Changing Leadership Perceptions: Leaders in the Private Sector in Kenya

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9.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on leadership in Kenya and explores changing perceptions of leadership and leadership styles, particularly among business leaders in the private sector in Kenya. The growth of women in political leadership in Kenya has increased in leaps and bounds, with 29% more women running for office in the 2017 elections (this led to the highest number of seats held by women in the government in the country's history at 9% of elected seats). On the other hand, female leadership in the private sector remains stagnant with only four females as CEOs in 62 listed companies on the Nairobi Securities Exchange (NSE, 2018). The chapter considers the differences in

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perceptions within this sector between male and female leaders, as well as young and senior leaders. It further describes different ways in which leadership skills can and are being developed and assesses their effectiveness. The study aims to be helpful for developing young business leaders for the future, especially (but not exclusively) for people in Kenya and Africa.

The chapter is structured as follows:

- Section 9.2—"Context: Leadership in Private Sector in Kenya": Status of private sector (number, growth, and type of business), growth of private sector since 2000, the support they get and constraints they face, women and youth leaders.
- Section 9.3—"Case Study Data": We describe how our data were collected.
    Sections 9.4, 9.5, 9.6, 9.7 and 9.8 report our case study findings:
- Section 9.4—"Perceptions of Hierarchy": It includes the national culture and aspects of organizational culture, notably differences between private sector and government structures.
- Section 9.5—"The Need for Change": It shows a shift towards strategic and people-oriented leadership styles: expectations of today's leaders.
- Section 9.6—"Leaders Diversity": includes women leaders and youth.
- Section 9.7—"Leaders' Attributes": What leaders' attributes were considered important? In our survey and interviews the following five attributes emerged: decisiveness, candidness, doing good, honesty/integrity, and adaptability.
- Section 9.8—"The Road to Becoming a Leader: Leadership Development": It explores determinants for success in how people have become leaders, their role models, and different initiatives for development of leadership skills and how to build confidence.
- Section 9.9—"Conclusions/Discussion": It includes lessons learnt and suggestions for further development of business leaders and leadership in Kenya.

9.2   CONTEXT: BUSINESS LEADERS IN KENYA

9.2.1   *Private Sector Development*

The African Development Bank (ADB) states that the private sector in Kenya is vibrant and in good health (ADB, 2018). The report describes the Kenyan economy as remaining resilient due to its diversity; services contributed the highest proportion to gross domestic product (GDP) growth. This is

expected to continue as the country remains the leading regional hub for information and communication technology (ICT), financial, and transportation services. Recent investment in rail and road and planned investment in a second runway at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport are potential growth drivers. Macroeconomic stability continues, with most fundamentals projected to remain healthy. The business-enabling environment has improved as well; Kenya moved up 12 places to a ranking of 80 in the World Bank's 2018 Doing Business report. GDP growth has been steady—on average 5.1% per year over the last decade and 5.7% in 2018 (World Bank, 2018). The ADB states that the economy is projected to rebound further to a GDP growth of 6.2% in 2019. The ADB further reported that the private sector is well developed and large by sub-Saharan and regional standards and that it plays the leading part in the Kenyan economy. The private sector is noticeably split into two parts: a formal, large business sector which is relatively healthy and productive and a massive, informal small business sector that is poorly understood and supported, yet which employs almost nine out of ten workers. Links between the formal and informal sectors are very weak (ADB, 2013). The ADB further states that agriculture, manufacturing, trade, tourism, transport and communication, and financial services account for over 80% of the private sector's contribution to total GDP. Agriculture remains the most important sector in terms of contribution to private sector GDP and employment, though the importance of agriculture in terms of its contribution to GDP is declining relative to other sectors, while that of manufacturing remains relatively stagnant. Growth in the private sector is increasingly driven by trade, transport, ICT, and financial services.

The ADB report concludes that Kenya is a promising place to do business, with growing markets and good opportunities. Importantly, there is a widespread consensus amongst Kenyans, including government officials, that the private sector is important and will be the main driver of growth and employment, rather than the state. From the early 1990s, Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) consisting of loans provided by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) to countries that experienced economic crises were implemented to reduce the borrowing country's fiscal imbalances in the short and medium term or in order to adjust the economy to long-term growth (Lensink, 1996). As a result of these SAPs, the role of government and people's reliance on it was greatly reduced, which might have fostered the acceptance of private sector–led growth. Positively, the ADB states that the business climate has improved over the last decade; frustratingly it is the same recurrent challenges that prevent the private sector from reaching its full potential: political uncertainty, corruption, infrastructural deficits, and an untapped informal sector.

The World Bank states that Kenya has the potential to be one of Africa's success stories from its growing youthful population, a dynamic private sector, highly skilled workforce, improved infrastructure, a new constitution, and its pivotal role in East Africa (World Bank, 2018). The World Bank report argues that addressing the challenges of poverty, inequality, governance, the skills gap between market requirements and the education curriculum, climate change, low investment, and low firm productivity to achieve rapid, sustained growth rates that will transform lives of ordinary citizens will be a major goal for Kenya.

9.2.2   Female Business Leaders

A study by International Finance Cooperation (IFC, 2006) states that women-owned businesses are making a significant contribution to the Kenyan economy. Their businesses account for about half (48%) of all micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), which contribute around 20% to Kenya's GDP.

Kenya's new constitution, passed in 2010, provides a framework for addressing gender equality. It seeks to remedy the traditional exclusion of women and promote their full involvement in every aspect of growth and development (USAID, 2018). Kenya's 2010 constitution has made a number of positive changes for women, particularly in the economic realm. Of the six indicators measured by the World Bank (2011), Kenya is making strides in three very important areas: women's access to institutions, access to justice, and ability to control and use property. Political parties are required to respect and promote gender equality. Customary and traditional laws that contradict the new legislation, some of which cement gender inequality, are now considered invalid.

A provision in the constitution (Government of Kenya, 2010) stipulates that not more than two-thirds of members of elective public bodies shall be of the same gender (Article 27, clauses 6 and 8). This provision has further been captured in the Capital Market Authority code: 2.1.5 "Diversity applies to academic qualifications, technical expertise, relevant industry knowledge, experience, nationality, age, race and gender". However, like all legislation, implementation of these laws has proven less easy. In terms of elective politics this has been a constant struggle for women, where in spite of the 2010 Constitution's two-thirds gender provision, it has yet to be attempted—let alone accomplished.

9.2.3   Youth in Business and Leadership

A literature review on youth employment in Kenya (DFID, 2017) notes that while annual GDP growth of more than 5% has been regularly recorded, Kenya's youth (ages 15–24) unemployment rate has shown little to no positive development and is estimated at 26% (ILO, 2018). In addition, underemployment appears to be a rampant phenomenon for young Kenyans. The danger of a "lost generation" is running high in Kenya; and most countries in Africa record significantly lower youth unemployment rates than this relatively strong economy. The British Council's report on youth employment in Kenya states "although GDP growth in both Kenya and Sub-Saharan Africa" (SSA) has been significant since 2000 and Kenya's youth employment rate is now 42% higher than in 2000, the youth employment rate for overall SSA has decreased by 9% (British Council, 2017).

Though these figures are cause for concern, a recent survey of youth, found young people across all countries were more optimistic than adults, with more than nine in ten teenagers in Kenya, Mexico, China, Nigeria, and India reporting feeling positive about their future, though there was widespread dissatisfaction with politicians (Gates Foundation, 2018). A survey conducted among 7000 youth in Kenya Tanzania and Rwanda by Awiti and Scott (2016) found that the youth are entrepreneurial, with the majority (50–65%) aspiring to start their own business, rather than pursue traditional careers in law, teaching, medicine, or engineering. The study revealed that while youth were concerned about unemployment, they were willing to be part of the solution through a strong orientation to entrepreneurship—the desire and willingness to create and run their own business. Awiti and Scott (2016) concluded that overall, East African youth are positive and optimistic and are confident that the future will bring more prosperity, with more jobs, better access to health and education. They state that these strongly held values and the spirit of enterprise, along with impressive GDP growth, must be leveraged to address the challenge of unemployment, especially among university-educated youth.

9.3   Case Study Data

Data for this case study was collected during 2018. Survey participants were sought among professional networks of business leaders working in the private sector: 45 were sent the invitation; 30, or 67%, did respond. The link to our leadership survey resulted in some very quick responses. It was noted that women were quicker and more eager to respond than men. In order to have more men respond took effort and reminders. The online survey was completed by 30 leaders, 25 females/5 males, 15 young/15

senior, with all except one respondent having leadership experience. Half (15) have more than six years' experience and slightly less than half (11) have from three to six years of experience; thus the majority (26) of respondents have more than three years' experience in leadership positions.

The survey was followed by in-depth qualitative interviews, which were held with 12 leaders (7 male/5 female, 6 young/6 senior). These business leaders were selected from a range of business sectors, including construction, hospitality, ICT, research, education, and retail, as is indicated in Table 9.1.

Three of the interviewees also responded to the survey. Thus, overall, this chapter represents the views of a total of 39 leaders (30 female/9 male; 19 young and 20 senior).

Table 9.2 shows the coding scheme used for the case studies (see the Methodology chapter for an explanation) along with the coding frequen-

Table 9.1 Demographic information of the interviewees (Kenya)

Name	Gender	Young/senior	Sector
Mr Safari	M	Young	Education
Percival Omuronji	M	Young	ICT
Dawn Atak	F	Senior	ICT
George Wandera	M	Senior	Construction
Capo	M	Senior	Retail/media
Henry	M	Young	ICT
Brenda Wanjuki	F	Young	Research
Binti	F	Young	Hospitality
Judy Wambui	F	Senior	Retail
Sifa	F	Senior	Finance
Maina Muiruri	M	Young	ICT
Kaimenyi Mwangi	M	Senior	Construction/hospitality

Table 9.2 Coding frequencies by attributes (Kenya)

Code Category (5)	Codes (15)	Number of times coded (197)	In how many different interviews (12)	Attributes of interviewee (Number)				Number of interviewees, by attribute, who mentioned the coded issues two or more times			
				Age		Gender		Age		Gender	
				Youth	Senior	Man	Woman	Youth	Senior	Man	Woman
01-Perceptions of hierarchy	General	19	7	3	4	4	3	3	3	4	2
	Organization Specific	4	3	0	3	2	1		1		1
02- Leadership Style	Strategic Leadership	10	4	1	3	3	1	1	1	2	
	People Oriented Leadership	18	11	6	5	6	5	3	2	2	3
03_Leader Diversity	Women leaders	25	8	3	5	4	4	2	5	3	4
	Youth	18	8	5	3	4	4	3	2	3	2
04_Leadership Attributes	Candidness	7	6	3	3	3	3	1		1	
	Decisiveness	5	4	0	4	1	3		1		1
	Integrity	7	5	1	4	2	3	1		1	
	Doing Good	9	5	4	1	3	2	3		3	
	Adaptability	7	3	0	3	1	2		2	1	1
05_Leadership Development	Leadership determinants	28	12	6	6	7	5	2	5	3	4
	Role Model	7	6	4	2	5	1	1		1	
	Skills Development	15	8	3	5	5	3	1	3	3	1
	Confidence	18	7	4	3	3	4	3	3	4	2

cies, which are also disaggregated by attributes of age and gender, and the number of interviewees who mentioned coded issues two or more times

The following sections (Sects. 9.4, 9.5, 9.6, 9.7 and 9.8) report the findings from both the survey and interview data, organized by the interview coding categories.

9.4   Perceptions of Hierarchy

The leadership context in Kenya encompasses many different elements, including the history of colonialism, rural-urban as well as international migration, and multilingual cosmopolitan cities. All of these factors affect the leadership norms and beliefs; the expectations about what leaders should or should not do and what followers should or should not do. These expectations are associated with cultural beliefs and practices, and we will explore this further in this section. Kenya as a nation encompasses different ethnolinguistic groups, several of which are represented among our interviewees. However, in our research we do not distinguish the data between different ethnolinguistic groups.

An important aspect of leadership that is influenced by cultural values is the norms and beliefs around hierarchy. In our survey, we recorded both the perceptions of current *practice* and respondents' personal *preferences* towards hierarchy (Fig. 9.1).

The results are positioned in four quadrants; the respondents in two of these could be considered broadly satisfied (the green quadrants) and the respondents in the remaining two quadrants could be considered broadly dissatisfied (the red quadrants):

Broadly dissatisfied:

- *Lower right quadrant*: The largest group of 14 respondents (47%) considers the current practice as quite or very hierarchical and would personally prefer less hierarchy than they currently witness in the society.
- *Upper left quadrant*: No respondents. In other words, none of the respondents considers the current practice to be very hierarchical, while also preferring more hierarchy than currently witnessed in the society.
- There are nine respondents (30%) who consider the current practice average, but would prefer a lower hierarchy, and so these could likely be also termed broadly dissatisfied.
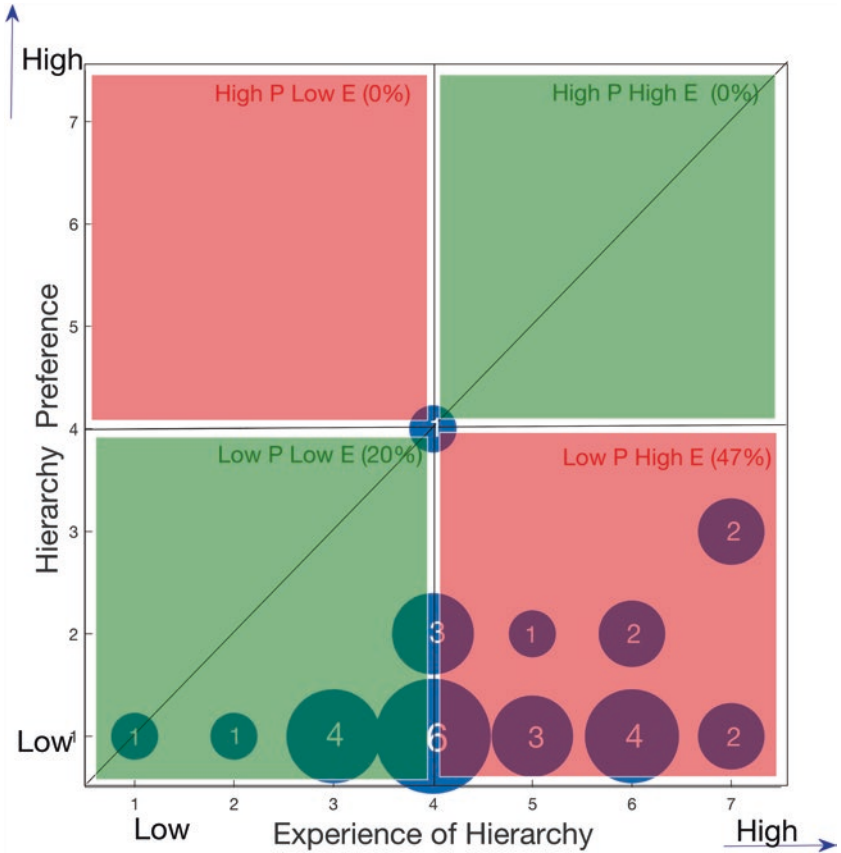
Fig. 9.1 Experiences and preferences towards hierarchy (Kenya)

Broadly satisfied:

- *Lower left quadrant*: Six respondents (20%) consider the current practice not very hierarchical and this corresponds with their preference.
- *Upper right quadrant*: No respondents. In other words, none of the responses both prefers and experiences high levels of hierarchy.

Right in the middle, there is one respondent who considers the current practice of hierarchy as average highly (four), (slightly) high, which is the same as the preference.

If we look at this in more detail, the closer a respondent's answer is positioned near the diagonal, the more satisfied this person is, as the practice and preference are close; if the answer is far from the diagonal, the level of satisfaction is much lower. In this case, two respondents' responses are on the diagonal, one in the lower left quadrant and one in the middle. One further respondent is close to the diagonal (one space removed). Thus these respondents (a total of three, or 10%) are more or less satisfied. This indicates that the majority (27 or 90%) of respondents are positioned further from the diagonal, with all preferring lower hierarchy, in other words less enactment of power differences than they currently experience in their society.

General perceptions on hierarchy were mentioned by seven interviewees, slightly more often by men. For example, one of the young interviewees expanded on this as follows:

Junior male leader, Personal experience: "Leaders want to be worshipped and often lack reason or logic"
Problems of leadership in Kenya—over time the colonial structure determined what we think leaders and leadership should look like. This is passed through school where the teacher is boss and king, their word is right and must always be listened to. This is replicated in government positions such as the chief. Or through class structures where in the village, for example, the person who is rich and has a car has to be worshipped. Another problem I see is leaders that lack reason or logic—that is when there is no factual or logical evidence in agendas of leaders. Religion a big supporter of this kind of leadership. All you have to do is reference God, tradition, development, "world class", or "move with times" to convince others of an unreasonable agenda. I fear this kind of leadership is getting worse. Mr Safari, young male leader in Education sector

The experience described below indicates that the preferences and behaviour around hierarchy are complex and also intertwined with cultural norms on communication and feedback.

Senior female leader's view on influence of culture
My experience is that many staff do not want to be accountable and much prefer to be directed than to think for themselves. There is a lot of fear of repercussions for their actions even when encouraged to do make decisions and assured that genuine mistakes (as opposed to dereliction of duty) in the course of doing business will not be punished. Therefore, developing a leadership mentality of themselves first, of one's team is key and a real challenge as it takes a lot of coaching, mentoring and an open (!) frank culture which is "un-African"! It is not "African culture" to freely give open critique and feedback. Being a consensus people because we are a "community people" as opposed to the Western "Individualistic" people, one finds that being "in harmony", "at peace", together, etc. is more important. So, people work to please one another or the boss. (Anonymous survey respondent)

One of the young male interviewees recounted an experience of a friend: "*A friend of mine was talking with people in his company. He was not very clear on what they wanted him to do. So he asked for clarification, but then they took offence—as if he was bothering them.*" He also shared the following experience on dealing as a leader with feedback in the workplace.

Junior male leader, Personal experience: "In giving feedback, getting the balance right is very hard"
As a mid-level manager you can encourage your subordinates to speak freely to you, you will have to try this—and not be defensive if they come up with criticism, over time they will realize that it is possible.
    Giving feedback upwards to your higher management is trickier—you need to be very careful, for example, present information in a written form so that it cannot be misinterpreted and show that your intention is good and constructive. You have to be careful to prove that you are not out to get at anyone, you have to figure out the best time and place for your feedback. With practice you can learn this. However, it can be tricky—especially with a leader who wants the rest of the world to kowtow to them and deferring to them as a leader. In that case you have to go around this, massage their ego but not be a sycophant/flatterer—getting this balance right is very hard. Percival Omuronji, junior male leader, ICT sector

Specific organizational characteristics also affect perception of hierarchy. Three senior interviewees detailed their experiences, with one senior female leader mentioning the issue several times. For example, the importance and impact of social and family relationships in the workplace is detailed below.

Senior female business leader, Personal experience: "staff were loyal to others or had godfathers"
I was thrust into a leadership role in an institution where staff members were loyal to other people or had godfathers. It was an institution that because of whom you knew or was related to, a staff member could be more powerful than a director, even a messenger. I had to make them work as a team. It was the most difficult time of my professional life. Dawn Atak, senior female leader, ICT sector

Some of our interviewees had worked both in private companies and government institutions and as such were able to comment on the differences in leadership style between private and public organizations, as indicated below.

Senior female leader, Personal experience: "Investing in growing next set of leaders"
I saw the potential of juniors and moulded them to show their potential. Not shining too brightly is a habit in government and is based on protocol and a hierarchical system, such that no one should show ability to do something above their position. Being a CEO, I came from the private sector, so I don't care about protocol. Inside we are a team and all have a role and potential, even the messenger. So, I invested in growing the next set of leaders. I learned that some people are not interested in staying because no one will listen to them. I developed a policy where if you think there is something you can do and do well and your line manager won't listen, you find a way to let me know and I will deal with it with wisdom. I also learned to see the weakest link. I was not a typical governing CEO. In other words, I did not just go to my office. Rather I walked around and went to everyone's department unannounced. I was able to solve departmental problems locally. Dawn Atak, senior female leader, ICT sector

Leaders working in these complex institutional environments have to be flexible and adapt to the environment of the institution they are working for, while at the same time finding ways to change it. This was particularly obvious for leaders moving from private organizations to government ones. The senior female leader abovementioned continued:

Senior female leader, Personal experience: "not a typical governing CEO"
I have worked in academia, private sector, and government. My style changed as a leader when working for government. Before government I was a consultative leader, I liked to make everyone feel that they are contributing to decisions even if I would ultimately make the decision. Where I can't make a decision I would find the people who can to consult with to solve the problem. But in this government job I found sometimes one needed to have dictatorial tendencies. Authoritative was key. I tried to be consultative but because of protocol no one would give their opinions. I had to make decisions. Dawn Atak, senior female leader, ICT sector

Our study predominantly focused on leaders in the private sector. However, they reflected on experiences of leading in government institutions. They concluded that within public institutions hierarchy and protocol were more important than in the private sector, which is considered more result-oriented.

Senior male leader, Personal experience: "the end goal is the difference between private and public entities"
The difference between private business and public entities is the end goal. In a private business it is to make money; in a public entity it is social benefit. When running my own practice it is about profit. You choose by business sense. When you are funded, as in a public entity, you focus on value addition to end user—the common man. George Wandera, senior male leader, Construction sector

9.5   THE NEED FOR CHANGE: LEADERSHIP STYLES

A common theme among the survey respondents and interviewees is the need for or evidence of a change in leadership styles. This relates to both strategic leadership, as well as people-oriented leadership styles.

9.5.1   Strategic Leadership

Several of the survey responses and interviewees indicated the importance of and their experiences with strategic leadership. Strategic leadership is defined by Hitt, Ireland, and Hoskisson (2001) as "the ability to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility, and empower others to create strategic change as necessary". In our study, it is also referred to as the importance of having a vision and being able to convince others of this. It also often links to flexibility and managing the necessary changes. As such, it is reflected below in the section on the leadership attribute "adaptability".

Perhaps unsurprisingly, strategic leadership was mentioned mostly by senior leaders, mostly male leaders, and one female and one young leader. The young leader understood strategic thinking to be a result of the combination of knowledge and relationships. He commented as follows: "*I like to work with people to get results and drive agendas. I am a strategic and critical thinker. I like to build relationships. I am a risk taker. I am always seeking to know how to do things. I consider Knowing to be freedom.*" Below we present a few experiences of senior leaders.

Senior male business leader, Personal experience: "Focus on what you need to do"

When running a business and deciding what you want to do, having taken into consideration all risks, including social risks, you just focus on what do you need to do to achieve your objectives. Deliver what your objectives are and figure out the way to appease guys you rub the wrong way in the process. This is not always easy. For example, in media, the current business model is not sustainable in the long term and not looking for new income streams will put the whole business at risk. Changing that culture to achieve a sustainable business model was painstaking and difficult and I never quite resolved it

(continued)

but I started the process. I got maligned by those who disagreed with me in the industry. In addition, the political environment in the country was not the most conducive making the attempted change in the organization difficult. I however believe I did the right thing in bringing this serious commercial issue at the fore of the organization and taking it on. Capo, senior male business leader, Retail and media sector

Senior leaders argued that you have to look at the long term even if it means implementing change that is not easily accepted in the short term. It also involves putting the business or institution in a broad contextual framework where trends become visible, including the political context. At times strategic thinking in the private sector entails supporting or making policy to regulate your future business. This is especially true in areas such as Information Technology (IT) where technology is rapidly changing and producing new policy frontiers.

Senior female business leader, Personal experience: "Initiative and organization led to influence on policy"
I was working on ICT policies and decided to set up a steering task force to push for a review, amendment of the ICT policy in Kenya. It was my idea to set up this with a group of like-minded friends in the industry and initial meetings were out of my office. We also developed KICTANET (Kenya ICT Kenya Action Network) to advocate for these issues. Civil society push got recognition of the government. We were invited to meetings and ultimately contributed to the new ICT policy. Dawn Atak, senior female leader, ICT sector

Often strategic thinking is structurally separated in the form of boards. This can be successful when the strategic plans are known and supported by the board as well as the management and staff.

Senior male business leader, Personal experience: "Separate strategy and operations"

I am a team player. I love organizations with a clear separation between strategy and operations. Day to day running is work of management. Strategy is work of a board. I insisted that our industry association must have a strategic plan, to know where will be in the next five years and evaluated it annually on progress to be made and realignments. But it had to be a strategic plan that has sought ownership from stakeholders, not just from the board but from management, to get buy in on how to make it more sustainable. George Wandera, senior male business leader, Construction sector

An aspect of leadership identified by our respondents was their experience and ability to take initiative to introduce strategic thinking and leadership in their organizations.

9.5.2   A Shift Towards People-Oriented Leadership Styles: Expectations of Today's Leaders

In response to the survey question that asked about the challenges faced as a leader, 18 out of the 30 responses were about people management issues, including the following:

- *Difficulties of getting staff fully engaged in the organization*
- *My challenge is when my followers sometimes cast doubt on my style*
- *The expectation that as a leader, I am not expected to freely mingle with those perceived to be junior*
- *Getting people to take ownership and be accountable for their decisions*

Another question in the survey asked respondents to rate how frequently they have experienced eight different leadership styles and to indicate the most suitable and least suitable leadership styles for addressing the challenges that leaders face. Combining these two questions in one figure we see the following pattern emerging (Fig. 9.2).

The leadership styles that were considered the most suitable (inspirational, participative, and coaching) were not commonly used (shown by the blue dotted line). These are also the most people-oriented leadership
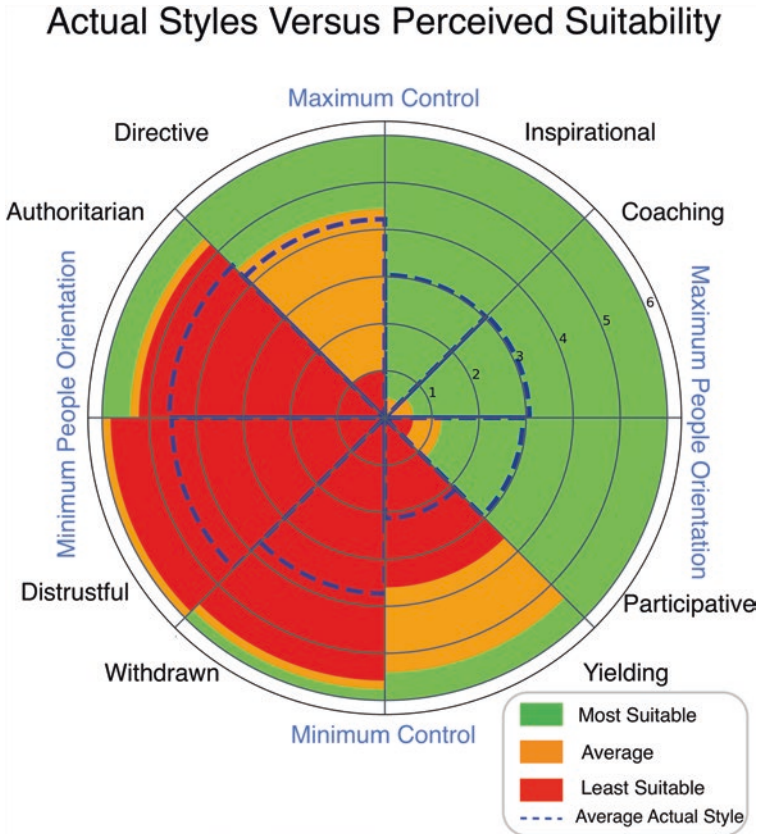
Fig. 9.2 Actual leadership styles versus perceived suitability (Kenya)

styles. In contrast, the leadership styles considered the least suitable (authoritarian, withdrawn, and distrustful) are actually the most common. These styles are also the least people-oriented.

Directive leadership style is in the middle—it is relatively common and considered fairly suitable. The yielding style is the least common and is considered not very suitable.

In terms of control, leadership styles with more control by a leader (inspirational, coaching, and directive) are clearly favoured in comparison to the styles with minimum control (distrustful, withdrawn, and yielding) both in terms of preference and use. The participative style is considered quite suitable as it has medium control and maximum people orientation.

The issue of leadership style, people's perceptions of this, and their own approach was the issue mentioned very often in the interviews, with 18 codings from 11 out of the 12 interviews (with a balance of male/female and young/senior interviewees), and often addressed in quite some detail, especially by young leaders.

Interviewees felt that young adults respond better to participatory leadership styles. They also recognized that there are problems of trust and information in authoritarian styles of leadership. The effective functioning of teams was important to a number of respondents. They felt that there is something to be learnt from subordinates about how their team is functioning, which they see as key to getting things done. Rather than the most commonly used leadership styles, which are less people-oriented, both senior and young leaders favoured a change towards more people-oriented leadership styles, with less hierarchy and control enacted by leaders.

Below, a number of personal experiences are presented that illustrate this clearly.

> *Junior male leader, Personal experience: "Delegation motivates young people to do better"*
> I am not afraid to delegate as long people around me are empowered, it makes young adults feel more confident and trusted. Actually, my experience is that it motivates people to do better, they want to prove their worth, improvement and learning is continuous. Henry, young male leader, ICT sector

Participants talked about the building of teams and of trust as an effective way of getting work done.

> *Junior female leader, Personal experience: "Friendliness as a management style"*
> As a leader sometimes it's very hard to understand what is happening in the team, that is, the secrets or issues they can't share with you in the open. My strategy is to include friendliness in my management style but at a controllable level, that way I am able to learn more from some team members about the things they won't be comfortable to raise with the top management. Brenda Wanjuki, young female leader, Research sector

The same interviewee also believes strongly in using a coaching or participative leadership style, with minimal control and with delegating and giving responsibilities to team members.

> *Junior female leader, Personal experience: "No need to micro-manage"*
> I had a very good role model at my first company. What I learned from her was to give people opportunities to prove themselves, not to micro-manage and that delegation is always key. While I was working under her she would give me tasks and set timelines, this allowed me to plan myself and deliver within the timeline given because I could supervise myself and set internal timelines. I learnt a lot of skills from her including working under no or very little supervision, project management, data collection and analysis, team leadership, among many more. I admired her way of managing and found it very effective; unlike micromanaging which is not as effective. I implement the approaches I learned from her now with the different teams I am assigned per project. I set the targets and trust the team to deliver. I believe this shows respect to the team and proves you believe in what they are capable of and they are able to deliver. Brenda Wanjuki, young female leader, Research sector

Another junior female leader echoed this sentiment fully.

> *Junior female leader, Personal experience: "As a leader, I give freedom"*
> I am not authoritarian. I do not give instructions. My leadership is somehow open. I give the team freedom and have an open mind—as long as they meet standards. I do not give "point to point" instructions. I think this is the best way, I learned this during my training in college—so long as there are set of standards to be met, people can perform and become creative. I have myself experienced both this more free and open style and a more authoritarian way of leading—for me—I prefer to be left free, so that I am more innovative. If only specific instructions are given, people do not tend to think wider and they feel enslaved. Binti, young female leader, Hospitality sector

As this young female leader points out, there is a preference for giving people freedom and the perception that this builds and encourages creativity, both of which are seen in a positive light. However, as she acknowledges below, this does not always work for everyone. This form of leadership works best where the people being led are self-driven, able to meet deadlines, and don't need supervision. The leaders have to adapt to the structure, culture, and team members they work with and attempt to lead accordingly. The young leader continues:

Junior female leader, Personal experience: "As a leader, I give freedom"
Sometimes, people you lead are too relaxed, and they find it difficult to meet deadlines, no one is watching or following it up frequently. If that happens, my first reaction is to have a short meeting with them and remind them what could be the problem, how can we solve this together. So the open leadership style does not apply to everybody, depends on the people you work with—some need more guidance. This is also my advice to other young leaders. I recommend to give your team members freedom, but you need to monitor, and you cannot use this style with everyone. Binti, young female leader, Hospitality sector

This is also the experience and perspective of senior leaders—as indicated by the following examples.

Senior female leader, Personal experience: "People-based leadership"
I have a people-based leadership style. All inclusive. So, for example, if I am the leader of a group and we need to do something, I will tell the group what we should do, but I am open to hearing if they agree. This is the way I want to do it, but do they have a better way? In addition, I do not have to be the one doing it, it is open to all and I won't take your glory. I acknowledge who played the role that made us achieve the thing we achieved. Judy Wambui, a senior female leader, Retail sector

This senior female leader highlights the importance acknowledging other's work and of showing respect. Along with giving people freedom to be innovative and creative, participants indicated that acknowledgement and respect for team members' ability as well as the ability to amass the necessary resources to get the work done were vital ingredients of leaders. One leader (survey respondent) saw this as an investment in the right people.

> *Senior female leader: "Need for people focus"*
> My leaders need to be more involved and in touch with operations; working harder to develop a culture of openness and people-centred instead of results-oriented and spending maximum time possible to ensure the right people are hired. Too often companies do not spend enough time, resources, and tools to ensure that the right people are coming into the organization. There's not enough "people" focus. (Anonymous survey respondent)

The, at times strongly felt, personal preference for less control and more people orientation could be explained partly as a reaction to the more common opposite approaches in Kenya that are considered less effective. So, in order to be effective and achieve results, people-oriented leadership is considered important. It may also be partly due to the growing number of highly educated, professional staff, also in the business environment, who respond better to leaders encouraging their participation and delegating tasks. Other reasons could be the diversity of leaders: youth/gender—as discussed below. It also transpired that leaders often have to experiment, learn, and implement this relatively uncommon leadership behaviour as only a few leaders have had role models displaying these types of leadership styles.

9.6   Leaders' Diversity: Gender and Age

9.6.1   Women Leaders

In this case study several specific gender issues related to leadership were mentioned. Although the survey did not specifically probe gender issues, because of the large number of female respondents, some specific comments on leading as a woman were provided:

- *To some extent, I experience resistance and negative attitude just for being a woman. Some men are open to say they don't like working with women leaders or even women.*
- *My leader could improve by providing a level playing ground for both men and women leaders and appreciate people for their capabilities and not gender.*
- *I need from my colleagues to jointly work as a team recognizing each other's strengths irrespective of gender and no battle of power which is very common from men colleagues.*
- *Most important challenge is that Africa is a more patriarchal society, in which women leaders often have to work double to prove their worth to many organizations/bosses.*
- *The challenge is the reality of women at the workplace and maximizing/supporting their potential in top leadership level.*

Women were concerned that there was not a level playing field and they had to work twice as hard while not being supported. In addition, they felt that men feel they need to compete with women when on a team that includes women. They felt that this was detrimental to teamwork. In addition, several leaders interviewed (8 out of 12), 4 men and 4 women, indicated that they witness a difference between male and female leadership. Slightly more senior leaders and women mentioned the issues twice or more. Overall, women leaders are perceived to be better at people management, that is to say people-oriented leadership styles. However, women leaders also face several specific obstacles.

One of our interviewees works as a governance auditor, trains directors of boards on governance matters, and conducts governance audits for listed companies, parastatals, schools, and pension schemes. She comments on her observations of gender issues in leadership.

Senior female leader, Personal experience: "Women in boards make a difference (that counts!)"
Sifa has observed that in terms of the Champion Awards of Corporate governance (by the Institute of Certified Secretaries)—these have been won the last five years by firms run by women or with women on their boards and 50% in management teams. She explains this as follows: "I think this is because if there is a need for changes in terms of governance, men can get stuck at the vision or

(continued)

the idea, whereas women make sure it gets implemented. Furthermore, women have better social skills, more empathy to make changes work. Nowadays, for business to thrive you need service differentiation and personalized customer service; it is no longer about the product. For this you need a feminine approach. The same social skills—listening and empathy—work well with staff—female managers are able to appreciate staff as individuals and emphasize with what is going on in their lives—this makes staff motivated and as a result they outperform their targets. Staff appreciates it if leaders look at them as a people and not machines. This also helps to retain staff longer. Nowadays staff want flexible working hours and if you allow them time to manage their personal life, they value the employer and will give their loyalty to the employer." Sifa, a senior female leader, Finance sector

To this senior female leader, women are better at turning visions into practice, especially if implementing change. This is because she sees women as being more flexible and able to recognize that a new business environment needs many of the skills that female leaders bring to the table, including empathy, inspiration, ability to listen, motivation practicality, personalization, social skills, and teamwork. The abovementioned senior female leader continued:

Senior female leader, Personal experience: "Women in boards make a difference (that counts!)"—continued
It seems as if these social skills are inherent for women. However, I believe that it can also be learned and some men are also good at it. Generally in my opinion, women are nurturers, are able to empathize more, and are less restrained in expressing emotions compared to men. Kenyan management culture so far has not been noticing the importance of this, or of more broadly, people management skills. However, this is changing, as the business environment is becoming more competitive. Increasingly, companies now train their management staff in soft skills, as a way of building capacity to having more all-round managers. Sifa, a senior female leader, Finance sector

The above is further substantiated by research carried out by the Kenya Institute of Management (2017), which showed that there is a significant difference in financial performance measured by revenues assets and Return on Equity (ROE) amongst companies that have at least 33% representation of one minority gender compared to those that are not. It further shows a positive correlation between share price performance and women representation in the boardroom. This study also documents that women's representation on the boards of 52 listed companies is increasing: 21% in 2017, up from 18% in 2015 and 12% in 2012. However, of 52 companies, only 12 had complied with the one-third gender rule.

Several interviewees indicated that this change is accompanied by some resistance from men, but in some cases also from women. Some examples of gender discrimination were given by female interviewees, such as the following.

> *Senior female leader, Personal experience: "Change is not easy…."*
> When I was appointed to a Task Force we were 2 women and 11 men. I contributed in a discussion and one man said I was lucky I was part of one-third reserved for women; in other words he considered me an unqualified person only in place because of affirmative action. I was upset but restrained myself. One day I asked for everyone to introduce themselves and tell about their background. I explained when and at what age I got my PhD and what my work had been. When it came to the man who had told me I was lucky, he declined to introduce himself properly. I was always treated differently after that. Dawn Atak, senior female leader, ICT sector

This senior leader also remarked on the different attitudes held by young male and female leaders she has mentored.

> *Senior female leader, Personal experience: "Let's meet half way"*
> I mentor both young men and women. I find I have to spend more time with male millennials—they need more help as they feel more entitled, but are less driven and less capable, seem to think that because they are men it will be OK for them. Dawn Atak, senior female CEO, ICT sector

Junior female leader, Personal experience: "There is a constant need to prove myself"

I am very patient—this is my key skill. So I can sit out and survive the first negative reaction. I then wait for the chance/moment to display my knowledge and skills. For example, in a remote area in Kilifi (on the coast) I was facilitating training for head teachers on digitizing information from Kenyan schools to be sent to the Ministry of Education. Before the training started some of the head teachers were very quick to brush me off just because I am young and a woman. After the training the mostly very senior participants (both men and women) called me "teacher" simply because I had been able to prove myself and shift their perception of me.

In urban areas this seems less of a problem. However, also in urban areas men feel they need to be led by men, that a woman cannot do my job. They will not say this openly but will indicate this afterwards. So, I feel the need to constantly, always, prove myself and show that I have something to bring to the table. While on the other hand I feel the respect is automatically given to my male counterparts even if we are in the same position. Brenda Wanjuki, junior female leader, Research sector

The women respondents took specific actions to combat persistent prejudice through performance, qualifications, and perseverance in making themselves visible and acknowledged. Many of the institutions they worked in had no structures in place to ameliorate the problems of gender discrimination, even though these same institutions had placed women in leadership positions. Men, on the other hand, are assumed to be leaders and are respected; they don't have to try. Even if they are less qualified, men feel entitled to judge a woman's qualifications and suitability for a job. Because of this men are more able to take up opportunities, they are more likely to be offered free rides and more doors are opened for them. This is particularly important because the way most leaders we interviewed became leaders was through being recognized and given opportunities and responsibilities by someone above them in a position of power. The junior female leader continues:

Junior female leader, Personal experience: "There is a constant need to prove myself"
Male colleagues often grab opportunities or they are easily given to them, citing issue of availability or for long-term projects the risk of pregnancy for women. I had one male colleague with the same skills and at the same level as me. An opportunity came up and my male boss prioritized him instead of me. I asked "why? I can do this!" My boss said that it was easier for him to do the job than for me, which was not true and he never gave any reasonable explanation to explain this. Brenda Wanjuki, junior female leader, Research sector

Women leaders also sometimes face sexual harassment in the workplace. The same interviewee recounts a challenging experience with her boss.

Junior female leader, Personal experience: "Facing issues with male ego"
As my leadership grew I faced a lot of issues with the male ego in my own company. I faced issues with male colleagues and especially my male boss. He was interested in a relationship with me. But I did not give in to him. So he made sure to punish me for this to a point I almost lost my job. When I turned him down, he started to try and prove that I am incompetent and am not doing my job well as his assistant. He started assigning other people in the team to roles that I should be doing, even when I had nothing to do, so I can just be idle. When I confronted him about this, it became such a big issue that it had to be raised with the managing director. After the meeting it was determined that he was just trying to sexually harass me and after that I had to switch to a different department. As time went by after this incident, I started hearing other female colleagues in the team say how he did the same thing to them. He started saying I had promised him a relationship and that he would in turn give me a promotion. This is very bad—especially as it is your word against his word and it ends up demoralizing the affected party. Brenda Wanjuki, junior female leader, Research sector

In the case of this junior female leader, there were not sufficient structures in place to deal with his problem of gender discrimination and harassment in the workplace. Cultural attitudes towards harassment problems need to be less hidden and specific structures for whistle-blowers are necessary for a more equitable workplace. This junior female leader points out that her case was not an isolated incident.

Junior female leader, Personal experience: "Facing issues with male ego"
This happens a lot; I hear a lot of stories like this from friends, often people end up blaming women for this. Men are seen to be entitled to this, as if it is their nature and women are supposed to control them. What would really help is if women spoke out more! If, for example, in a company where 100 women work and 10 women experience this it would help if the first one had spoken about it, so that the second and third would not face this alone. At the same time, I understand why women do not speak out. They fear losing their job, or promotions, and also people tend not to believe women a lot—sometimes you are even labelled as a "home-breaker" if the guy is married. In my case I had to speak out because it had gotten to the final straw, which is I almost lost my job so it was either I say the truth or I will be labelled as incompetent and end up being fired. Brenda Wanjuki, junior female leader, Research sector

However, not everyone is convinced that women leaders have specific qualities or workplace problems. In our interviews, some of the men expressed doubts, as the following male interviewees explain.

Young male leader, Personal experience: "not so sure about differences"
In my view, there are no big differences between male and female leaders. It is true that women are better listeners, and that may work well in a leadership positions. However, if we look at female political leaders we see mixed types—some are very good, but some are very bad. Percival Omuronji, junior male leader, ICT sector

Senior male leader, Personal experience: "Competence is what counts"
I struggle with the idea that women were not promoted because of gender. I worked with many very competent women in the organizations that I worked for and they got to their positions because they were competent and this was visibly demonstrated. Capo, senior male CEO, Retail and media sector

Both the male leaders above base their argument on the value of competence and that this is the main thing recognized in promotions. Specifically, they argue that if you are competent you will be recognized. In contrast, what female leaders point out is the double work they have to do to have their competence seen or recognized because of cultural and institutional bias, which already sees men as competent by gender, with less or no further proof necessary. Overall, it seems that women leaders are increasingly common, their leadership styles and skills more and more in demand, and they are mostly having a positive influence on the organizations where they work. At the same time, they still face several challenges in being accepted, respected, recognized, and progressing in their career.

9.6.2   Youth

Given the large number of youths in the workplace, people tend to enter into management positions relatively young. The Kenya Institute of Management study found that generally, female board members tend to be younger (average 52.1 year) than male board members (average 56.8 year). Also, in Kenya, the average age of both men and women board member is about five years lower than the global average age (which for women is 57.8 years and for men is 61.2 years).

Our case study shows that young leaders are eager to lead, and to lead well, with all in favour of adopting more people-oriented styles, as was shown in section 4. They also want to "do good" (we will explore this further in section 7). A young leader explains as follows:

Young male leader, Personal experience: "Leaders should delay gratification"
In my view good leadership is based on sacrifice and delayed gratification. Leaders should not expect results and pleasure now, but work hard and expect results later. In that sense the example of our political leaders is not good; they tend to think short term because otherwise the next political leader will benefit from their work. A leader should not be selfish, should not be doing this for themselves, but should be sacrificing for others. A leader should think about the next generation, not for gains today. Also try to improve the lives of those around you; we see such a big gap in wealth. African leaders could learn a lot from Asia, especially the values of honour and virtue, and the Greeks—stoicism would be interesting. Maina Muiruri, young male leader, ICT sector

This young male leader understood leadership as something that can change society even if not discernible in politics. In this way, anyone can contribute to transformation. This needs forward-thinking, broad social thinking, and strategic planning. In our survey and interviews we also got various insights into people's views on young leaders and millennials in the workplace, from both senior and slightly more young interviewees. Some people clearly value the skills and mindset of young people, and of people-oriented leadership, as the following example illustrates.

Senior male leader, Personal experience: "I need a young manager"
Right now I am looking for a manager for my hotel, and I have specified in the ad that this person needs to be maximum 35 years old—I need a young person who is willing to learn to be different, and daring and also does not come with ideas around hierarchy that a manager is more powerful and "bosses" people around. I want the manager to lead the team, give people room to innovate, take initiative and learn. Only in that way we can grow and excel the business. Kaimenyi Mwangi, senior leader, Construction/hospitality sector

Like in other countries in the world, the different behaviour of millennials in the workplace is noticed and by some leaders considered an issue. Both senior and young leaders commented on this, and also on how they deal with it. Below, the first two experiences are from senior leaders who see both the plusses and minuses.

Senior female leader, Personal experience: "Let's meet half way"
Many CEOs are struggling with millennials in the workplace. I like to say let's meet each other half way. It is difficult trying to shape a generation that has their mindset on how they should work. Either we build them up or give up on them. They are the bosses of the future so I feel we don't have a choice. I tell other managers don't expect them to be loyal to a job. When they are there with you, use them productively. Look at their strengths like IT savvy. Women millennials are stronger, so driven, so dynamic but often they don't have a care in the world. I find I have to slow them down and explain, for instance, how they should not quit a job because they say they are not growing when they have only been in a position for six months. I ask them what more can they do in the role they have. Many are doing too much; trying to save the world, or want to be like me overnight. Dawn Atak, senior female CEO

Young people are dealing with a rapidly changing world both demographically and economically. They are searching for ways that they can sustain the future.

Respondent's view of young leaders (senior female leader): "Plusses and minuses"
From the people in my team I need a mind and voice that is present and unafraid. I find the younger generation, while courageous, intelligent, creative, and quick are apt to lack in detail and therefore depth. There is a reluctance to delve in and understand issues opting for quick un-researched solutions. (Anonymous survey respondent)

In the next example, a young leader reacts to criticism from senior people of his generation, maintaining that youth have a different starting point and view on life as compared to the older generation. On the one hand he critiques the idea that the youth have to be patient, arguing that the opportunities that existed for past generations are not present today, especially the upward mobility that accompanied political independence. On the other hand, he advises young people not to expect things to work out immediately.

Young male leader, Personal experience: "We grow up in a time with many uncertainties"
I do not agree with the criticism of senior people that the young need to be more patient. We grow up in a time with many uncertainties, and frequent, quick changes; automation of roles and lay-offs are common. We often need to make short-term decisions. The strategies of before to achieve success do not work for us. In a sense the world is burning, and the older generation is not really there for us or providing us with many resources or opportunities. When they were young the colonial power had just left, and this provided them with many opportunities and resources. This is not the same for us. My advice to young people is to not expect everything to work out immediately, but try to achieve your goal step by step. Maina Muiruri, young male leader, ICT sector

In some cases, the combination of being young and female can pose specific challenges and requires careful handling, as the experience below describes. Again the young female leader deals with the problem by demonstrating competence, confidence in her own work, and humility in the form of willingness to listen and to ask questions.

Young female leader, Personal experience: "not easy to lead team members that are older than me"
Currently, as a field research manager I am leading a team of enumerators, some of them are senior in age. Not all of them feel like they need to respect me. Some feel like "I can do what she is doing, plus I am older than her so I should be leading her not the other way around". So they try to throw me in my game or embarrass me by asking questions I cannot answer. My patience helps me. I answer

(continued)

their questions if I can; if not, I say I will refer and get back with feedback. If it continues, I have 1:1 with the particular enumerator, not a confrontation but more like a discussion to address his/her concerns. For instance, I would ask "Is the reason why you've been having a lot of questions because you didn't understand the training, do you need me to retrain on particular topics?" This allows me to be able to understand and differentiate whether their questions are genuine or they just have a vendetta against me.

Thus being a young leader requires patience and excellent communication skills. Especially because young leaders are expected to have a lot of experience which sometimes is not the case. I mean, we can't all know everything and there is always something new to learn, but the people you lead expect you to know it all. You just have to manage expectations and engage them on a mature level. If I am challenged, it's easier to strike back with facts and information, than just an arrogant look of youthful confidence because that doesn't help at all. Brenda Wanjuki, junior female leader, Research sector

9.7   Leaders' Attributes

In the survey responses and interviews several leaders' attributes were mentioned and considered important. In other words, several qualities or features were regarded as a key characteristic or an inherent part of being a good leader. The following attributes were mentioned by several interviewees:

1. *Candidness*: Mentioned by six interviewees, balanced in age and gender
2. *Decisiveness*: Mentioned by four interviewees, more senior and more women
3. *Doing good*: Mentioned by five interviewees, mostly youth
4. *Integrity*: Mentioned by five interviewees, mostly senior
5. *Adaptability*: Mentioned by three interviewees, mostly senior

These attributes resonate with the findings of the survey relating to the single greatest cause of losing respect for a leader, which for the majority, 19 out of 30 respondents, was lack of honesty and integrity. The responses included comments such as:

- *Lack of courage and lack of integrity*
- *A leader who abdicates their responsibility*
- *Self-interest and selfishness*
- *Unavailability: Travelling for self-interests*
- *Dishonesty and lack of integrity*
- *Corrupt practices: Immoral behaviour*

The five attributes are discussed below. At times, the attributes are quite interlinked; for example, candidness, decisiveness, and adaptability have interconnections, as have doing good and integrity.

Candidness: The ability to speak truth to people in power is one way for people to get recognized, as they need courage to speak out. Straightforward and truthful talk might be also described with the adjective candid; it can also be called assertive. Out of all interviewees, six (both men and women) made specific remarks about the need to be candid.

Senior female leader, Personal experience: "Ask for what you deserve or say what you need to say"
I believe in asking for things. After all, what is the worst that can happen? I also have some sense of entitlement. What I mean by this is that if I am paying for something and this is what you said I am getting, I will make a lot of noise about not getting it in full. As a leader you must be able to ask for what you deserve or say what you need to say. Judy Wambui, a senior female CEO, Retail sector

Junior male leader, Personal experience: "Open communication is key"
In my view one of the key values to be a good leader is communication—you must be open and communicate clearly, allow people to criticize you, otherwise you lose valuable inputs from them—in doing this you have to put your ego aside. My experience is that a lot of fights and disagreements are caused by miscommunication, not incompetence. It is my belief, that if you can communicate clearly and openly you will have fewer conflicts. However, cultural norms are an issue if you want to give honest feedback. Percival Omuronji, junior male leader, ICT sector

Junior female leader, Personal experience: "Persistent and focus on my target"
Over time I have learned to become more persistent and ignore people's assumptions and judgements—I focus on my target, and make sure that I get there—by all means. I'll be nice about it—but people quickly realize I am serious about what I want and patient enough to get it. This I learned already from a young age—I was born and brought up in Mathare—a slum area of Nairobi. I had to be tolerant, as the living conditions were not very good and very often I did not know what was going to happen next, some days we would not have food, for example. All I could do was persevering and remain hopeful. Brenda Wanjuki, junior female leader, Research sector

Decisiveness: Decisiveness stands for the ability to take up challenges and to act when no one else will. This attribute was mentioned by four interviewees (mostly senior female leaders) and considered essential for their success as a leader.

Senior female leader, Personal experience: "Fanatical about time-keeping"
I changed the issue of time-keeping. In general, everyone would come late to meetings. Prior to my becoming CEO, the CEO would be called in only after everyone had arrived. But I believed I had to be present from the start. On a day when we were discussing salary structure, I got fed up. I waited 45 minutes for everyone to come in. When everyone was finally seated I said "thank you and the meeting has ended, you have all taken half an hour to come for a meeting as if I have nothing to do. If you would like to discuss salary structure we can do it at a meeting two weeks from now." That was the last time anyone was late. People learned that productivity and time are correlated. They thought I was fanatical about time-keeping and integrity, and called me bossy, crazy and arrogant. But many of these structures are still in place. I had to change to a style that was not really me and was not 100% confident with and I felt I was not giving people a chance. Looking back it was the right style to get things done in that institution. Dawn Atak, senior female CEO, ICT sector

Senior male leader, Personal experience: "Success earns you a seat at the table"
Success brings credibility and failure to deliver it early in a new setting
brings about difficulty in earning your seat at the table. I did a project
based on my experiences in Kenya that I was sure would work and it
did. After that they accepted me as very different in my approach to
things, but productive. So I could get away with being different.
Capo, senior male business leader, Retail and media sector

Doing good: Doing good, as an attribute of a leader, is mostly mentioned
in the context of the need for a leader to have an impact on the wider envi-
ronment, feeling social responsibility in terms of impacting a change for
disadvantaged groups in society. The importance of this attribute is men-
tioned mostly by young interviewees (four), and interestingly only by one
senior interviewee. Three young male interviewees mentioned the issue
more than once. For young people this is, in most cases, their core leader-
ship ambition, for which they see the need and also witness a gap in the
behaviour of current leaders. In some cases, this relates back to the chal-
lenges they experienced or witnessed in their own childhood and upbringing.

Young male leader, Personal experience: "I want to light candles"
In my own village and region on the Lake (Victoria) there are very high
rates of HIV/Aids—some of the highest in the country. As a kid I grew
up with so many orphans around me, and there was a stigma attached
to this as well. This is still there. Also people seem to be aware of the
risks, but do not care—nowadays even less than before. For me this is
my rationale to want change—to influence the negative and fatalistic
attitude—and experience a level of fulfilment if I could achieve a change.
I am not complete; I have to continue to work on myself. My passion is
to make people's lives better, especially of youth. I have initiated a liveli-
hoods programme in my home county, hoping to reduce the number of
HIV infections as a result of the common "Sex for Fish business". If we
could just be successful with a few people, this would save not only them
but also their kids. I am also looking for a way to do a master's degree
in Development studies. I want to continue lighting more candles,
everyone has one but some are struggling to locate theirs but I am posi-
tive about the future. Henry, young male leader, ICT sector

Young interviewees also remarked on the need for ethical leaders and compassion, as is indicated by the example below.

> *Young male leader, Personal experience: "Ethical and compassionate leaders"*
> The aim of our outdoor leadership training is to produce ethical leaders for the future who are aware, self and environmentally conscious, and have fun. It is my nature to be compassionate and I aim to feel and know others' struggle and put myself in others' shoes because I have to understand others to solve problems. I find it most difficult to deal with people who are not able to be compassionate and make decisions lacking ability to see other people's feelings or needs. Mr Safari, junior male leader, Education sector

Integrity: The issue of integrity was specifically mentioned in five of the interviews, mostly by senior leaders. Indirectly this is also mentioned in the context of doing good that we discussed earlier. One young male interviewee voiced his hope for young leaders as follows: "Do not be corrupt—as a leader try to practice servant leadership and stay out of people's way—let them do their work, facilitate them, and be there to help them."

In recounting difficult situations at work, several interviewees talked about the challenge of dealing with dishonesty and integrity issues at work.

> *Senior female leader, Personal experience: "Dealing with the misuse of vehicles"*
> Once when I was in charge of administration, people who were senior to me were misusing vehicles, they were abusing their position. It was tricky, because I did not want to confront them, but at the end of the day—during an audit—I would be responsible and held accountable for it. Ultimately, I proposed to senior management the introduction of procedures that would make staff accountable. This was accepted and became the new policy and managed to stop the misuse. I thus managed to solve the situation amicably and without personal confrontation. Sifa, senior female leader, Finance sector

Senior male leader, Personal experience: "Curbing personal interests"
There at times can be a misconception that people are appointed to the board to make money or to get their relatives employed or awarded tenders. Whenever I felt a board member was going off track I would call them in, one on one, and tell them that I have information about their possible personal interest—relative employed, etc. I would remind them that we are public institution and inform them that all applicants irrespective of their relations would have to go through the transparent open process. If they make it to be hired, it is because of the system and not personal influence. We instituted anonymous qualification such as IQ exam where candidates are listed by code so you don't know who is who. George Wandera, senior male CEO, Construction sector

One of the features of leadership expressed here is that of conflict avoidance. Leaders find it particularly hard to avoid conflict when faced with issues of integrity. Their ability to deal with integrity issues while avoiding conflict has been enhanced by new digital technologies. Not only do these technologies offer ways to curb corruption, but they are particularly appealing as they also avoid face-to-face confrontation.

A survey respondents view (young man without leadership experience): Transparency, technology, and engaging the populace
The world is moving more and more to digital systems, which means that the leaders will need to be able to use technology in their day to day tasks. The use of technology will also, probably, lead to a more transparent society, and the leaders will also need to engage with the population, to inform them of what the leader is pursuing, and also address the concerns of the people. (Survey respondent)

Adaptability: Many of the leaders' personal experiences link to the need to be flexible, able to adapt to the circumstances or organizational culture, in order to get things done. This attribute also often determines how well a leader is able to manage changes. In three interviews, senior leaders expanded on this in more detail.

Senior female leader, Personal experience: "Managing a difficult transition"
One of the difficult things to work on as a leader was the national ban on plastic bags. I had to guide transitioning supermarkets from giving free bags to selling bags. Free bags had been one of their largest advertising tools. I had to show them the value over and above the money saving for supporting the plastic bag ban. I did this through consultations and using case studies from other parts of the world. I managed to show them that their greatest fear that customers would revolt was not the experience of anywhere else, as long as they were given solutions of reusable things. However, it is still a challenge to get customers to carry the reusable bags. Judy Wambui, senior female CEO, Retail sector

Senior female leader, Personal experience: "Thinking out of the box"
The situation required me to be very innovative and think out of the box. If I was told something was impossible, I would look within the law and find a way to make it possible. I could not trust people 100% and had to read the law and documents and do research to make innovations. Dawn Atak, senior female CEO, ICT sector

Senior male business leader, Personal experience: "From a one-man show to a management team"
A general manager of a company in Mombasa was used to running the company on his own, holding all responsibilities. Under new management after an international merger it was decided to change the organizational structure and bring in a high-level management team. Therefore the GM had to delegate responsibilities to experienced professionals who were recruited from outside the company. The GM recounts: "I was open to this change, which was for me a novel approach and went along with the required changes. It took a while for me to get used to making decisions as a team and learning how to think with others. It turned out that I actually appreciated the support of the experienced colleagues and the sharing of responsibilities, as before it was lonely at the top."

9.8   The Road to Becoming a Leader: Leadership Development

This section explores how people have become leaders, their role models, and different initiatives for development of leadership skills.

9.8.1   Determinants of Success

All interviewees explained how they had become a leader and what factors contributed to this. Senior women leaders expanded on this in more detail and mentioned it twice or more often. Several factors that influence being or becoming a leader were mentioned, including the following: order of birth (with firstborns assigned more responsibilities in the family); leadership role experiences at school or university or in sports; the influence of others, such as parents, mentors, and guides; and being recognized by people above in the organization. Almost all the leaders we spoke with had some opportunity, often in the form of responsibility, given to them either by parents (as oldest child), in school (as prefects), in sports or university (as captains), or at work. As such, people were more chosen than self-made. Many remain in a system that rewards their hard work and skills but is dependent on internal recognition rather than self-promotion. A few reflections of leaders are presented below.

> *Senior female leader, Personal experience: "Being the eldest girl I was given a lot of responsibility"*
> When I look back I have always been in positions of leadership from when I was young. I was class prefect, senior prefect, games captain, and hockey captain. I was conscious that if someone is not doing something you should take charge. I was also the eldest girl in my family, and although I had an older brother, I was given a lot of responsibility and was forced to be in charge of my siblings. I was forced to do things because I was a girl. By the time I was in school, I was very responsible. I did well at Moi University and came out the top student in my Faculty. Dawn Atak, senior female leader, ICT sector

Senior female leader, Personal experience: "Born a leader?"
I am a responsible and dependable person. Prior to my current job, I was in positions that would have positioned me to move higher, but I doubted my ability. But there were people who saw there were traits in me that showed I was leadership leaning. For instance, they said I had the education, the personality, and the character for leadership. I could not see it. Now, by character I am very prone to leading. Before I used to think it was being helpful. For instance, we are in a meeting and no one is taking charge so I would stand up and take charge. Perhaps it is from being the eldest as my dad gave me a lot of responsibilities; the rest of my siblings picked up on that and would look to me for guidance. In addition, I lost my mum in 2010 so there were her shoes to fit into, as she was always the "go-to" person before. Dad passed on the following year 2011 so I really became the firstborn. Judy Wambui, a senior female business leader, retail sector

Senior female leader, Personal experience: "Discover your passion!"
My journey so far has taught me that it is important that you need to discover what drives you, your passion—the rest will then follow by itself. I found my niche eventually in governance. Continuous learning and exploring new areas creates new perspectives and opens new doors. Interaction with people in various spheres opens your eyes or opens doors for you and gives you different perspectives from what you held. Five to ten years back I did have a very different perspective on what I thought was my passion and my work, but with time you get to know better from experience. Luck also plays a role in that you need to be at the right place, at the right time. Finally faith in God is also crucial in all you do. Sifa, a senior female business leader, Finance sector

Only one senior male leader mobilized his leadership skills, identified through parents (firstborn) and school (prefect) to seek out his own promotion, demonstrating to a stranger how he could transform the stranger's organization. Rather than waiting to be recognized and

letting competence speak for itself, he pushed further by taking a risk. These stories also reflect the nature/nurture debate, and we can conclude that it seems often a mixture of factors causing someone to become a leader.

9.8.2   Role Models and Mentors

Having an inspiring role model has been very important for many of our interviewees. Half of them mentioned this specifically, predominantly young male leaders (with one of them mentioning this multiple times).

Junior male leader, Personal experience: "You need role models and mentors"
Henry was born and grew up in Western Kenya, close to Lake Victoria. His dad was a primary school teacher but died when Henry was in primary school. Life was a struggle after that; his mother had to feed the family from some livestock and some petty trading. He wanted to be a teacher. "My teacher would send me to buy bread for him—I only got bread at Christmas, so this made me think that I also wanted to be a teacher. In the village, you do not have many examples apart from a teacher and also a doctor—who was a mere pharmacist, but we called him doctor. If you want to grow you need a mentor, someone to look up to. These do not have to be prominent people. Instead they can be people near to you, and they can be even unaware that you see them as your mentor. I picked a few mentors and observed everything they did very closely. This included a youth leader in a church environment. I admired his confidence and how he encouraged people and got things done. Another mentor was the director in my organization. I watched her from a distance, did not directly talk to her, but watched how she handled things and learned a lot that way." Henry, young male business leader, ICT sector

Senior male leader, Personal experience: "My GM was my guide"
I had great respect for the general manager who sent me for training. He got us through difficult things. It got to the point we would do pretty much anything he asked. He had become a guy we trusted to lead. He allowed us to question and took up our ideas most of the time. We hardly did anything we did not create and he would just tweak things. He was also as tough as nails. When he told me I would be general manager, I had to think seriously because he was not just another GM. Capo, senior CEO, Retail and media sector

Having an inspiring role model and a mentor has really benefitted many of the leaders in their development and in dealing with specific challenges and difficult situations.

Not all interviewees mentioned the benefits of role models. Our data suggest that women have benefited less from having role models, which could be related to there being less female leaders which could set an example for them. Some mentioned the benefit of their schooling, skills development, and the importance of reading books, including science fiction books, philosophy, and, as indicated below, books on politics and wars.

Young male leader, Personal experience: "I benefited from skills and books"
I don't have role models. Rather I think of leadership as skills. I had teachers at university and people who helped me gain skills. I also read a lot starting with philosophy when 13. I was the librarian in high school so had access to books. The Principal was American and so he left me in the library, allowed me to take home books. My interests were politics and war such as stories of Genghis Khan, Ivan the terrible, and Pharaohs of Egypt, which made me ask throughout my schooling—What is being great? Mr Safari, young leader, Education sector

9.8.3   Skill Development

Skill development was considered an important issue by eight interviewees, especially by senior male leaders. However, examples of formal leadership skill development activities, like training and coaching, were rare. A few leaders had participated in formal training events in their companies, but most had not. Also, in terms of developing the leaders in their companies or groups, our interviewees resorted to devising their own training system and programmes.

Senior male leader, Personal experience: "I want my team to be independent and ambitious"
I have some experience with formal training conducted by outsiders—often based on western training programmes. My experience is that this makes no difference whatsoever. Therefore, I conduct training for my staff by myself; I have developed my own system and materials. I organize retreats at a nice place out of town for two days. We sit together, I tell them now we are in this room together there are no hierarchical differences, everyone is equal— we all can participate. I invest time and money in developing my people and my teams. I want to reach a point where they think for themselves, take initiative and I am not needed to give instructions. Important is to achieve the highest quality in what we do as a business. I am ambitious, and I want my team to be ambitious. Kaimenyi Mwangi, senior leader, Construction/hospitality sector

For the youth, autonomy and innovation along with team building were considered important parts of leadership. In the rapidly changing and flexible environment in which most leaders were working, the leaders had to find innovative ways to build teams and manage people, as well as ways to implement their broader philosophy of inspiration and team cohesion.

Young male leader, Personal experience: "Training a group of peer mentors/influencers"

As I personally could not interact and influence 300 people at the same time, this is when I thought of working with a few youth who had the ability to influence their peers. I developed a scheme of peer mentorship among the young people entering our company. The peer mentors would need to have a similar background in order to be able to influence them. As complementary support, we would have mentors and motivational speakers from outside, advising them—guiding them on what needs to be done.

I work closely with these influencers to ensure they only influence positively, give them responsibilities and trust them. Some have now grown to a higher level than we had expected. My motto is: I have one candle that I can use to light someone else's candle—he or she can do the same to others—as a result the whole place becomes brighter. Using the influencers was the biggest break for me in getting results in my current role. Henry, young male business leader, ICT sector

One interviewee is developing specific African leadership training programmes, as he explains below.

Young male leader, Personal experience: "I believe in outdoor leadership training"

Currently I am trying to start my own leadership school and I have run some independent courses. The courses range from week-long trips to a month in the outdoors where students can learn and practice leading self and each other. The aim is to create compassionate, resilient, and ethical future leaders. I use African (Ubuntu) values and "primitive skills", for example, spear throwing, tracking, making fires, natural history on edible and medicinal plants. I involve sage philosophy/knowledge from elderly cultural liaisons who hike with the students. I also touch on a bit of tech skills including camping, map reading, and environmental ethics. Mr Safari, young male leader, Education sector

9.8.4   Confidence

Building self-confidence and overcoming problems of self-doubt was mentioned by seven interviewees as crucial in the path to becoming a leader.

Senior female leader, Personal experience: Self-confidence lost and found
I never talk about myself. I have no idea how. I don't think this has served me well. Not selling myself is what allowed me for some years to be a subdued character, it did something to my self-confidence. Demanding things from people, I still find this hard and in my "lost years" I was not able to. I would have characterized myself during my lost years as a push-over, but now I stand up for myself and I am not easily swayed. I was self-doubting but now I am confident, I did not believe in myself but now I am totally a believer in myself. I am quite happy and hit my 50s with a bang. Judy Wambui, a senior female business leader, Retail sector

The importance of confidence and not doubting your ability was also a key lesson for a senior leader during his training to be a general manager (GM).

Senior male leader, Personal experience: "Failure is not an option"
My mentor told me that you must back yourself—don't doubt. You don't always know if it would work, but you trust that you have enough ability, intelligence, and people around you to overcome any problem that you meet. In one training session we watched *Apollo 13*. On things going pear-shaped during that trip, the Lead flight director Gene Kranz said: "We've never lost an American in space, we're sure as hell not gonna lose one on my watch! Failure is not an option." In a moment of doubt the leader used one statement that turned the attitude to problem solving to action rather than wallowing. This training session had a great impact on my attitude to leadership. Capo, senior male CEO, Retail and media sector

A senior female leader provides the following advice to young female leaders:

> *Senior female leader, Personal experience: "Do what you have to do and do it well"*
> My advice to young women is that you don't have to wave your hand frantically to be heard, but rather do what you have to do and do it well, always know that where a man has to take one step you may have to take three, be patient about it, if you feel there is a fight in front of you don't get emotional but fight with facts and dig deep. If appointed to a task force/board make sure it is something you can do. When part of something, believe in yourself and do the best you can with integrity and humility. That is to say, humility to the level where you are supposed to be humble—if it is issues of integrity don't be humble at all. Where struggling, talk to the right person, look for a mentor in or out of your organization or industry, and feel free to talk to them about challenges. Be selective of who they are and how many. There will always be some people who don't have your interest at heart. It is how you rise out of it is where your strength comes. Continue doing what you believe in and don't let others derail you. Be careful of who you speak to. Don't be over-friendly and over-trusting of people you first meet in the job. Dawn Atak, senior female leader, ICT sector

9.9   CONCLUSIONS/DISCUSSION

The perceptions on hierarchy impact strongly on people's expectations and behaviour. Our case study indicates a shift in the attitudes towards hierarchy, with the majority of survey respondents and interviewees favouring less hierarchy than they witness currently in society. There are also several differences between private sector and government structures, with the latter requiring a more structured and at times authoritarian approach than the private sector, where results orientated and less hierarchical leadership style is more common.

Expectations of today's business leaders include a shift towards more strategic leadership and people-oriented leadership styles. The survey results, backed up by leaders' personal experiences, indicate a major shift

in perceptions of effective leadership, typically from authoritarian/control focused leadership styles towards people-oriented leadership styles, based on the concepts of participation and consultation. Interestingly, women are seen to be more able to practice this style of leadership.

Leaders' diversity: The group of leaders in Kenya is becoming more and more diverse. Increasingly women leaders and youth leaders are taking up leadership positions. Both groups have different, often novel, approaches that they bring to the workplace. This change in the status quo is causing some resistance, mostly from men and from some senior leaders. Others, however, see the benefits from diverse leadership, often more people-oriented styles, by women and youth, and appreciate their different approaches and skills.

Leadership attributes: In our survey and interviews five attributes emerged as being important for leaders: decisiveness, candidness, doing good, honesty/integrity, and adaptability. Decisiveness, integrity, and adaptability were mostly mentioned by senior female leaders, while doing good was mostly mentioned by young male leaders.

The road to being a leader: Common factors for success in how people have become leaders include order of birth (with firstborns assigned more responsibilities in the family); experiences at school or university; influence of others, such as parents, mentors, and guides; and being recognized by people above. Half of our interviewees, especially men, have benefitted from having role models. Formal initiatives for development of leadership skills have so far been very limited; most leaders learned through learning by doing, informal mentoring, and reading. In terms of developing the leaders in their companies or groups, many leaders resorted to devising their own training system and programmes. Finally, in the process of becoming a leader and carrying out this responsibility, many leaders emphasize the importance of increasing confidence.

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