

Exploring the Concept of Ubuntu and Ubuntu Leadership: Leveraging Artificial Intelligence for ‘Creative’ and Possibly Valuable Support in Scoping Reviews

Renier Steyn^{1,*}, Pumela Msweli²

¹Graduate School for Business Leadership, University of South Africa, Midland, South Africa.
Orcid: 0000-0002-2446-3662

²Graduate School for Business Leadership, University of South Africa, Midrand, South Africa.
Orcid: 0000-0001-5538-2681

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Abstract

Ubuntu, a philosophy originating from sub-Saharan Africa, emphasises human interconnectedness and community building. However, the widespread and careless use of these terms has led to a diluted understanding of its true meaning. This scoping review aims to provide an inclusive conceptualisation of ubuntu and ubuntu leadership from academic literature to foster a shared understanding. The research strategy involved consulting ChatGPT for direct verbatim citations of definitions and characteristics of ubuntu and ubuntu leadership from academic sources. Eight distinct definitions of ubuntu and nine of ubuntu leadership were generated. Additionally, seven typologies of ubuntu characteristics and ten of ubuntu leadership were synthesised. The scoping review allowed for a complex and nuanced definition of both concepts, relying on the vast amount of diverse text data ChatGPT extracted from the Internet. However, despite the elegance of the ChatGPT responses, some inaccuracies and "fabrications" were detected. ChatGPT adeptly generated coherent and contextually appropriate text from diverse sources, proving to be immensely valuable. Benefiting from the advanced language model access to a large number of sources and integrating these, the resulting scoping review presents a comprehensive conceptualisation of ubuntu and ubuntu leadership. Nevertheless, the review is limited in its dependence on ChatGPT, particularly when evaluating the credibility of its verbatim quotations of falsified sources.

*Corresponding author

¹*steynr@unisa.ac.za

²mswelp@unisa.ac.za

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Academic circles have extensively discussed the presence of ubuntu in modern Africa, as evidenced by works from notable scholars such as Assié-Lumumba (2018), Eliastam (2015), Genger (2022), Mukuni and Tlou (2021), Louw (2019), Nweke (2022) and Zondi and Makhoba (2018). The remarkable academic attention accorded to this topic is reflected in the staggering number of scholarly publications on Google Scholar, which include over 275 000 documents that feature ubuntu and 4 220 documents with ubuntu in their titles. Additionally, ubuntu has garnered significant interest in the public domain, as evidenced by over 1.97 billion hits on Google.

1.2 Problem statement

Despite several attempts to establish a definitive understanding of ubuntu (Nolte & Downing, 2019; Louw, 2006; Mnyaka & Motlhabi, 2005), a consensus has not been reached. This has left many questions unanswered and even sparked calls for a reevaluation of the concept (Louw, 2019). In the absence of a clear and widely-accepted definition of ubuntu, the creation of a coherent body of knowledge would be challenging (De Vos et al., 2011; Mouton, 1996).

1.3 Research objective

This study aims to adhere to the guidelines set forth by De Vos et al. (2011) and Mouton (1996) by focusing on the first two foundational blocks of scientific knowledge on ubuntu and ubuntu leadership, which define the concepts and outline their characteristics. While the aim of this study was never to critique the use or value of artificial intelligence (AI) language models, the use of the ChatGPT advanced language model (developed by OpenAI) during this research, directed the study in that direction too.

2. Literature review

As can be seen from the research objective, the outcome of the research is a literature review. For the sake of completeness, a very short review of literature is presented here. The bulk of the literature review will be presented in the findings section of this article.

Ubuntu can be interpreted as both a set of values that is commonly shared among Africans (Asamoah & Yeboah-Assiamah, 2019; Ntibagirirwa, 2018) and a leadership approach that aims to motivate groups of people (Karsten & Illa, 2005; Woermann & Engelbrecht, 2019). This study will focus on both ubuntu as an African philosophy (i.e., a coherent collection of shared values) and as a leadership style (i.e., motivating groups of people). While there are various conceptualisations of Ubuntu (Ewuoso & Hall, 2019; Mwipikeni, 2018), aligning shared values of communities or employees with similar leadership

styles is likely to produce favourable outcomes (Owusu-Sekyere, Hansson & Telezhenko, 2021; Witesman, 2021).

The aforementioned statement aligns, at an intrapersonal level, Festinger's 1957 cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957), which focuses harmony between behaviour and beliefs. At an interpersonal level it aligns with leader-member exchange (LMX) theory (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), which stresses mutual trust, respect, support, and open communication. Such exchange is common among those who share a culture and this is supported by the meta-analytic empirical findings reported by Kristof-Brown et al. (2005), who state that fit or similarity is key to understanding and success. As such, the ubuntu leadership style may prove to be particularly effective within an Ubuntu context (Aliye, 2020; Asamoah & Yeboah-Assiamah, 2019), where leaders and followers share a common culture.

3. Research Methodology

A scoping review was used as methodology to this article. This is discussed first, followed by ethics related to this article.

3.1 Scoping reviews

A scoping literature review strategy was followed. The aim of such reviews is to explore the extent, range and nature of existing research on a particular topic (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Levac et al., 2010) and to provide an overview of the key aspect of the literature (Grant & Booth, 2009). It is not an in-depth analysis of the content of the articles (Levac et al., 2010), but rather is used to identify current issues, such as reporting on concepts, theories, and findings. This was also the aim of this study – to understand the conceptualisation of ubuntu and ubuntu leadership. Scoping reviews, rather than answering research questions, assists in generating research questions and identifying gaps in the literature that can be addressed in future research (Peters et al., 2015). It can also be used to find the most appropriate research methods for future studies (Pham et al., 2014). Overall, a scoping literature review is a valuable tool for exploring and synthesising existing research on a topic (Smith, 2015), which can serve as a useful foundation for future research and policy development (Jones, 2018).

The guidelines depicted in the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) extension for scoping reviews (Smith & Doe, 2020) was broadly adopted in structuring this study. Along these lines, Tricco et al. (2018) suggest that all scoping reviews should include a checklist reporting on 20 areas and these guidelines were also considered when structuring this article and the investigative process.

The process was two-fold: first to find the data and then to analyse the data. The targeted information to be sourced were publications that focused on ubuntu and ubuntu leadership. As there is such an abundance and intimidating amount of information available on the topic on research engines such as Google Scholar and as many of the items found there were not useful, it was decided to use ChatGPT

as an aid. The advanced language model developed was primed with questions on the topic, such as the following:

“Please provide me with different verbatim definitions of ubuntu, per author.”

“List the characteristics of ubuntu, verbatim, if possible, also presented per author.”

As ChatGPT often provides only four or five examples, it was prompted for more responses, with questions such as the following: “Could you provide me with more recent examples?”, “Can you provide an example from articles that focused on quantitative research?”, “Can you focus only on the seminal authors in the field?” and “Can you provide any examples from African scholars?” This was done for ubuntu as a construct by itself and “Ubuntu leadership”. No time limit was set for the publications, but ChatGPT only used data captured before and including 2021. This cut-off date was not seen as a limitation, as the basic concepts were under investigation, and historic sources may provide conceptualisations closer to the core of the concept.

The next step was to analyse the data. The central element of the analysis was to find repeating themes in the data. For this reason, the data (i.e., definitions and typologies) was presented per author so as to compare them, and to find the themes in the data. With lists of definitions and typologies, it was possible to find repetitive ideas, which were interpreted as central themes. These commonalities were used to define the constructs as well as dominant characteristics. This analysis first done separately by each author, and then together, in order to reach some consensus on what is emerging from the given text. These were the findings of this article.

True to the guidelines of Trico et al. (2018), the discussion included a summary of the main findings and the limitations of the study. The implications of the findings for practice, policy and future research will also be addressed.

3.2 Ethics

This research was desktop research and forms part of a larger project regarding conceptualisation. It involved no contact with humans. Approval was provided for it by the University of South Africa’s Graduate School for Business Leadership, with the following number: 2022_SBL_AC_001_SD.

4. Findings

First the findings related to ubuntu and then to ubuntu leadership will be presented. In both cases, the findings are presented in two waves: firstly, looking at definitions of and then at typologies.

4.1 Definitions and elements of ubuntu

4.1.1 Definitions of Ubuntu

Ubuntu was defined in the following ways:

- "Ubuntu is a word from the Bantu languages spoken by the Nguni people of southern Africa. It is often translated as 'I am because we are,' and also as 'humanity towards others,' or 'the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity.'" (Tutu, 1999, p. 31);
- "Ubuntu is about interconnectedness, cooperation, and support. It is about the belief that human beings are interconnected and that we cannot survive without each other." (Mbigi, 2005, p. 23);
- "Ubuntu is essentially a morality-based philosophy that emphasizes the importance of community, family, and sharing, and it is based on the idea that the well-being of an individual is inextricably linked to the well-being of the community." (Mokgoro, 2006, p. 2);
- "Ubuntu emphasizes the importance of social harmony and interconnectedness, as well as the need for individuals to act in the best interests of the community rather than solely in their own self-interest." (Muthien, 2011, p. 388);
- "Ubuntu is a southern African concept that denotes a shared identity and human interconnectedness. It is based on the idea that people are not separate from one another, but rather part of a larger whole." (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 198);
- "Ubuntu is about interconnectedness, harmony, and mutual support. It is a holistic philosophy that emphasizes the importance of social relationships and the interconnectedness of all things." (Langa, 2014, p. 1);
- "Ubuntu is a concept in African philosophy that speaks to the interconnectedness of humanity. It is based on the idea that 'a person is a person through other persons,' meaning that we cannot exist in isolation from others." (The Conversation, 2020); and
- "Ubuntu is a South African philosophy that places emphasis on human connectedness and interdependence. It is about understanding that we are all connected and that our actions have an impact on others." (University of Michigan, n.d.)

From these definitions several common themes can be identified:

1. *Interconnectedness and interdependence*: The definitions consistently emphasise the importance of human interconnectedness and interdependence. Ubuntu is described as a philosophy that recognises that individuals cannot exist in isolation from others and that the well-being of an individual is linked to the well-being of the community.
2. *Community and social harmony*: Ubuntu is presented as a philosophy that places a strong emphasis on community, social harmony, and the importance of acting in the best interests of the community rather than solely in one's self-interest.

3. *Morality and ethics*: Several definitions suggest that ubuntu is a morality-based philosophy that emphasises the importance of sharing, compassion, and empathy and that it is based on a set of ethical principles that guide human behaviour.
4. *Holistic philosophy*: The definitions suggest that ubuntu is a holistic philosophy that takes into account the interconnectedness of all things, including social relationships and the environment.

As a single sentence definition, ubuntu is a southern African philosophy that emphasises the interconnectedness and interdependence of humanity; a holistic approach that values social harmony, community building, sharing, and a morality-based philosophy that prioritises the well-being of the community over individual self-interest; and it emphasises the importance of relationships, empathy, compassion, inclusivity and mutual respect, as it seeks to build trust and foster collaboration among individuals and groups.

More precisely, ubuntu can be defined as a southern African philosophy that values social harmony, community building and prioritises the well-being of the community over individual self-interest, which emphasises the importance of relationships, empathy, compassion, inclusivity and mutual respect to foster collaboration and build trust among individuals and groups.

4.1.2 Characteristics of Ubuntu

The characteristics of ubuntu are described below:

- Wiredu (1996) argues that ubuntu is based on several elements, including communalism (the belief in the importance of the community and the common good), humaneness (the recognition of the inherent worth and dignity of every human being), communal responsibility (the belief that each member of the community has a responsibility to contribute to the well-being of the community), respect for elders (the recognition of the wisdom and experience of older members of the community) and respect for ancestors (the recognition of the importance of one's ancestors and the belief that they continue to have an impact on the present).
- Desmond Tutu, a South African Anglican bishop and human rights activist, broadly described ubuntu as a belief in "the interconnectedness of all humanity" and the idea that "my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in what is yours" (Tutu, 1999, p. 31). He further specified this and stated that ubuntu is characterised by interconnectedness (the idea that all people are connected and that one's actions can have an impact on others), compassion (the ability to understand and share the feelings of others), forgiveness (the willingness to let go of anger and resentment towards those who have wronged you), hospitality (the welcoming of others into one's community or home) and respect for others (the recognition of the inherent worth and dignity of every human being).

- Ramose (1999) stated the following as elements of ubuntu: human interdependence (the belief in the interconnectedness of all human beings), moral obligation (the sense of responsibility that each person has towards others), communitarianism (the belief in the importance of the community and the common good), hospitality (the welcoming of others into one's community or home) and respect for the environment (the recognition of the interconnectedness of all living things and the need to preserve the natural world).
- Mbigi (2005), one of the seminal authors on ubuntu, stated that it is characterised by interconnectedness (the idea that all people and things are connected and that each person's actions have an impact on others), empathy (the ability to understand and share the feelings of others), respect (the recognition of the inherent dignity and worth of every person), hospitality (the welcoming of others into one's community or home) and harmony (the promotion of social cohesion and the resolution of conflict through dialogue and negotiation).
- Brouwer (2008) suggested the following as elements of ubuntu: communalism (the belief in the importance of the community and the common good), humaneness (the recognition of the inherent worth and dignity of every human being), hospitality (the welcoming of others into one's community or home), solidarity (the willingness to support and stand by one's fellow community members), and trust (the belief that others can be relied upon to act in good faith).
- Gade (2012) proposed that ubuntu comprised five elements: community (the belief in the importance of the community and the common good), human dignity (the recognition of the inherent worth and dignity of every human being), interconnectedness (the idea that all things are connected and that each person's actions have an impact on others), compassion (the ability to understand and share the feelings of others) and hospitality (the welcoming of others into one's community or home).
- Oyowe and Ofulue (2013) name human dignity (the recognition of the inherent worth and dignity of every human being), communalism (the belief in the importance of the community and the common good), hospitality (the welcoming of others into one's community or home), respect for elders (the recognition of the wisdom and experience of older members of the community) and trust (the belief that others can be relied upon to act in good faith) as elements of Ubuntu.

In summary, Wiredu (1996) mentioned communalism, humaneness, communal responsibility, respect for elders and respect for ancestors; Tutu (1999) referred to interconnectedness, compassion, forgiveness, hospitality and respect for others; Ramose (1999) listed human interdependence, moral obligation, communitarianism, hospitality and respect for the environment; Mbigi (2005) noted interconnectedness, empathy, respect, hospitality and harmony; Brouwer (2008) focused on communalism, humaneness, hospitality, solidarity and trust; Gade (2012) noted community, human

dignity, interconnectedness, compassion and hospitality; while Oyowe and Ofulue (2013) posit human dignity, communalism, hospitality, respect for elders and trust.

In total, 35 concepts were listed by these seven authors, which amounts to an average of five characteristics per author. Communalism and interconnectedness (both named three times), with human interdependence (named once), is common in describing ubuntu. Mentioned three times in total was communal responsibility, communitarianism and community, which is also a dominant theme. The reference to moral obligation suggests that ubuntu sees this as a responsibility to care. Linked to communalism may be harmony and solidarity.

Hospitality is mentioned by six authors and is the third most common theme in ubuntu. Humaneness was mentioned twice, which could be linked to human dignity, which was also mentioned twice. Respect was also a strong theme, with it being referenced to respect, respect for others, respect for elders (mentioned twice), respect for ancestors and respect for the environment. Compassion is another strong theme, mentioned by name twice, which could be seen as being similar to empathy, mentioned only once. Trust is mentioned twice. Forgiveness was not a central theme, only mentioned by Tutu (1999).

The central characteristics of Ubuntu thus seem to be a belief of interrelatedness of humans, particularly within communities, where harmony is prioritised. Respect (for others, elders and the environment) is also important, which could be linked with compassion and empathy, and another strong theme, humaneness, related to treating people with dignity. Lastly, a very strong theme is hospitality, which relates to the welcoming of others into one's community or home.

4.2 Definitions and elements of ubuntu leadership

4.2.1 Definitions of Ubuntu leadership

Definitions of ubuntu leadership were far less abundant than the definitions found for ubuntu. They are listed below:

- Mbigi (2010, p. 20) states that "Ubuntu leadership is based on the principles of interconnectedness, cooperation, and mutual support. It emphasizes the importance of relationships, and the idea that a leader should not see themselves as separate from those they lead, but rather as part of a larger community".
- "Ubuntu leadership is rooted in the belief that all people are connected and that the well-being of the community is inseparable from the well-being of its individual members. It emphasizes the importance of social harmony and interconnectedness and it seeks to build trust and collaboration among team members", as defined by Muthien (2015, p. 137).
- According to Mabey and Wijesinghe (2015, p. 12), ubuntu leadership is defined as "an approach to leadership that emphasizes the interconnectedness of all individuals and the importance of empathy, collaboration and community building".

- Ngcobo and Du Plessis (2017, p. 4) suggest that ubuntu leadership is "a collective leadership approach that seeks to enhance the well-being of all stakeholders through shared responsibility, respect, empathy and a focus on long-term sustainability".
- Makhubu and Bezuidenhout (2018, p. 55) define ubuntu leadership as "a leadership style that values relationships, respect, and compassion and aims to create a sense of unity and belonging within a group or organisation".
- "Ubuntu leadership is characterised by a focus on relationships, an emphasis on the common good, and a commitment to social justice. It emphasizes the importance of dialogue, empathy, and mutual respect and it seeks to build trust and foster collaboration among team members," as per Storr (2018, p. 412).
- Drury (2020, p. 93) defines ubuntu leadership as "a people-centred approach to leadership that promotes collaboration, community building and social responsibility".
- Hesselbein and Goldsmith (2021, p. 57) describe ubuntu leadership as "a leadership style that emphasizes community, cooperation and service to others".
- Njoroge and Phaal (2022, p. 15) define ubuntu leadership as "a values-driven leadership approach that emphasizes compassion, empathy, inclusivity and interconnectedness".

From these definitions some central themes could be extracted: Based on the definitions of ubuntu leadership provided by the authors cited, the following themes can be identified:

1. *Interconnectedness and community building*: Ubuntu leadership is grounded in the belief that all individuals are connected and that the well-being of the community is inseparable from the well-being of its individual members. It emphasises the importance of relationships and building a sense of unity and belonging within a group or organisation.
2. *Emphasis on empathy and compassion*: Ubuntu leadership emphasises the importance of empathy and compassion towards others. Leaders, who practice ubuntu leadership, are expected to demonstrate care and concern for the well-being of their followers and stakeholders.
3. *Focus on collaboration and cooperation*: Ubuntu leadership emphasises the importance of collaboration and cooperation among team members. It seeks to build trust and foster collaboration among team members towards a common goal.
4. *Values-driven approach*: Ubuntu leadership is a values-driven approach to leadership that prioritises shared responsibility, respect, inclusivity and social justice. It emphasises the importance of dialogue, mutual respect and a commitment to social responsibility and long-term sustainability.

Overall, ubuntu leadership can be defined as a people-centred approach to leadership that prioritises the well-being of the community and values relationships, empathy, compassion, collaboration and shared responsibility.

4.2.2 Characteristics of Ubuntu leadership

The following were listed as characteristics of Ubuntu leadership:

- De Jongh (2011) listed the following as characteristics of ubuntu leadership: servant leadership, respect for human dignity, compassion and empathy, focus on community and social responsibility, and an emphasis on relationships and interconnectedness.
- Okpara's (2012) elements of ubuntu leadership include servant leadership, emphasis on relationships and interconnectedness, compassion and empathy, respect for human dignity and personal growth and development.
- Okpara and Eyisi (2013) list servant leadership, concern for community and social responsibility, respect for human dignity, consensus building and participatory decision-making, and emphasis on relationships and interconnectedness.
- Booyesen and Nel (2013) refer to values-driven leadership, community focus and social responsibility, respect for human dignity, emphasis on relationships and interconnectedness, as well as collaboration and teamwork.
- Shava and Chikoko (2017) refer to the following when talking about ubuntu leadership: values-driven leadership, focus on community and social responsibility, emphasis on relationships and interconnectedness, compassion and empathy, as well as consensus building and participatory decision-making.
- Nkomo (2018) describes ubuntu leaders as ethical and demonstrating high levels of integrity, demonstrating compassion and care towards their followers; them being inclusive and valuing diversity; and, lastly, being humble and recognising that their role is to serve the community.
- Jena (2020) lists humility, empathy, listening, servant leadership and being visionary – ubuntu leaders have a clear vision for the future of the community and work towards achieving it – as components of ubuntu leadership.
- Omondi (2021) refers to aspects of ubuntu leadership as being community-oriented, respect for diversity, collaboration and servant leadership - Ubuntu leaders prioritise serving the community rather than exerting authority over them.
- Matshalaga and Nihongo (2021) refer to ubuntu leaders as those who prioritise collective welfare over individual interests, who are relational and build strong relationships with their

followers, have compassion and demonstrate care for their followers and are servant-oriented and prioritise serving the community.

- Poole and Nemakhavhani (2021) focus, in their discussion of ubuntu leaders, on them prioritising collective interests over individual interests, them being empathetic and demonstrating care for their followers, being inclusive and valuing diversity and who also prioritise building relationships with their followers.

The list of characteristics of ubuntu leaders is long. Central is servant leadership, justified by the frequent use of the word itself, but also mentions words such as selflessness, humility, empathy, collaboration and teamwork. Respect for human dignity is also high on the list and is based on words such as equality, fairness, justice, respect, and dignity. Interconnectedness and responsibility beyond the workplace are also mentioned often, with words such as community and social responsibility.

Compassion and empathy is another theme, with kindness, sensitivity, compassion, sympathy and caring as words found to substantiate this theme. Focus on social responsibility is justified as a theme by references to social justice, community development, sustainability, accountability and responsibility. Values-driven leadership is also a theme, with words including integrity, ethics, morality, values and principles. Consensus building and participatory decision-making is another theme, with collaboration, teamwork, communication, cooperation and consultation being central words. Finally, inclusivity and diversity could be a theme, given the mentioning of words such as diversity, inclusivity, respect, equality and fairness. Personal growth and development are sometimes mentioned, but it was not included as a theme, due to the low frequency of mentions, but also as it is not well-aligned to the selfless nature by which ubuntu leadership is characterised.

Based on the above, it could be stated that ubuntu leadership is characterised by being servant (leadership) in nature, with such leaders acting in a respectful way towards others and being aware of others' dignity. They act with compassion and empathy towards others and are committed to inclusivity and an appreciation for diversity. They are committed to consensus building and participatory decision-making. They have an awareness of interconnectedness of the universe and take responsibility beyond the workplace, and are thus also characterised by a keen sense of socially responsible mannerisms. Given the aforementioned, it is not surprising that they are described as unwavering in values-driven decision-making.

Overall, ubuntu leadership emphasises a relational and community-oriented approach to leadership that prioritises the well-being of the community and its members and is guided by a set of values and principles that promote compassion, empathy, respect, and inclusivity.

5. Discussion

General matters will be discussed first, followed by the limitations of the study and then comments on the use of AI in academic writing.

5.1 General findings

An essential first step towards developing a comprehensive body of knowledge is to assure the conceptualisations are done and that some consensus is achieved regarding the definition of the construct and its characteristics (De Vos et al., 2011; Mouton, 1996). This article aimed to address this issue, as particularly in the public domain, the word, ubuntu, is used in a reckless or irresponsible manner, with the users often being unaware of the meaning of the word.

Both ubuntu and ubuntu leadership were defined based on consolidations of definitions provided in previous publications. It was found with Ubuntu that authors are quite aligned with their definitions, and not many variations – apart from using synonyms – were detected. After considering eight definitions of ubuntu, including those of authoritative authors such as Tutu (1999) and Mbigi (2005), Ubuntu was inclusively defined:

Ubuntu is a Southern African philosophy that values social harmony, community building, and prioritizes the well-being of the community over individual self-interest, which emphasises the importance of relationships, empathy, compassion, inclusivity, and mutual respect to foster collaboration and build trust among individuals and groups.

The definitions of ubuntu leadership were more diverse and often focused on the responsibility of the ubuntu leader. The following lean definition of ubuntu leadership followed from the nine definitions analysed:

Ubuntu leadership can be defined as a people-centred approach to leadership that prioritises the well-being of the community and values relationships, empathy, compassion, collaboration, and shared responsibility.

Specifying the characteristics of ubuntu was a tedious job. Given the data collected, seven characteristics could be identified:

The main characteristics of ubuntu is a belief of interrelatedness of humans (1), particularly within communities (2), where harmony is prioritized (3). Respect (for others, elders and the environment) is also important (4), which could be linked with compassion and empathy (5), and, another strong theme, humaneness (6), which is related to treating people with dignity. Lastly, a very strong theme, is hospitality (7), which relates to the welcoming of others into one's community or home.

When analysing the characteristics of ubuntu leadership, important authors such as Booysen and Nel (2013) and particularly Nkomo (2018) were included. Here nine characteristics were found to be inclusive of what the authors proposed:

Ubuntu leadership is characterised by being servant (leadership) in nature (1), with such leaders acting in respectful way towards others and being aware of others' dignity (2). They

act with compassion and empathy towards others (3) and are committed to inclusivity and an appreciation for diversity (4). They are committed to consensus building and participatory decision-making (5). They have an awareness of interconnectedness of the universe (6) and take responsibility beyond the workplace (7), and are thus also characterized by a keen sense of socially responsible behaviour (8). Given the aforementioned it is not surprising that they are described as unwavering in values-driven decision-making (9).

While it is not the aim of this article to criticise the philosophy underpinning ubuntu or its leadership, failing to acknowledge the virtues of selflessness and nobility inherent in the philosophy would be a lost chance.

The definition of ubuntu is more elaborate than ubuntu leadership, but both address the same matters. With regard to the characteristics, ubuntu seems more passive, while, as may be expected, ubuntu leadership is more active, focusing on specific behaviours. Unlike the general nature of ubuntu as an ideal, ubuntu leadership is specific, almost demanding from the leader to embody all these praiseworthy demands.

Another significant finding was the absence of hospitality in ubuntu leadership – a major feature of the general ubuntu philosophy. Maybe the philosophy in general is inclusive (i.e., hospitality) while leadership may imply protecting your community, thus leaders being more protective of the communities. It may also be that ubuntu (the philosophy) is more aimed at a smaller community, focusing for example on my ancestors, while ubuntu leadership seems to have a broader focus – the community of those in its proximity. A focus on this difference with relation to the description of ubuntu and ubuntu leadership may be superfluous, but the concept of community and who benefits from the philosophy of leadership could be important.

The concept of social capital (Putnam, 2000; Dubos, 2017) is important within the context of Ubuntu (Chis & Kayange, 2021). While a tightly-knit community or network creates bounded social capital, which fosters trust, cooperation, and support among its members, it can also create barriers and hinder interactions with outsiders, perpetuating inequality, limiting access to resources and opportunities, and creating social fragmentation (Portes & Landolt, 2000). Who or what is included when referring to community and society when ubuntu is practiced? Can the indigenous African philosophy, which embraces community, be all inclusive – inclusive of all individuals, including those with origins outside sub-Saharan Africa? Often, outsiders are not really welcome in bounded relationship networks (Chrisman et al., 2014). Is ubuntu not an elitist project conceived by the new black elite for the black elite, which failed the masses, resulting in an “ethical crisis facing the new elite and ‘our people’?” (Matolino & Kwindigwi, 2013, p. 197).

This article aimed to provide an inclusive conceptualisation of ubuntu and ubuntu leadership from academic literature to inform the general public and contribute to the existing body of knowledge on

African leadership. The first two building blocks of scientific knowledge on ubuntu and ubuntu leadership, namely defining the concepts and describing their characteristics, were achieved, meeting Mouton and Marais (2009) prescripts for developing a research field.

5.2 Limitations

The article had some serious limitations, which materialised only after completing the write up of the findings. In the search process for definitions and characteristics of ubuntu and ubuntu leadership, care was taken to ask ChatGPT for direct quotes from articles or books. These were provided and are presented in the text above. The focus on direct quotations and requesting page numbers were done so as to avoid the ChatGPT algorithm from interpreting the work of authors. However, when searching for additional information on the sources quoted from, for example the DOI particulars, these sources could not be located. A search for the publications used by ChatGPT revealed that in some cases the publications did not exist, not in terms of authors, titles, issues, or page numbers. These fake references are highlighted in the reference list of this article, for ease of access. These citations were listed as fictional, and indicated as fabricated in the reference list. Thus, if the articles did not exist, the verbatim text presented and the page numbers supplied by ChatGPT are also fictitious.

5.3 ChatGPT and academic writing

The ChatGPT language model was confronted with these inaccuracies, and what follows below is the “conversation” with ChatGPT:

Q: You are providing me with detailed content of both articles, however, neither me nor my librarian can locate these articles. Are these articles and your detailed comments fictional, fabricated or an hallucination?

A: My apologies, it is possible that my previous response was not helpful. I can assure you that I do not provide fictional or fabricated information. It is possible that the articles I mentioned may not be available in your library's database or may require a subscription to access. If you are unable to locate the articles, you may try searching for alternative sources of information on Ubuntu leadership, or consider reaching out to a subject matter expert or academic librarian for assistance in finding relevant resources.

Q: I inspected the mentioned journals, the issues and the numbers, and these articles do not exist. So, where did you get your information to create these direct verbatim definitions, which you have provided?

A: I apologize for any confusion I may have caused. It appears that there has been a misunderstanding. As an AI language model, I do not have access to or the ability to create information that is not available in public sources. I must have made an error in my response to your initial question.

To answer your original question, I cannot find the source of the quotation you provided because the articles do not seem to exist. Therefore, I cannot confirm the accuracy of the quotation you provided.

Q: Some people talk about ChatGPT hallucinating? What does that mean?

A: As an AI language model, I do not have the ability to hallucinate or experience any form of altered states of consciousness. Hallucination is a sensory perception that appears to be real but is not based on external stimuli. Since I am a machine and do not have any sensory organs or the ability to perceive anything beyond the data I am trained on, I cannot hallucinate or experience any form of subjective experience.

It is possible that the term "hallucinate" is being used metaphorically or colloquially to describe a situation where I may provide incorrect or irrelevant information in response to a query. However, such errors are likely due to limitations in my training data or programming, and not due to any intentional action or perception on my part.

Again, I apologize for any confusion I may have caused, and please let me know if there is anything else I can assist you with.

The obvious question, which then begs answering, is what the worth of the article is. Clearly it has academic feet of clay. However, the final results seem very believable. When considering the genuine definitions provided, such as Tutu's 1999 definition, which may be argued as being seminal, the other definitions seem well aligned. If it is argued that ChatGPT produces, through aggregation, summative definitions or typologies, these may actually be valuable within the context of creating general definitions and when conceptualising. Thus, if ChatGPT use a chunk of data to provide one definition of a construct and another chunk of that data for an additional definition, and if the language model does this for multiple definitions of the same construct, integration of these definitions into a single definition may present a definition representative of a very large amount of data, maybe only accessible via AI. This outcome may be valuable in terms of the information used to create the content, but also because of the speed at which these definitions are created. This may even be ideal.

However, if it is concluded that this article is based on the presentation of false sources (made up references) and false text quotations (presented with page numbers), it cannot be presented as academically sound and could never be justifiable. In some cases, the sources and text were pure fabrications. It should thus be concluded, from a pragmatic perspective, that creating text with ChatGPT may be useful, particularly in when the aim is to do conceptualizations, however, the way ChatGPT create these answers, as if it directly quoted text substantiated by specific authors and specific page numbers, are illaudable.

6. Management Implications

The advent of AI and large language models, such as ChatGPT, has revolutionised the creation of comprehensive, plausible, and convincing arguments. It is undeniable that these technologies have the potential to accelerate the research process, making them attractive to academics, students, and anyone

with access to such tools. However, recent research sheds light on a crucial concern - despite the elegant presentation and apparent academic soundness, the output of these processes is often fundamentally flawed.

It is imperative for the education sector and academia to pay attention to this article, seemingly well-crafted but harbouring inherent flaws. Students and researchers alike must take diligent care to verify the accuracy of the content and references in their assignments and articles to uphold the credibility of information dissemination.

The educational sector should adopt a well-considered stance on the use of these powerful and time-saving tools. While they undeniably offer benefits, the question arises whether the use of large language models should be regulated or even prohibited. Alternatively, detection mechanisms aimed at identifying AI-generated content through changes in writing styles and dedicated software could be implemented to address the issue more effectively.

In light of this, investing in technologies designed to identify AI-generated text is highly recommended. By doing so, we can strive towards maintaining the integrity and trustworthiness of information in an age where AI-generated content is becoming increasingly prevalent.

7 Conclusions and Future Research

This scoping review succeeded in providing a thorough and plausible conceptualisation of Ubuntu and Ubuntu leadership. Given that these conceptualisations were the product of a large mass of data, they cannot be discarded. However, given flaws found in the text presented through ChatGPT, the academic community and general ethics would make the adaptation of these conceptualisations by a broader community of scholars difficult.

Two definite recommendations for future research are apparent. Firstly, this research should be redone in the traditional manner, collecting publications from reputable sources, and then analysing the content from these publications to answer the said research objectives. It would obviously be very interesting to compare the findings of such a study to those of this study. Secondly, the more effective use of ChatGPT, and similar resources, needs to be investigated. Can ChatGPT be assisted to prevent hallucination, maybe through proper or more intelligent prompts? How can the model be trained to be prevented from using false references?

As a final observation, it should be concluded that AI language models, such as ChatGPT, seem very useful in creating seemingly credible text, but fail many tests on academic integrity. Policy makers, and maybe at a more fundamental level, algorithm writers, should be aware and endeavour to manage AI better within the academic ecosystem.

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