The principle of **ethical foundations** strongly resonates with the National Framework's emphasis on ethics and integrity as fundamental to professionalisation and professionalism. Ethical conduct is positioned as a cornerstone of public service, with public servants expected to act as stewards of the values enshrined in the Constitution (Republic of South Africa, 2023:11). The proposed behavioural leadership framework for the SMS reinforces the significance of integrity, accountability, and ethical decision-making in leadership, arguing that these attributes are essential for building public trust and ensuring effective governance.

The dimension **of Transformational vision** aligns with the Professionalisation Framework's objective of establishing a capable and developmental state. The Professionalisation Framework seeks to create a public service that not only attracts highly skilled individuals but also fosters a sense of common purpose and commitment to developmental goals (National School of Government, 2023:8). Transformational leadership, in this regard, involves inspiring and motivating others to achieve long-term objectives while fostering a culture of continuous innovation. Leaders who exhibit a transformational vision can mobilise resources and people towards meaningful change, ensuring that public institutions remain relevant and effective.

A service-oriented approach is central to both the proposed behavioural leadership framework for the SMS, and the Professionalisation Framework places emphasis on the *Batho Pele* principles, which prioritise citizen-centred service delivery. The Professionalisation Framework (Republic of South Africa, 2023:32) underscores the importance of serving the public with empathy, in alignment with the Constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996), the *Batho Pele* principles, and the Public Service Charter (Republic of South Africa, 2013). This proposed behavioural leadership framework responds to the expectations set in the National Professionalisation Framework, and advocates for leadership that places citizens at the centre of public

service, promotes public trust, and ensures that service delivery remains responsive to societal needs.

The dimensions of the proposed behavioural leadership framework holistically reinforce the objectives and expected outcomes outlined in the Professionalisation Framework. By fostering leadership that is dynamic, ethical, visionary, and service-oriented, the proposed behavioural leadership framework for the SMS contributes to the development of a more professional, capable, and responsive South African Public Service.

7.5.4 Implications for Leadership and public Policy Development

The Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS advances the field of public administration by integrating theory with practice. It introduces a contextually relevant model tailored to the South African Public Service, reflecting the realities of citizen-centred public service delivery, technological change, and ethical governance. This framework addresses critical gaps in the DPSA SMS Competency frameworks, equipping SMS leaders with the tools needed to navigate the complexities of the Public Service.

By emphasising Service Orientation, Transformational Vision, Ethical Foundations, and Dynamic Leadership Response, the Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS ensures that South African Public Service leaders can effectively respond to changing demands, build public trust, and promote innovation. The study contributes new knowledge by reframing leadership as a behavioural practice, offering a model that supports both institutional goals and citizen's needs. These elements were informed by behavioural adaptability (Jonck, 2024:78), dynamic leadership theory (Nöthel *et al.,* 2023:1-16), and foundational leadership models (Bass & Riggio, 2006:4), and inspired by values-based leadership models rooted in African leadership traditions (Chetty & Price, 2024:6; Mahlati, 2024:3) and empirical public ethics research (Jarbandhan, 2019:130). Additionally, extending the foundations of transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006:9), foresight capabilities (Shahid, 2024:3806-3822), state development goals (Republic of South Africa, 2011:412), citizen-centred service models and emotional intelligence-based governance (Haricharan, 2022:132; Munawar *et al.,* 2024:12; RSA, 2023:22)

The proposed Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS provides a blueprint for leadership development in the South African Public Service and serves as a foundation for public policy recommendations to strengthen public service performance, ensuring that SMS leaders remain responsive, accountable, and aligned with the goals of public value creation.

7.5.5 Practical implications for SMS leadership

The Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS offers a perspective that enhances existing public policy and strengthens the DPSA Competency Framework for the SMS. The framework provides SMS leaders with practical behavioural indicators to ensure that leadership is not only policy-driven but also aligned with the nuanced, ethical, and adaptive demands of public service. This integration supports more effective leadership development, ultimately improving public service delivery.

7. 6 Conclusion

The proposed Behavioural Leadership Framework for the Senior Management Service (SMS) in the South African Public Service offers a contextually grounded, theoretically robust, and practically implementable model of leadership that responds to the complex realities of governance and service delivery in the 21st century. Through the integration of theoretical constructs, empirical findings, and policy imperatives, the framework addresses key behavioural gaps in the existing DPSA SMS Competency Framework and aligns leadership development with the values enshrined in the Constitution, the National Development Plan (Republic of South Africa, 2011), and the Professionalisation Framework (Republic of South Africa, 2023).

This chapter has detailed the four core dimensions of the framework, namely: Dynamic Leadership Response, Ethical Foundations, Transformational Vision, and Service Orientation. Each dimension is supported by behavioural indicators that are both actionable and reflective of the lived experiences of senior public service leaders. Collectively, these dimensions redefine SMS leadership as a behavioural, ethical, and citizen-centred practice. The elements were informed by behavioural adaptability (Jonck, 2024:78), dynamic leadership theory (Nöthel *et al.,* 2023:1-16), and foundational leadership models (Bass & Riggio, 2006:4), and were inspired by

values-based approaches rooted in African leadership traditions (Chetty & Price, 2024:6; Mahlati, 2024:3), alongside empirical public ethics research (Jarbandhan, 2019:130). In this way, the foundations of transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006:9), foresight capabilities (Shahid, 2024:3806-3822), state development goals (Republic of South Africa, 2011:412), citizen-centred service models, and emotional intelligence-based governance (Haricharan, 2022:132; Munawar *et al.,* 2024:12; RSA, 2023:22) were extended.

The concluding chapter (Chapter 8) reflects on the overall contributions of this study, synthesising key findings across chapters, highlighting theoretical and practical implications, and offering recommendations for future leadership development and policy reform. Further discussion on institutional application and implementation pathways for this framework, particularly within the Ministry of Public Service and Administration, and wider public service are discussed in Sections 8.4.2 and 8. 5. These insights provide practical routes for integrating behavioural leadership dimensions into professional development policies and training systems.

The Chapter concludes and revisits the research aims and questions, offering a summative evaluation of how the proposed Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS advances the academic discourse and supports a capable, ethical, and developmental public service.

CHAPTER 8
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This final chapter concludes the study by drawing together the key findings, theoretical insights, and practical implications that have emerged through the research process. It provides a synthesis of the study's main contributions and presents conclusions based on the empirical and conceptual exploration of behavioural leadership within the SMS of the South African Public Service. The chapter identifies critical gaps in existing leadership theory and policy frameworks, particularly in relation to behavioural competencies. It further offers recommendations for policy and practice, institutional application, and leadership development, with specific reference to the National School of Government (NSG) and the broader Public Service reform agenda. Finally, the chapter outlines suggestions for further research and concludes with reflective remarks on the significance of embedding behavioural leadership in the pursuit of a capable, ethical, and citizen-centred public service.

Figure 8.1 presents a recap and visual consolidation of the contextual considerations, leadership behaviours, and contingency factors and how these converged to shape individual leadership aptitudes in the South African Public Service, as recorded in the proposed Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS (Figure 7.3).

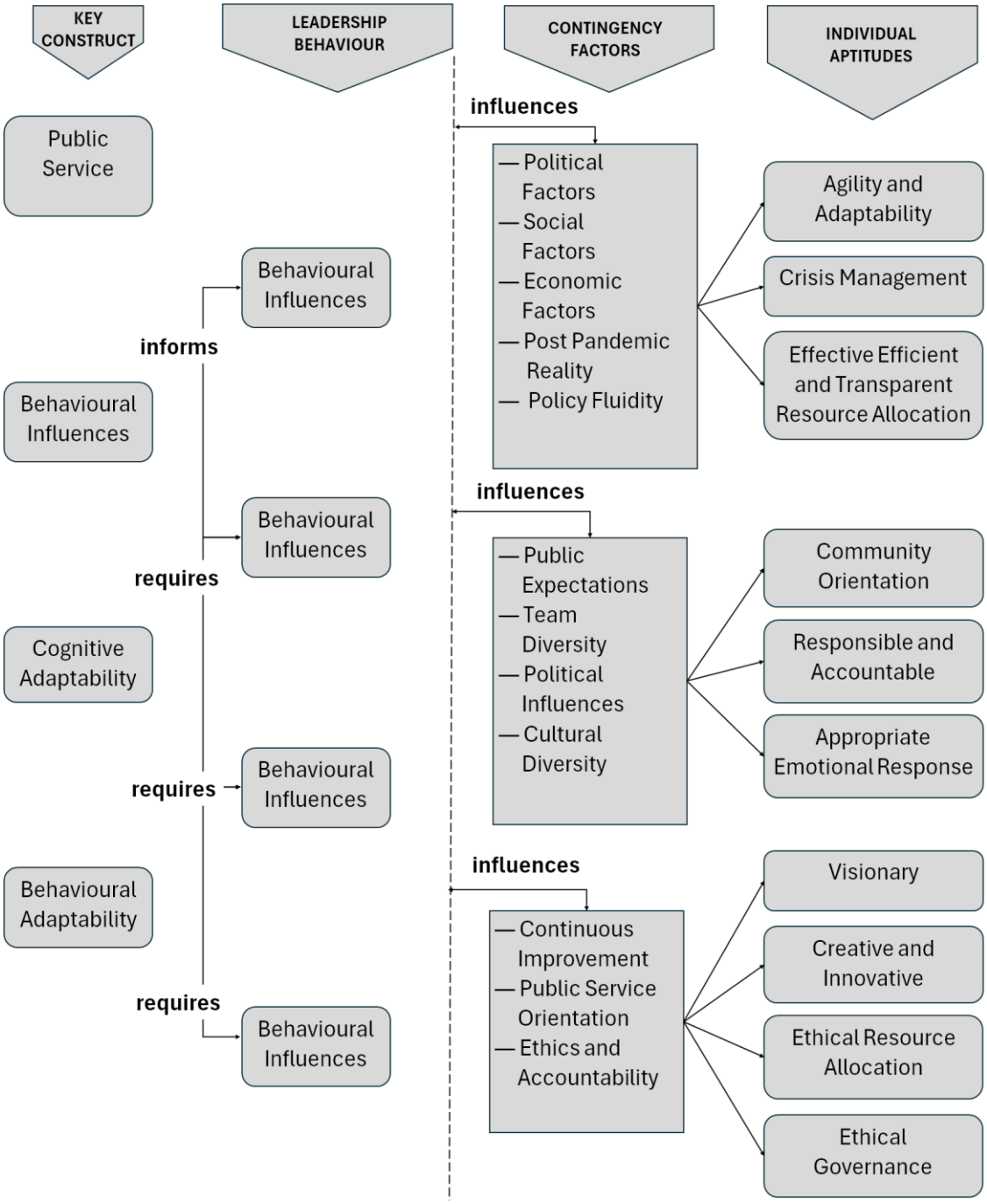

Figure 8.1 Contextualised Conceptual Framework for Behavioural Leadership in the SMS in the RS Public Service.
(**Source:** Researcher's construct, 2025).

Figure 8.1 illustrates how key contextual considerations, behavioural constructs, and contingent environmental factors inform individual leadership aptitudes. It complements the Behavioural Leadership Framework (Figure 7.3) by tracing its theoretical and contextual origins.

8.2 CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE STUDY

This study set out to propose a Behavioural Leadership Framework for the Senior Management Service in the South African Public Service. Grounded in behavioural public administration theory and qualitative empirical research, the study concluded that effective leadership within the SMS necessitates more than technical competencies. Effective leadership requires a behaviourally grounded approach. The proposed framework consists of four interrelated dimensions: Dynamic Leadership Response, Ethical Foundations, Transformational Vision, and Service Orientation. These elements collectively reflect the contextual demands of the South African Public Service, while aligning with global shifts in leadership theory and practice. The conclusions drawn from the empirical data and theoretical investigation indicate a clear need to embed these behavioural attributes into the current leadership development and competency systems to ensure a capable and ethical developmental state.

8.3 GAPS IN EXISTING THEORY AND POLICY

A key contribution of this research is the identification of gaps in existing leadership theories and public service policy frameworks. Firstly, prevailing models such as the SMS Competency Framework (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003 & 2008), while robust in technical domains, underrepresent behavioural dimensions such as emotional intelligence, ethical grounding, and transformational intent. Secondly, African leadership principles, although resonant within the public service context, remain insufficiently integrated into dominant frameworks. Thirdly, the Professionalisation Framework (National School of Government, 2023) acknowledges the need for ethical and capable leadership but lacks detailed behavioural indicators for implementation. These theoretical and policy gaps suggest an urgent need to revise leadership frameworks to include behavioural competencies tailored to the unique context of South Africa's public service. A detailed analysis is presented in the paragraphs to follow.

8.3.1 Addressing gaps in Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership theory has been praised for its focus on visionary change, motivation, and empowering followers (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Critiques

suggest that it may lack adaptability, as it emphasises long-term vision over real-time responsiveness (Northouse, 2016:178-179). In fast-changing environments, leaders often need to shift their focus between immediate operational issues and long-term strategic goals, a flexibility that transformational leadership does not inherently support (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003:261-295). While Transformational Leadership offers a visionary and empowering approach, it lacks the adaptability required for the dynamic and politically complex environment of the Public Service.

The proposed Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS addresses this limitation by incorporating the concept of Dynamic Leadership Response, which surpasses the static constructs of transformational leadership. While transformational leadership suggests that leaders inspire followers toward long-term change, the behavioural leadership framework adds real-time adaptability, allowing SMS leaders to pivot between leadership styles as demands shift. This ensures that leaders maintain a dual focus on immediate public service delivery and visionary transformation, striking a necessary balance for public service effectiveness.

8.3.2 Addressing gaps in African Leadership Theory

African leadership theory emphasises collective governance, relational values, and community-oriented leadership, particularly through *Ubuntu* principles. Critiques indicate that the theory lacks specific tools for structured performance management and accountability frameworks that are both critical for leaders who are operating in complex, politically dynamic environments (Nkomo, 2011:365-386). African leadership theory, particularly as exemplified by the *Ubuntu* philosophy, places strong emphasis on interpersonal relationships and collective solidarity, often prioritising these over task execution or operational efficiency (Mbigi & Maree, 1995; April & Ephraim, 2005). While such relational leadership is deeply rooted in African cultural values and contributes positively to team cohesion and trust, it may present challenges in contexts such as the public service, where leadership is also expected to meet performance targets and deliver services efficiently. Swartz and Davies (1997:293) asserted that *Ubuntu* does not automatically guarantee change, suggesting that an overemphasis on relational aspects without integrating performance metrics can hinder effective service delivery. Therefore, a balanced

approach that integrates the values of *Ubuntu* with accountability and functional competencies is essential to ensure that African leadership remains relevant and impactful in contemporary governance contexts.

The proposed behavioural leadership framework integrates *Ubuntu* principles while addressing performance management gaps by emphasising service-oriented leadership that aligns relational values with operational goals. Leaders are encouraged to demonstrate empathy while also maintaining accountability for measurable outcomes. This approach bridges the relational aspects of African leadership with structured public service delivery and transparent performance management. Additionally, by embedding ethical foundations into leadership practices, the framework ensures that values-based leadership remains actionable in real-world governance settings.

8.3.3 Expanding key cognitive constructs: Critical Thinking, Analytical Thinking, and Cognitive Flexibility

Traditional leadership theories do not always account for the full cognitive and behavioural demands placed on public service leaders. The proposed Behavioural Leadership Framework for SMS addresses these gaps by incorporating and extending constructs such as critical thinking, analytical thinking, and cognitive flexibility.

Critical thinking traditionally involves analysing, evaluating, and interpreting information to make sound, unbiased judgments. The framework places additional emphasis on consideration and empathy in public leadership decision-making. SMS leaders are expected to assess complex scenarios independently, question assumptions, and adopt transparent and ethical problem-solving processes, which go beyond standard critical thinking.

Analytical thinking involves systematically breaking down complex challenges to identify relationships and root causes. The behavioural leadership framework enhances this construct by promoting data-informed public decision-making and public solution-oriented leadership. Leaders must align public policy impacts and operational outcomes with citizen needs, ensuring that solutions reflect both institutional goals and public welfare.

Cognitive flexibility represents a key innovation in the framework, surpassing situational leadership models by embedding real-time adaptability as a behavioural expectation. In the South African Public Service, leaders are required to pivot between multiple leadership styles and adjust strategies in response to dynamic socio-political conditions. This flexibility ensures that leaders can effectively balance short-term crises with long-term strategic objectives while keeping citizen needs at the centre of public decision-making.

Additionally, cognitive flexibility enables leaders to manage competing interests and navigate complex systems by making decisions that positively impact multiple stakeholders. This adaptability ensures that the framework provides a fluid, responsive model suited to the unique demands of the South African Public Service, where political and operational realities are constantly evolving.

In a dynamic public service context, SMS leaders are expected to engage in continuous reflection and learning, regularly revisiting strategies based on feedback, data, and environmental changes. This reinforces the framework's value as a dynamic, adaptive model that transcends traditional leadership theories, equipping SMS leaders to meet evolving challenges with agility, ethics, and cultural alignment.

This behavioural leadership framework for the SMS transcends traditional leadership models, providing innovative solutions to address the demands of a dynamic RSA Public Service. It offers SMS leaders the tools to lead with agility, ethics, and cultural alignment, fostering public trust and sustainable service excellence for the benefit of both institutions and citizens.

8.3.4 Comparative analysis of the Behavioural Leadership Framework and existing models

The behavioural leadership framework developed in this study addresses a number of gaps identified in existing leadership models. These include the DPSA Competency Framework, Transformational Leadership, and African Leadership theories, which, while influential, exhibit limitations in meeting the dynamic and complex demands of public service leadership in the RSA. Table 8.1 provides an analysis and comparison in summary format.

Table 8. 1 Bridging gaps: Addressing critical limitations in existing theories and frameworks

Aspect	Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS	Transformational Leadership	African Leadership/ *Ubuntu*	Situational Leadership	DPSA Competency Framework
Adaptability	Real-time dynamic leadership response to South African needs and realities	Focus on long-term change; less adaptable in immediate situations	Moderate adaptability; focused on relational aspects	Highly situational but lacks cultural and ethical focus	Lacks guidance for adaptive behaviour
Ethical and cultural alignment	Embedded *Ubuntu* principles, focused on empathy and public trust as is deeply rooted in the South African context	No explicit cultural dimension	Deeply rooted in communal values, but limited operational focus	Neutral; not culturally aligned	References ethics but lacks behavioural guidelines that implicitly requires a cultural alignment
Service orientation	Emphasises proactive, citizen-centred public service responsive to the needs of the people, the team and the institution	Indirect focus on public service through empowerment	Community-focused, but operational outcomes unclear	Service depends on leader's style	Procedural focus on public service delivery, and an institutional focus but not leadership-driven
Performance management	Aligns relational leadership with operational	Indirect performance focus to promote	Lacks structured accountability	Moderate, depends on situation	Focus on technical skills, and behaviours

Aspect	Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS	Transformational Leadership	African Leadership/ *Ubuntu*	Situational Leadership	DPSA Competency Framework
integration	goals; promotes accountability and ethics in leadership and governance	future change	mecha-nisms		linked to specific functional competences – weak on leadership behaviours and adaptability
Leader-ship style versatility	Leaders pivot between multiple styles dynamically to respond to the complex nature and need of the Public Service ecosystem	Inspirational but rigid in its empha-sis on vision without sufficient considera-tion of the public service system	Focuses on collective governance and the need to care	Adaptable but context-limited	No emphasis on shifting leadership styles aligned with specific situations and needs resulting in singularity in leadership approach.
Decision-making approach	Balances short-term and long-term priorities; emphasises ethical transparency and responsiveness to changing State, Institutions, team and	Long-term focus; risks overlooking immediate issues and required responses	Prioritises group consensus, less focused on individual accounta-bility and consequen-ces	Immediate decision-making based on context	Lacks specific protocols for real-time leadership decisions – highly compliance driven

Aspect	Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS	Transformational Leadership	African Leadership/ *Ubuntu*	Situational Leadership	DPSA Competency Framework
	citizen needs				
Cognitive constructs	Incorporates critical thinking, analytical thinking, and cognitive flexibility	Limited to visionary and strategic thinking	Focused on interpersonal relationships	Cognitive adaptability based on context	Cognitive aspects underrepresented
Emotional intelligence	Core to leadership behaviour; fosters empathy-based decision-making	Indirect emphasis through follower motivation	Embedded in *Ubuntu* but lacks structured application	Situational, not core to the model	Focused on technical-over interpersonal skills
Leader-Follower Relationship	Blends ethical relationships with operational accountability and the leadership ecosystem for a people-centred public service leader	Inspires followers toward a vision	Emphasises collective governance and community,	Focused on immediate situational dynamics	Limited to hierarchical, role-based interactions
Governance Relevance	Provides actionable tools for managing governance challenges	Indirect focus on governance through leadership influence	Emphasises relational governance and *Ubuntu* principles	Context-dependent governance actions	Focus on technical aspects, limited governance perspective to

Aspect	Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS	Transforma-tional Leadership	African Leadership/ *Ubuntu*	Situational Leadership	DPSA Competency Framework
					financial management
Institutio-nal Alignment	Balances behavioural and technical competencies specifically required for the Public Service context in a Post Covid society.	Focus on visionary alignment with long-term goals	Relational alignment with community values	Alignment shifts based on situation with no specific link to the institution	Focus on technical competencies, lacking behavioural focus and highly compliance driven.

(**Source:** Researcher's construct, 2025).

The Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS offers a balanced integration of technical and behavioural competencies. Unlike the DPSA Competency Framework (DPSA, 2003), which predominantly emphasises technical expertise such as financial management, project execution, and governance compliance, the proposed framework incorporates essential interpersonal and ethical capabilities. These include emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998), adaptability (Diamond, 2013), and service orientation (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015), which are increasingly critical for managing the complex, people-centred challenges faced by leaders in the South African Public Service.

This framework also addresses theoretical limitations associated with Transformational Leadership. While Bass and Avolio (1994:3) highlight the importance of articulating a long-term vision and motivating change, critics such as Northouse (2021:195) note that this theory may lack mechanisms for real-time responsiveness. The Dynamic Leadership Response dimension within the Behavioural Leadership Framework enables SMS leaders to navigate shifting priorities by integrating multiple leadership approaches. This versatility allows

leaders to maintain strategic focus while simultaneously responding to immediate operational demands, thereby enhancing continuity in service delivery and agility in addressing evolving socio-political contexts (Van Wart, 2014; Heifetz et al., 2009).

Beyond technical proficiency, effective public service leadership requires the capacity to inspire, motivate, and build trust within teams. This framework foregrounds soft skills such as emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998), conflict resolution (Cherniss et al., 2010), interpersonal communication (Northouse, 2021), and adaptability (Diamond, 2013); skills essential for navigating institutional complexity, fostering collaboration, and upholding ethical governance. In this way, SMS leaders are equipped to manage their leadership portfolios in a manner that is both professional and values-driven, supporting responsive and citizen-centred service delivery (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015:58).

The framework also bridges a significant gap between African and Western leadership traditions. African leadership theory, informed by *Ubuntu*, contributes an ethical foundation rooted in empathy, dignity, and communal accountability (Nkomo, 2011:365-386; Mbigi & Maree, 1995). However, such relational models often lack structured mechanisms for performance management and results-based accountability (April & Ephraim, 2005:10). Conversely, Western models typically prioritise efficiency and technical competence (Van Wart, 2014), but often neglect socio-cultural context. The proposed framework integrates the ethical relationality of *Ubuntu* with the operational precision of performance-oriented leadership, creating a more contextually responsive and ethically grounded model for public service leadership in South Africa.

Cognitive capabilities further enhance the framework's uniqueness. By embedding constructs such as critical thinking (Halpern, 2013), analytical reasoning (Brookfield, 2012), and cognitive flexibility (Diamond, 2013:138-141), it promotes data-informed, ethical, and empathetic decision-making. Leaders are encouraged to approach complex problems with an integrative mindset, balancing logic and empathy, strategy and responsiveness. Cognitive flexibility in particular equips SMS leaders to navigate competing priorities, adapt to dynamic environments, and align short-term execution with long-term public value.

Ultimately, the Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS supplements the technical competencies already expected of SMS members by foregrounding the behavioural dimensions of leadership. It provides a holistic response to the leadership challenges identified in both the literature and empirical data. By aligning leadership practices with *Ubuntu* principles (Mbigi & Maree, 1995; Nkomo, 2011) and integrating behavioural indicators derived from the empirical analysis in Chapter 6, the framework empowers public service leaders to advance service excellence, foster public trust, and build institutional resilience within the unique context of the South African Public Service.

Taken together, these distinctions underscore how the Behavioural Leadership Framework proposed in this study not only bridges existing theoretical and practical gaps, but also contributes a uniquely integrated and contextually grounded model tailored to the leadership realities of the South African Public Service.

8.3.5 Original contributions of the Study

The proposed Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS in the South African Public Service offers a series of original contributions that advance both theory and practice. Conceptually, it introduces the notion of dynamic leadership response, which builds on but surpasses traditional situational leadership theory. While situational approaches suggest matching predefined leadership styles to contexts, dynamic leadership emphasises real-time adaptation to complex, evolving public service environments. This allows leaders to respond flexibly to political pressure, stakeholder needs, and service delivery demands.

Another theoretical contribution lies in the integration of *Ubuntu* principles into leadership discourse. Unlike Western-centric models that emphasise individual performance, the framework embeds values such as empathy, interconnectedness, and collective welfare, aligning public leadership with African philosophies of governance. In doing so, it addresses cultural relevance and enhances relational ethics in public institutions.

The framework also bridges the persistent gap between theory and practice by aligning behavioural constructs such as emotional intelligence, cognitive flexibility, and analytical thinking with practical leadership development tools. These constructs

are linked to behavioural indicators that guide leaders in navigating operational challenges while remaining attuned to institutional goals and public expectations.

In addition, the framework expands the concept of service-oriented leadership. It emphasises proactive, anticipatory behaviours that enable leaders to engage communities, promote collaboration, and drive sustainable public value. This contribution aligns leadership practice with citizen-centred governance and strengthens accountability.

The study further augments existing leadership theories. While Transformational Leadership highlights vision and change (Bass & Avolio, 1994), it often lacks real-time adaptability. The proposed framework responds to this by integrating operational strategies for decision-making under pressure. Similarly, while African leadership theory is rooted in relational values, it frequently lacks structured accountability mechanisms. This framework harmonises both traditions by combining relational ethics with measurable performance.

The study also makes a distinct contribution to the field of Behavioural Public Administration by applying behavioural science principles to leadership within complex bureaucracies. Whereas much Behavioural Public Administration literature focuses on individual-level biases and decision heuristics, this framework offers a structured, leadership-oriented behavioural model that integrates emotional intelligence, ethics, and cognition.

Lastly, the introduction of Ethical Foundations and Transformational Vision as dimensions of the framework enhances the moral and strategic compass of leadership. Ethics are operationalised through behavioural indicators, ensuring that moral integrity is embedded in daily leadership practice. Transformational Vision, on the other hand, ensures leaders retain long-term foresight while staying adaptive to emergent realities. Altogether, these dimensions present a culturally grounded, adaptable, and service-oriented approach to leadership that directly responds to the unique socio-political realities of the South African Public Service.

8.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER APPLICATION

The successful implementation of the Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS proposed in this study requires deliberate and targeted action across policy, institutional, and developmental domains. The recommendations discussed here aim to guide the practical application of the framework within the South African Public Service, with particular emphasis on supporting the professionalisation agenda and enhancing leadership capacity at the senior management level.

In the context of the SMS in the South African Public Service, it is crucial for leaders to demonstrate a distinct set of behavioural attributes. These attributes extend beyond conventional roles like policy formulation and implementation; SMS leaders act as pivotal figures within the democratic governance framework, continuously reassessing and reinvigorating public values. The role of the SMS leader encompasses more than administrative duties, positioning them as agents of change responsible for adapting to and influencing the evolving socio-political landscape.

Human behaviour is inherently dynamic, shaped by temporal, circumstantial, and cultural factors. By drawing from a range of models and theories, this framework postulates that integrating various psychological constructs, is essential for understanding the complexities of leadership in the 21st century. It is also essential to maintain a balance between these constructs, using them collaboratively without over-relying on any single model, as noted by Wood (2007:57-58), to form a credible and robust leadership approach.

The individual nature of SMS members cannot be overlooked. Despite their official positions, they remain unique individuals shaped by diverse life experiences, perspectives, and preferences. These personal attributes profoundly impact the success of their teams and the broader institution. SMS leaders' behaviours, decisions, and reactions to the dynamic environment of the Public Service in RSA play a crucial role in shaping outcomes. As public service leaders, they must guide their teams to success, with leadership styles and personal preferences playing a pivotal role in achieving these goals.

The Behavioural Leadership Framework is highly relevant to the unique challenges and demands of the South African Public Service. It provides SMS leaders with a

structured approach to leadership that is grounded in ethical governance, dynamic adaptability, and a commitment to service excellence.

The Behavioural Leadership Framework proposed in this study augments the SMS Competency Framework of the DPSA by addressing key gaps, particularly in areas such as dynamic leadership, ethical foundations, and service orientation (Table 8.2).

Table 8. 2 Addressing the gaps in the SMS Competency Framework

Aspect	Gap in SMS Competency Framework	How the Behavioural Leadership Framework Complements
Ethics and Integrity	Mentions ethics but lacks actionable guidelines for ethical decision-making in complex scenarios.	Provides practical strategies for applying ethical leadership, promoting moral responsibility, and ensuring accountability for ethical lapses.
Emotional Intelligence	Underrepresented in the framework, with focus on technical- rather than interpersonal skills.	Integrates emotional intelligence, helping leaders develop empathy, self-awareness, and interpersonal skills to build trust and resolve conflicts.
Adaptability and Innovation	Limited emphasis on adaptability and innovation, focusing more on routine management competencies.	Encourages adaptive leadership, flexibility, and innovative problem-solving to respond to evolving public service challenges.
Communication and Transparency	Recognises communication but does not stress transparency in leadership decision-making.	Emphasises transparent communication, fostering trust and accountability by promoting openness in leadership decision-making processes.
Decision-Making and Accountability	Mentions accountability but lacks detailed guidance on operationalising it in leadership roles.	Reinforces accountability by promoting transparent, ethical decision-making and providing clear protocols for managing failures or lapses.
Service Orientation	Focuses on procedural aspects of public service delivery, rather than behavioural leadership tied to public value.	Embeds service orientation into leadership behaviours, encouraging leaders to prioritise public welfare and align actions with citizen needs.

Aspect	Gap in SMS Competency Framework	How the Behavioural Leadership Framework Complements
Holistic Leadership Competence	Emphasises technical skills over behavioural leadership competencies like agility and emotional intelligence.	Integrates both technical and behavioural competencies, developing leaders who are not only skilled but also adaptive, emotionally intelligent, and ethically grounded.

(**Source:** Researcher's construct, 2025).

The framework offers a behavioural perspective that enhances existing public policy and strengthens the DPSA Competency Framework for SMS. The proposed framework provides SMS leaders with practical behavioural tools. These tools ensure that leadership is not only policy-driven but also aligned with the nuanced, ethical, and adaptive demands of public service in the RSA. This integration supports more effective leadership development, ultimately improving public service delivery.

Additionally, the new framework aligns with the character expectations set out in the Professionalisation Framework. It emphasises the crucial leadership qualities of integrity, accountability, and a strong commitment to public service, ensuring that public service leaders uphold the ethical standards and values essential for effective governance.

The Behavioural Leadership Framework proposed for the SMS in the Public Service of the Republic of South Africa has a practical application, and can be used for the following:

(a) As a pre-employment tool for assessing leadership candidates' suitability for SMS roles.

(b) As a developmental tool for current SMS members, helping them align their behaviours with the leadership requirements in a post Covid, 21st Century Public Service.

The South African Public Service faces increasing complexity due to factors such as the changing political-, economic-, and social conditions, as well as heightened public expectations for public service delivery. This comprehensive Behavioural

Leadership Framework provides SMS leaders with a clear model to navigate these challenges by promoting adaptive leadership, ethical governance, a shared vision and a service-oriented approach. This framework helps ensure that SMS leaders can maintain high standards of integrity while improving the quality of public services delivered to South African citizens, which is crucial in such a dynamic and complex environment.

The following specific recommendations in relation to policy, and leadership development are proposed.

8.4.1 Policy Recommendations

The following policy considerations are proposed:

- Revise the SMS Competency Framework of 2008 to incorporate behavioural dimensions proposed in the Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS.
- Institutionalise behavioural indicators within performance assessment tools and development plans for SMS members.

8.4.2 Institutional Recommendations (NSG)

In relation to education training and professional development interventions of the NSG, the following proposals are made:

- Integrate the proposed Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS into NSG curriculum design, focusing on case-based and reflective learning.
- In collaboration with the DPSA, develop diagnostic tools to assess behavioural leadership capacities among current and prospective SMS members to inform directed interventions for prospective and employed SMS members. The assessment and diagnostic tools, and subsequent directed learning can be built into the leadership development offerings of the NSG for senior managers, but also for middle managers in preparation for the potential role as senior managers in the future. The Nyukela Programme can also be augmented to include key areas of behavioural leadership capabilities required by senior managers in the South African Public Service.

- The NSG can contribute to the successful implementation of the Professionalisation Framework by integrating the behavioural competencies of this novice framework into leadership training and advocating for the recognition of behavioural leadership in all facets of learning and professional development in the Public Service, continuous assessments of public servants, and create awareness of the importance of behaviour in a capable, ethical Public Service.

8.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

While this study has established a foundational Behavioural Leadership Framework, further research is could expand and test its applicability across the Public Sector. Suggested areas for further research include:

- Quantitative validation of the framework across multiple national and provincial government departments, local government and the rest of the Public Sector.

- Longitudinal studies assessing the impact of behavioural leadership on service delivery outcomes.

- Research into the integration of behavioural indicators within digital performance management systems in the Public Service.

The findings and contributions of this study open several further avenues for exploration within the field of Behavioural Public Administration and public service leadership. As the complexities of governance evolve, so must leadership frameworks adapt to address emerging socio-political challenges and technological advances. Future research can build on this study by examining the practical impact of behavioural leadership frameworks on public service delivery, comparing leadership models across diverse public service environments, and exploring the integration of technology within behavioural leadership approaches. These research directions will not only strengthen the conceptual foundations of leadership in the Public Service but also ensure institutional resilience, efficiency, and relevance in an increasingly dynamic landscape.

8.5.1 Validation and development of behavioural competency indicators for the Behavioural Leadership Framework for the SMS

Future research can build on the findings of this study by developing a robust behavioural competency measurement tool for SMS leadership. The focus will be on validating the newly proposed behavioural framework, comprising Dynamic Leadership, Ethical Approach, Transformational Vision, and Service-Oriented Approach, and operationalising these constructs through detailed behavioural indicators. Such a study could among others include behavioural indicator development and refinement, and scale construction for the indicators and testing thereof in an empirical study with quantitative and qualitative aspects.

8.5.2 Exploring the impact of behavioural leadership on public service delivery outcomes

Future research could empirically investigate how the adoption of behavioural leadership frameworks, such as the one proposed in this study, affects key performance indicators in public service delivery. This could include studies on the relationship between adaptive leadership practices, employee engagement, and public service delivery efficiency in diverse public institutions. A longitudinal study could assess whether the integration of behavioural competencies like empathy and ethical public decision-making leads to measurable improvements in public trust and citizen satisfaction.

8.5.3 Investigating the role of technology and digital leadership in behavioural leadership models in the age of AI

As the Fourth and Fifth Industrial Revolutions continue to shape governance, future research could explore how digital leadership and technological innovation intersect with behavioural leadership in public service. This research could examine how SMS leaders integrate digital tools to foster collaboration, improve public service delivery, and enhance citizen engagement. It would also be useful to explore how behavioural competencies, such as cognitive flexibility and emotional intelligence, help leaders manage digital transformation efforts within the public service.

8.6 FINAL REFLECTIONS

This study set out to address the lack of a behaviourally grounded leadership framework for Senior Management Service members within the South African Public Service, a gap identified in Chapter 1. The central research problem concerned the insufficient attention given to behavioural, cognitive, and ethical dimensions in existing competency frameworks. Through rigorous conceptual analysis and empirical validation, the study responded directly to this challenge by proposing a Behavioural Leadership Framework that reflects both the complexity of modern public governance and the contextual realities of leadership in South Africa.

By embedding behavioural insight into public service leadership, the proposed framework captures both the aspirations and the operational demands of the South African context. It is guided by principles of ethical governance, citizen-centred service, and the values of *Ubuntu*. In addressing theoretical and practical gaps, the research contributes to the development of a future-ready, responsive, and ethical leadership culture, supporting ongoing efforts toward the professionalisation of the South African Public Service.

The study proposed a comprehensive, adaptive, and ethically anchored behavioural leadership framework for the SMS that is tailored to the complex and dynamic realities of South African governance. The Behavioural Leadership Framework introduced four interrelated dimensions namely Dynamic Leadership Response, Ethical Foundations, Transformational Vision, and Service Orientation that collectively redefine leadership in the public service. Notably, the dimension of Dynamic Leadership Response goes beyond situational leadership by equipping SMS leaders to pivot between leadership styles in real time, enhancing their agility in rapidly changing environments.

The integration of *Ubuntu* principles offered a culturally grounded contribution to African leadership theory, embedding community-oriented values into observable and actionable behaviours. This ensured that public service leaders align their conduct with public trust, social equity, and collective accountability.

Furthermore, the study directly addressed limitations in the DPSA SMS Competency Framework by balancing technical capabilities with behavioural insight. It emphasised underrepresented dimensions such as emotional intelligence, adaptability, and service orientation, and demonstrated how these traits interact with core technical functions like project and financial management.

The framework proposed in this study provides both theoretical depth and practical applicability. It serves as a bridge between abstract leadership constructs and concrete leadership practices. By aligning leadership development with the socio-political and institutional context of the South African Public Service, it contributes tools for real-world leadership improvement.

The study also laid the foundation for a more responsive and accountable South African Public Service. By fostering ethical awareness, cognitive flexibility, and transformational vision, the framework contributes to institutional resilience, strengthens public trust, and enhances the quality of public service delivery.

In advancing leadership theory, this study expanded existing understandings of cognitive flexibility, analytical and critical thinking, particularly in how they are applied in public service decision-making. The framework challenges public service leaders to make ethical, evidence-informed decisions in real time, while balancing short- and long-term institutional priorities.

Ultimately, this study offered a holistic and contextually grounded behavioural leadership framework for SMS leaders. By promoting adaptive, ethical, and service-oriented leadership, it aligned with the values and aspirations of the South African Developmental State, and provided a robust platform for continued research, innovation, and leadership development in the South African public service.

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ANNEXURES

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South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Fax: 018 299-4910
Web: http://www.nwu.ac.za

Senate Committee for Research Ethics
Tel: 016 103 4446
Email: Feziwe.Mseleni@nwu.ac.za

30 November 2022

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the **Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (BaSSREC)** on **30/11/2022**, the Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee hereby **approves** your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Senate Committee for Research Ethics (NWU-SERC) grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Study title: Developing a Behavioural Leadership Framework for Senior Management Service (SMS) in the Public Service.

Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher: Prof L Vermeulen

Student/Research Team: MJ Labuschagne (22513329)

Ethics number:

N	W	U	-	0	1	1	6	7	-	2	2	-	A	7
Institution				Study Number						Year			Status	

Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation

Application Type: Single Study

Commencement date:5/12/2022 **Risk:** Low risk

Expiry date:5/12/2023

Approval of the study is initially provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation.

Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable):

General conditions:

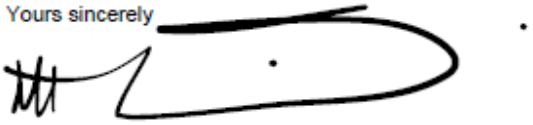
While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:

- *The study leader/supervisor (principal investigator)/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the BaSSREC:*
  - *annually (or as otherwise requested) on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided, and upon completion of the study; and*
  - *without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.*
- *The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the BaSSREC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.*
- *Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for an external audit.*
- *The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.*

- *In the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-SCRE and BaSSREC reserves the right to:*
  - *request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;*
  - *to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process;*
  - *withdraw or postpone approval if:*
    - *any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected;*
    - *it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the BaSSREC or that information has been false or misrepresented;*
    - *submission of the annual (or otherwise stipulated) monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and / or*
    - *new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.*
- *BaSSREC can be contacted for further information or any report templates via BaSSREC-Admin@nwu.ac.za.*

The BaSSREC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the BaSSREC or the NWU-SCRE for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely



Prof E. Idemudia

Chairperson NWU Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Original details: (22351930) C:\Users\22351930\Desktop\ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY.docm
8 November 2018

File reference: 9.1.5.4.2

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Basic and Social Science Research Ethics Committee (BaSSREC)
Faculty of Humanities Ethics Office for Research,
Training and Support
Tel: 018 285 2457
Email: Erhabor.Idemudia@nwu.ac.za

05 April 2024

APPROVAL FOR CONTINUATION OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

Ethics number: NWU-01167-22-A7
Study title: A Behavioural Leadership Framework for Senior Management Service (SMS) in the Public Service.
Study leader/supervisor: Prof. L. Vermeulen
Student: M.J. Labuschagne (22513329)
Application type: Single study
Risk level: Low risk

Dear Researcher

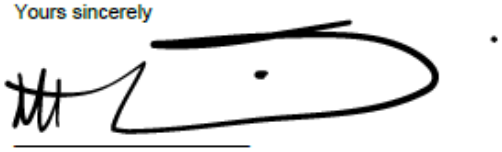
You are kindly informed that this application was reviewed for monitoring at the meeting of the North-West University Basic and Social Science Research Ethics Committee (BaSSREC), Faculty of Humanities, North-West University, held on **03/04/2024**. Following the review of the application, it has been decided that the study is approved for continuation.

Suspension	
Continuation	**X**
Termination	

Approval date: 03/04/2024
Expiry date: 03/04/2025

If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact BaSSREC.

Yours sincerely



Professor Erhabor IdemudiaChairperson: NWU-BaSSREC

ANNEXURE C LETTER OF APPROVAL TO DO RESEARCH

school of government
Department:
National School of Government
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X759, PRETORIA, 0001, ZK Matthews Building, 70 Meintjes Street, Sunnyside, PRETORIA
Tel: +27 12 441 6000, Fax: +27 12 441 6030

Ms Marisa Labuschagne
Marisa.Labuschagne@thensg.gov.za

Dear Ms Labuschagne

REQUEST TO UTILISE THE NATIONAL SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT AS A PARTICIPANT IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Your Letter dated 02 November 2022 refers.

Kindly be informed that National School of Government (NSG) has granted you permission to utilise it as a participant in your research under topic "Developing a Behavioural Leadership Framework for Senior Management Service (SMS) in the Public Service".

Kindly note that upon completion of your research, you are expected to provide the NSG with a copy of the full research report and you also have an obligation to share lessons learnt with the department.

Please communicate with Ms Faith Nyaka Chief Director: Quality Assurance and Accreditation, who will assist you with the required information. Ms Faith Nyaka can be contacted at the following e-mail address: Faith.Nyaka@thensg.gov.za or Tel No.: 012 441 6112.

The NSG would like to wish you all the best with your research.

Yours faithfully,

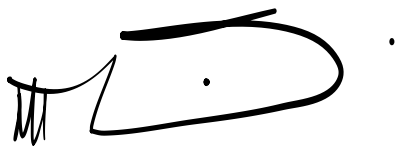
Ms Lakela Kaunda
Deputy Director-General: Administration
Date: 22/11/2022

Cc: Ms Faith Nyaka

Building F13, Room 116
Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (BaSSREC)
21081719@nwu. ac. za

DATE: 2022-11-04

BASSREC AUTHORIZATION



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM

Title of the research project	Developing a Behavioural Framework for SMS in the Public Service
Ethics number	
Principal investigator	Marisa Labsuchagne
Student number	22513329
Address	849 Christian Street, Daspoort, Pretoria
Email address	Marisa. labuschagne@thensg. gov. za
Contact number	0832611544

You are being invited to take part in a research project that forms part of my Thesis in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Public Management and Governance
at the North-West University. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project. Please ask the researcher any questions about any part of this project that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is

about and how you could be involved. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to decline to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part. Prior to publication of the study's results (or the point that publication is in process), you may also withdraw the data you generate.

This study has been approved by the **Basic Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (BaSSREC) of the Faculty of Humanities of the North-West University (NWU)** and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the international Singapore Statement on Research Integrity (2010) and the ethical guidelines of the National Health Research Ethics Council. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or relevant authorities to inspect the research records to make sure that we (the researchers) are conducting research in an ethical manner.

What is this research study all about?

- This study is an investigation of the behavioural profile of SMS in the Public Service and will involve the use of and in-depth literature, theory development as well as semi structured interviews.
- The researcher has been trained to use the methods mentioned in the previous sentence.
- Approximately 5 participants will be included in this study.
- The objectives of this research are:

    a. To present a critical analysis of the concepts and properties that substantiate a scholarly theoretical framework, which gives impetus to a preferred cognitive profile for leadership behaviour amongst SMS members in the Public Service, with specific reference to thinking style preference and personality style?;
    a. To conduct and present an in-depth analysis of the theories and models of leadership, and the application and relevance of these theories and models to the context of senior management in the Public Service; and
    b. To present the statutory and regulatory framework that direct Public Service leadership in the context of South Africa as democratic developmental state?
    c. To present a behavioural leadership framework for Senior Management Service in the Public Service that is validated by its concepts and properties

Why have you been invited to participate?

- You have been invited to participate because you are a specialist in the field of a professional and capable public servant and was intimately involved in the development of the Framework Towards the Professionalisation of the Public Sector approved by Cabinet in 2022.
- There are no inclusion or exclusion criteria relevant to the study.

What will your responsibilities be?

- You will be invited to participate in the noted study by participation in a semi-structured interview.
- You will have 14 days to indicate whether you would be willing to participate.
- You will be requested to sign this Informed Consent Statement before the commencement of the study.

Will you benefit from taking part in this research?

- There is no direct benefits for you as a participant in this study however
- The indirect benefit will probably be that you will have the opportunity to be a contributor to knowledge generation in the field Behavioural Public Administration.

Are there risks involved in your taking part in this research and how will these be managed?

The possible risks in this study, and how these will be managed, are summarised in the table below:

Possible risk	Mitigation strategy
Lack of privacy and comfort during interviews due to undue interference	The interview will take place at your office at your regular place of work, or any other suitable venue determined at the time of making the appointment.
Protection of personal information	Any personal information collected during the course of the study will be safeguarded and protected and will only be used for purposes of this study. All POPIA requirements will be complied with at all times

- However, we do believe that the benefits to you and to science (as noted in the previous section) outweigh the risks we have listed. If you disagree, then please feel free not to participate in this study. We will respect your decision.
- Should we learn, in the course of the research, that someone is harming you, or that you are intending to harm someone, then we must tell someone who can help you/warn the person you are intending to harm.

Who will have access to the data?

- The *handling, storage, security* and *analysis of data* is critical in ethical considerations. I will ensure data in both hard-(printed) and soft copy (electronic) are safely locked away and password-protected, respectively. There are no other members involved in this research and only my Supervisor and I will have access to my raw data where the need arises. At the analysis stage, as will be the case throughout, the use of coding will reinforce participants' non-identification, hence upholding the assurance of confidentiality and anonymity.
- *Anonymity* will be ensured by choosing your own fictitious names/I will assign a fictitious name to you before the interview starts. Only this name will be used in the research process.
- *Confidentiality* will include the use of codes for participants, organisations and locations. It involves not disclosing any information gained from an interviewee deliberately or accidentally in ways that might identify an individual.
- *Privacy* will be ensured by not probing unnecessarily if you do not wish to discuss particular matters.
- I will be responsible for transcribing the data – no other person will have access to the data.
- I will not use a *translator/interpreter* for the purpose of the interviews.
- The data will be *stored safely in electronic form* for a period of five years after which it will be destroyed.

What will happen to the data?

The data from this study will be reported in the following ways:

- Content will be analysed and thematic areas coded.
- Biographical analysis of the participants, including qualifications and job role/responsibilities as it relates to this study.

In all of this reporting, you will not be personally identified. This means that the reporting will not include your name or details that will help others to know that you participated (e. g., your address or the name of your institution etc.).

This is a once-off study, so the data will not be re-used.

Will you be paid/compensated to take part in this study and are there any costs involved?

No you will not be paid/compensated to take part in the study.

There will also be no costs involved for you to participate in the study.

How will you know about the findings?

➢ The general findings of the research will be shared with you by email at your request.

Is there anything else that you should know or do?

- You can contact Marisa Labuschagne at 0832611544 or marisa. labuschagne@thensg.gov.za if you have any further queries or encounter any problems.
- You can contact the chair of the Basic Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Prof Erhabor Idemudia) at 018 389 2899 or Erhabor. Idemudia@nwu. ac. za if you have any concerns or complaints that have not been adequately addressed by the researcher.
- You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own records.

Declaration by participant

By signing below, I _____ agree to take part in a research study entitled: "…".

I declare that:

- I have read and understood this information and consent form and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person obtaining consent, as well as the researcher (if this is a different person), and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I understand that what I contribute (what I report/say/write/draw/produce visually) could be reproduced publicly and/or quoted, but without reference to my personal identity.
- I consent to an audio and/or audio-visual recording of the interview.
- I am aware of the fact that I may request that the researcher does not continue with said recording if I request it.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.

Signed at (*place*) _____ on (*date*) _____ 20 _____

_____ _____

Signature of participant **Signature of witness**

- You may contact me again ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**
- I would like a summary of the findings of this research ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

The best way to reach me is:
Name & Surname: _____
Postal Address: _____
Email: _____
Phone Number: _____
Cell Phone Number: _____
In case the above details change, please contact the following person who knows me well and who does not live with me and who will help you to contact me:

Name & Surname: _____

Phone/ Cell Phone Number /Email: _____

_____

Declaration by researcher

I *Marisa Labuschagne* declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to the participant.
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above.
- I did not use an interpreter.

Signed at (*place*) _____ on (*date*) _____20 _____

_____ _____

Signature of researcher Signature of witness

ANNEXURE E SEMI-STRUCTURES INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Interview Questions: A Behavioural Leadership Framework for SMS in the South African Public Service

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1. When you think about **your role as a member of the SMS** in the South African Public Service, what are your views on **the most important attributes that you require** to be successful in your role?

2. What would you describe as the **ideal working style of the SMS as a leader** in the South African Public Service to ensure projects are completed and objectives are achieved?

3. What are the **main behavioural aptitudes** that you regard as **indispensable** for a South African **Public Service senior manager**?

4. What are your views on the **preferred cognitive profile for SMS members** in the South African Public Service when you think about **leadership style, thinking style preference and personality style**?

5. In your view, **what are the biggest misconceptions that SMS members have about their role and responsibilities** as a leader in the South African Public Service?

JOHN BAKER & ASSOCIATES
PROFESSIONAL ACADEMIC EDITORS & PROOF READERS

31 X 2024

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CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE

Dear Ms. Labuschagne,

I have finalised your draft PhD thesis, which includes; academic proof reading, editing, language use, spelling, grammar, punctuation and in-text source referencing for:

"A Behavioural Leadership Framework for the Senior Management Service in the Public Service"

The reviewed thesis is attached hereto for your further attention. It is in Microsoft Word format and the 'Track Changes' function has been used to aid in any corrections that you may choose to make.

Best wishes with your studies.

JOHN BAKER
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