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AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

Abstract

This paper provides an overview of the current state of the authentic leadership domain. It identifies the factors that inspire authentic leadership development, provides a description of the followers' perception of the construct, and explores how these perceptions shape authentic leadership. To this end, 80 articles issued between 1970 and 2021 were methodically identified and analysed. The review shows that authentic leaders develop in phases which may be the missing link that connects the two differing views on the development of self. Also, findings reveal that the followers' perception is crucial to the development of authentic leadership, however, these perceptions have not been examined adequately, as scholars have focused on the bidirectional nature of these perceptions that is; how leaders influence the perceptions of followers in the attainment of organisational outcomes and how follower perceptions impact authentic leader effectiveness. This neglects the iterative role that the followers' perceptions play in the developmental process of authentic leadership. Finally, the review highlights the dominance of specific regions evident in the conceptualisation, thereby limiting the understanding of the construct across diverse contexts. The relevance of this review is not in doubt as it presents the justification for further investigation by researchers and provides the necessary evidence for policymakers and practitioners.

Keywords

Authentic Leadership, Perception, Authentic Leaders, Followers

Track: Leadership and Leadership Development

1.0 Introduction

The call for authentic leadership is often attributed to the absence of ethical conduct within contemporary organisations and the instability within the environment (Johnsen, 2018, Mehmood et al., 2019, Harrison, 2018). This unpredictability contributed immensely to the emergence of a new form of leadership to address gaps and facilitate positive outcomes at the end of the 20th century (Luthans and Avolio, 2003, Gardner *et al.*, 2005). This uncertainty has been further amplified by the COVID 19 pandemic which has once again brought the conduct of leaders under public scrutiny (Ladkin, 2020, Wilson, 2020). Authentic leadership has been positioned as an effective leadership approach in ambiguous situations especially in the time of crisis. Therefore, to increase the understanding of the construct, boundaries of existing knowledge must be uncovered to map out the current knowledge and identify gaps within the domain (Xiao and Watson, 2019). Hence, a systematic literature review of the field has been conducted because "systematic reviews" can inform us about what is known, how it is known, and how this varies across studies through an explicit rigorous methodology (Gough *et al.*, 2012, Gough *et al.*, 2013).

Within the domain of authentic leadership, the first and most influential review of the field was conducted by Gardner *et al.* (2011). When the review was conducted, conceptual descriptions and quantitative contributions dominated the field (Iszatt-White and Kempster, 2019). Only two articles (Jensen and Luthans, 2006, Tate, 2008) of the ninety-one articles included in the review empirically examined authentic leadership perceptions (Steffens *et al.*, 2016). However, none of the studies examined the specific follower perceptions that shape authentic leadership development. Even though there have been earlier calls for scholars to investigate these underlying processes (Cooper *et al.*, 2005, Shamir and Eilam, 2005, Fields, 2007). Interestingly, scholars are beginning to examine these processes (Steffens *et al.*, 2016) but with emphasis on the impact of perceptions of authentic leadership outcomes. Consequently, more research is necessary to provide a clear understanding of the underlying processes.

Other reviews have been conducted within the domain such as Banks et al. (2016) meta-analytical review of authentic and transformational leadership. The paper compared the two constructs; evaluating the construct validity of authentic leadership. The findings of the study reveal that authentic and transformational leadership are closely linked indicating construct redundancy and no apparent incremental validity between the two constructs. A scoping review was also conducted by Suhonen *et al.* (2018) within the health sector. The review aimed to identify gaps and chart the path for future research efforts. The findings of the review revealed that four research themes were prevalent across the 29 articles included in the study. These themes are "wellbeing at work, work environment, authentic leadership promotion, and patient care quality". The prevalent use of quantitative research method, authentic leadership questionnaire (ALQ), and cross-sectional research design was also evident. Similarly, another systematic review was conducted by Alilyyani *et al.* (2018) within the health sector. The objective of this review was to examine the antecedents, mediators, and outcomes linked with authentic leadership in the healthcare sector. The article emphasises the relational nature of authentic leadership and the consequent effects on organisational outcomes. The review was based on Avolio et al. (2004) authentic leadership theory which led to the advancement of an adapted model based on the findings from the health sector.

More recently, a narrative review was conducted by Iszatt-White and Kempster (2019). The article examines the development of authentic leadership and called for a reconceptualisation of the construct to address the theoretical ambiguity that has plagued the leadership approach. A consistent limitation across all the reviews assessed is that all the reviews do not examine

the followers' perceptions of authentic leadership, with specificity to how these perceptions shape authentic leadership development in leaders. Hence, the relevance of this review, as this paper reviews for the first time the current state of knowledge with regards to the perceptions of followers. Consequently, the purpose of the SLR is to explore the concept of authentic leadership; investigating its meaning to leaders, followers, and configurations within organisations. Consistent with the above, the paper adopted the SLR methodology advanced by Tranfield *et al.* (2003). The article is divided into four sections. The first section provides the background to the review. The second section presents an overview of the three-stage methodology adopted within the study. It outlines the search strings, the selection criteria of the journals, and the main stages of the review. The third section presents the findings and answers to the review questions. The final section provides the conclusion, charts the path for future research, and highlights the limitation of the study.

2.0 Methodology

The systematic literature review adopts the three-stage process advanced by Tranfield *et al.* (2003). The key stages are Stage 1: Planning the review, Stage 2: Conducting the review, and Stage 3: Reporting and Dissemination. This aligns with the view of several scholars that a well-conducted review involves planning, conducting, and reporting the review (Kitchenham and Charters, 2007, Brereton and McGlinchey, 2020). Also, this three-stage process has been used and verified within extant literature (Harrison *et al.*, 2016, Sawyerr and Harrison, 2019, Mcquade *et al.*, 2020, Clark *et al.*, 2019). The stages are described below:

2.1 Stage 1: Planning the review

To commence the review process, a review panel was established. The panel members were tasked with three main responsibilities namely; to ascertain the review need, specify the review questions and develop a review protocol. In facilitating this stage, a scoping study was conducted, which revealed the nature of research within the authentic leadership field. The scoping study was fundamental to the development of the keywords and at the end shaped the review protocol. The key outcomes of this stage were the development of the review questions and protocol.

Review questions

The first outcome was the development of the review questions which were practical, thought-provoking, ethical, and well defined. These questions are:

- RQ1.* What is authentic leadership?
- RQ2.* What are the factors that inspire authentic leadership development in leaders?
- RQ3.* What is the followers' perception of authentic leadership?
- RQ4.* How do follower perceptions shape authentic leadership development?

The second outcome of stage 1 was the development of the review protocol. The inclusion and exclusion criteria were developed based on the research inquiry (Denyer and Tranfield, 2009, Gough *et al.*, 2017). These guiding principles were used to assess the suitability of studies for the review. Table 1 below provides a snapshot of the review protocol adopted for the review.

Table 1. Systematic review protocol

<i>Details</i>	<i>Description</i>
Panel	3 Members
Purpose of study	The purpose of the SLR is to explore the concept of authentic leadership; investigating its meaning to leaders, followers, and configurations within organisations in a developing economy.
Review Questions	RQ1. What is authentic leadership? RQ2. What are the factors that inspire authentic leadership development in leaders? RQ3. What are the followers' perceptions of authentic leadership? RQ4. How do follower perceptions shape authentic leadership development?
Inclusion Criteria	Peer-reviewed journal articles published between 1970- 2021 Articles originally published in the English Language Papers (positive and negative) that address one or more of the research questions Papers that focus on authentic leadership Papers published between 1970– 2020.
Exclusion Criteria	Articles focused on other styles of leadership Papers unrelated to the research questions Articles without access to full texts Papers not in peer-reviewed publications (i.e. conference or journals) The review excludes grey literature (e.g. book chapters, reports, etc.)
Databases	<u>Business Source Ultimate</u> EBSCO Emerald Ingenta connect Sage Journals Science direct Springer link Taylor and Francis Web of Science Wiley Online

2.2 Stage 2: Conducting the review

The review process began with the identification of the keywords. The keywords were derived from the review questions (Kitchenham and Charters, 2007, Xiao and Watson, 2019) scoping study, and suggestions from the review panel. The keywords and search strings are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2. Search Strings

<i>Search String Number</i>	<i>Strings</i>
Search string 01	Authentic*
Search string 1a	Lead*
Search string 1b	Develop*
Search string 1c	“Authentic leadership”
Search string 02	Lead*
Search string 2a	Authentic*
Search string 2b	Develop*
Search string 2c	“Authentic leadership”
Search string 03	Authentic leadership
Search string 3a	Oil and Gas
Search string 04	Authentic*
Search string 4a	Follow*
Search string 4b	Develop*
Search string 4c	Authentic leadership
Search string 05	Follow*
Search string 5a	Authentic*
Search string 5b	Develop*
Search string 5c	Authentic leadership
Search string 06	Follow*
Search string 6a	Perception OR Feelings OR Emotion*
Search string 6c	Authentic leadership
Search string 08	Authentic Leadership (For Google Scholar)
Lead* means leader, leadership, etc. Authentic* means authentic, authenticity, etc. Follow* means follower, followership	

Identification of Studies

The search strategy which included a pilot search, database search, and a manual search was completed in February 2021. The processes are described below:

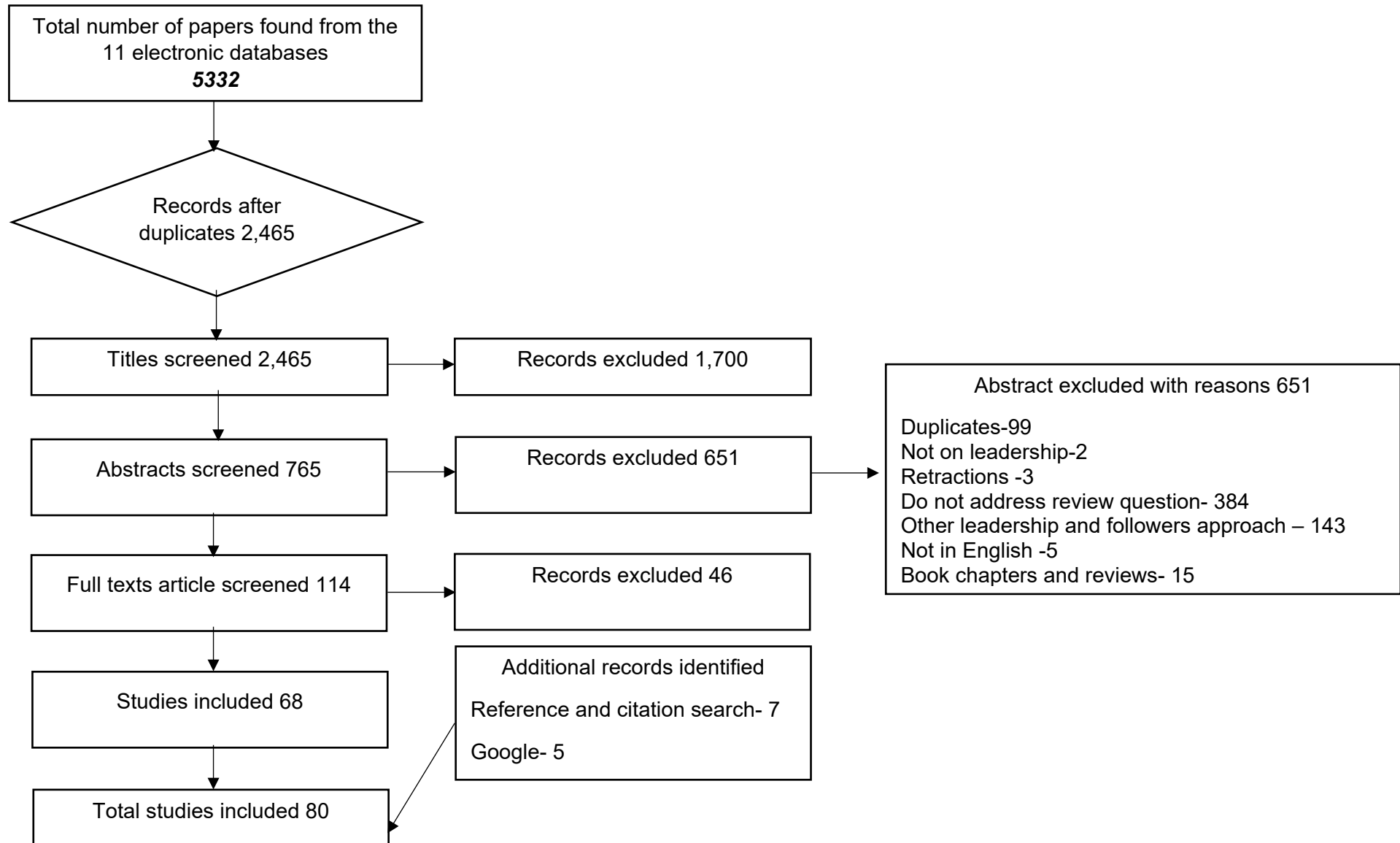
1. The pilot search commenced with a broad search on Google Scholar. The results of the first 20 pages were examined. This led to the discovery of important articles, identification of databases that prominently featured authentic leadership and confirmed the abundance of studies for the review.

2. A pilot search was conducted across three databases to assess the correctness of the chosen keywords. This led to search strings being modified to fit each database and appropriate indexing style (Tawfik *et al.*, 2019). To confirm the reliability of the keywords the results from the pilot search were compared to studies that are familiar to the researcher to assess the performance of the keywords as recommended by Kitchenham and Charters (2007). This proved beneficial for the review as a demonstration of a good search is the discovery of relevant articles that were unknown before the search (Gough *et al.*, 2013).
3. A systematic search was conducted across 10 databases using the refined keywords. These databases were selected for the review because they are recognised academically as the most appropriate for management research and they have been used for systematic literature reviews by several scholars (Harrison *et al.*, 2016, Brown and Bell, 2018, Mcquade *et al.*, 2020). The search period covered over 50 years of research to ensure an exhaustive review was conducted. A total of 5,332 results were obtained from the searches.

Screening of Studies

The broad search for studies that meet both the inclusion and exclusion criteria yielded a total of 5,332 results. Duplicated studies were removed using one key parameter: all references with the same title, author, and published in the same year. Consequently, 2,867 articles were removed from the search results. This cumulated to a total of 2,465 articles within the search pool. Based on the screening of titles 1,700 articles were removed from the search pool leaving a total of 765 articles for further evaluation. The final selection of studies was based on the appraisal of the full text. The key consideration during the quality assessment of the articles was the relevance of the articles in addressing the review questions and presentation of findings based on arguments (Gough *et al.*, 2017). Also, articles from journals with impactor factors were considered to be of high quality and consequently included in the review. Well-cited studies were also considered to be of high quality and included in the review. In total 80 articles were included in the review. Figure. 1 provides a flowchart of the literature search and selection procedure using the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Figure 1. Summary of Literature search



For the data synthesis, a thematic approach was adopted because it facilitated the synthesis of original findings in a transparent manner resulting in the unambiguous development of new concepts. Also, it led to the development of reliable answers to the review questions. An attempt was made to preserve context by providing structured summaries of all the included articles detailing aims, setting, and samples (Thomas and Harden, 2008).

2.3 Stage 3: Reporting and dissemination

A systematic review of authentic leadership was reported with full details of the review process (Okoli and Schabram, 2010). The rationale for all the criteria both inclusion and exclusion were clearly described in the report and a flow diagram of the searching, screening, and quality assessment provided.

3.0 Findings of the review

The findings from the review are provided in two sub-sections. The first section provides a graphical representation of the descriptive analysis of all the included studies. It offers inferences on the structure of the data. The second section provides answers to the four review questions. The sum of all the findings provides a current perspective of the field and will guide future research efforts.

3.1 Descriptive analysis

The section outlines the characteristics of all the included studies using charts, diagrams, and graphs. It provides data on the type of study, methodological approaches adopted, data collection techniques, frequency and spread of citation, number of publications, literature sources, and geographical distribution.

Type of study

The findings of the study were spread across conceptual, review, and empirical papers. Within the review, 30% of the papers were conceptual, 64% were empirical and the final 6% were review papers. The results are captured in Figure 2.

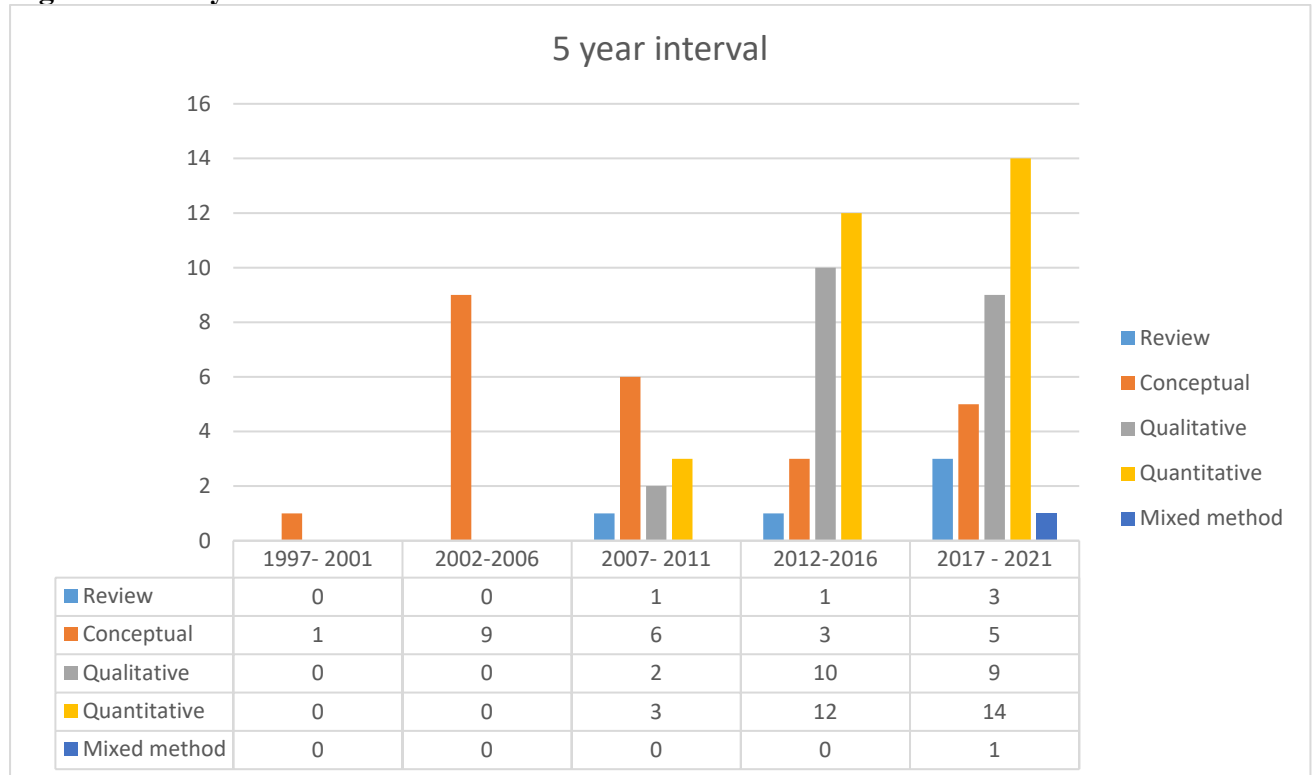
Methodological approaches

The empirical studies within the review adopted both quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. From the findings 57% were quantitative, 41% were qualitative studies and mixed methods contributed 2% of the studies. The results are plotted in figure 2 alongside the years of study.

Number of Articles

The articles in the review are dated from 1997 to 2021. These papers are plotted in figure 2 using a five-year interval. This graph provides an overview of the articles spread over five years, the types of study, and the methodological approach adopted. This was done to present the data concisely.

Figure 2. Five-year interval

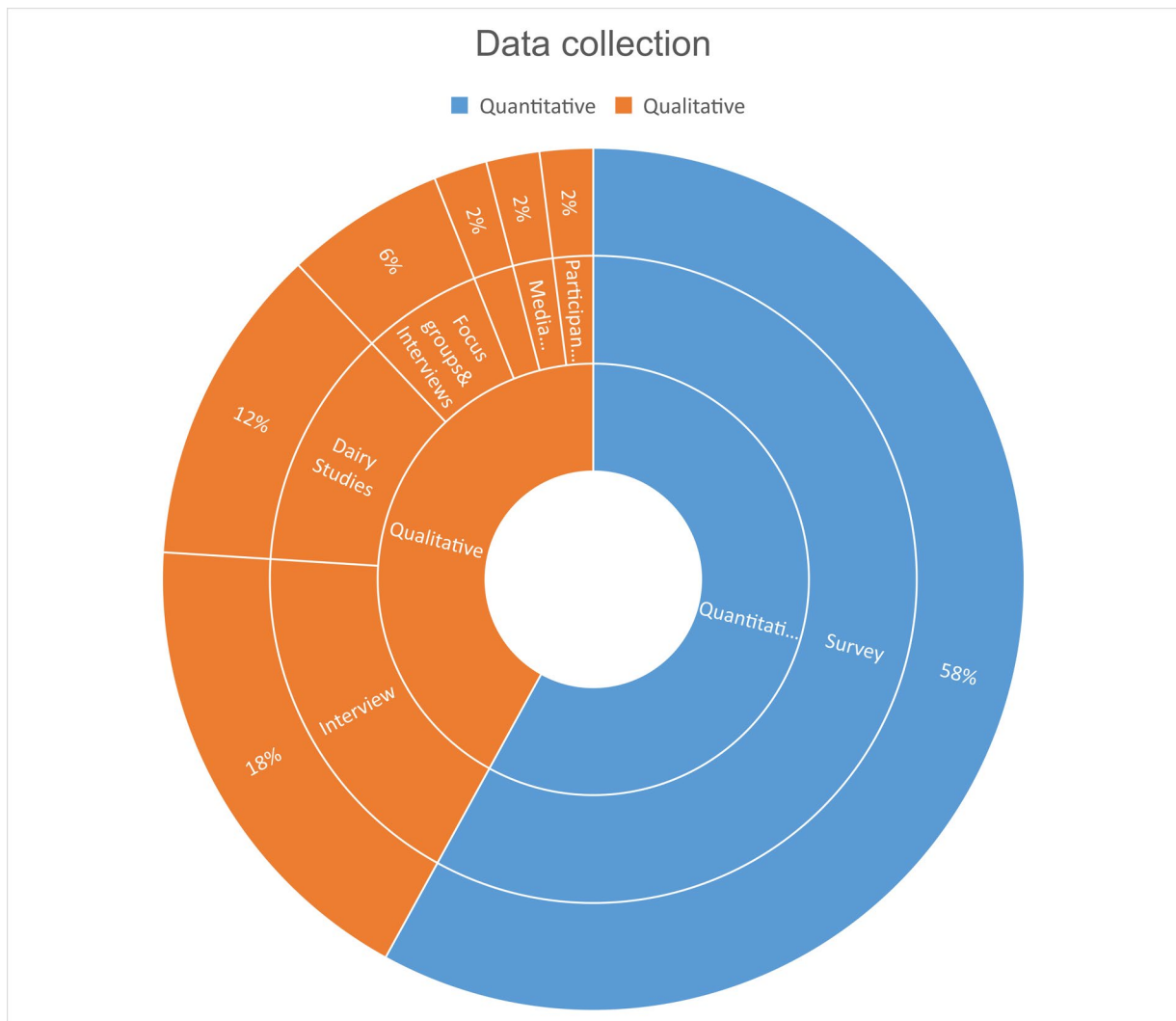


The conceptual papers peaked between 2002 and 2006 and dropped over the decade, but have started gaining traction in recent times. This shows that authentic leadership is a relatively new domain and further research is necessary to ground its conceptualisation.

Data collection techniques

The predominant data collection technique used was surveys and this was expected as most of the studies included in the review are quantitative. Surveys contributed 58% to the data collection techniques. With regards to qualitative studies, there was a combination of data collection techniques which include; interviews contributing 18%, participant observation contributing 2%, dairy studies 12%, and analysis of media articles contributing 2%. Some studies used a combination of focus groups and interviews contributing 6%, a combination of interviews and participant information contributing 2%. This is presented in figure 3 below.

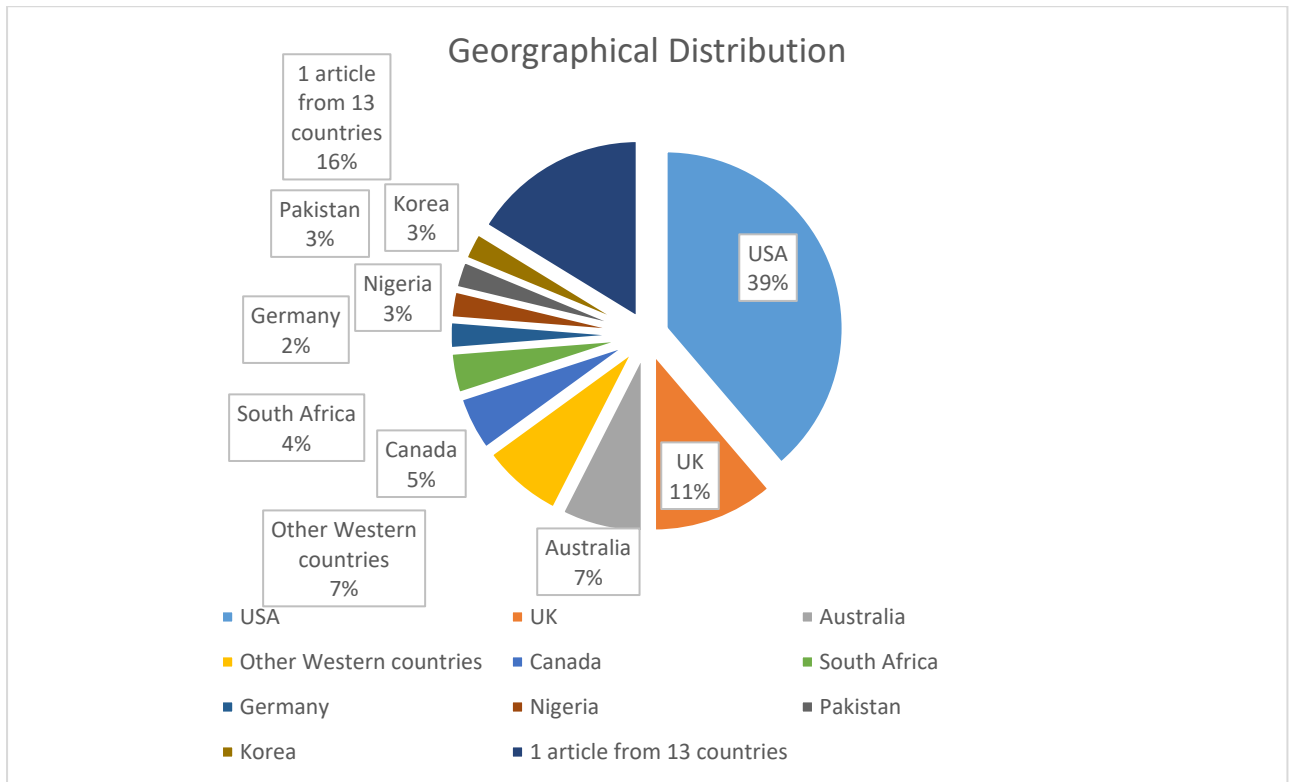
Figure 3. Data collection techniques



Geographical distribution of studies

A large number of research articles emerged from developed countries with a total number of 66 studies representing 82% of articles within the review. Articles from developing countries contributed 18% to the search pool with 1 study that sampled across developing and developing countries. In particular, 31 articles were found within the United States of America. This was closely followed by the UK with nine studies, Australia accounted for six studies and four studies were within Canada. Also, three studies were found in South Africa. The other countries contributed between one and two papers. There were also eight articles across multiple western countries however two papers collected samples from developing countries as well. The results provide evidence that research on authentic leadership is rooted within a western perspective. Figure 4 below shows the geographical distribution of the articles.

Figure 4. Geographical distribution of articles



Only 14 articles examined authentic leadership within a developing economy perspective as detailed in table 3.

Table 3. Papers on authentic leadership in developing nations

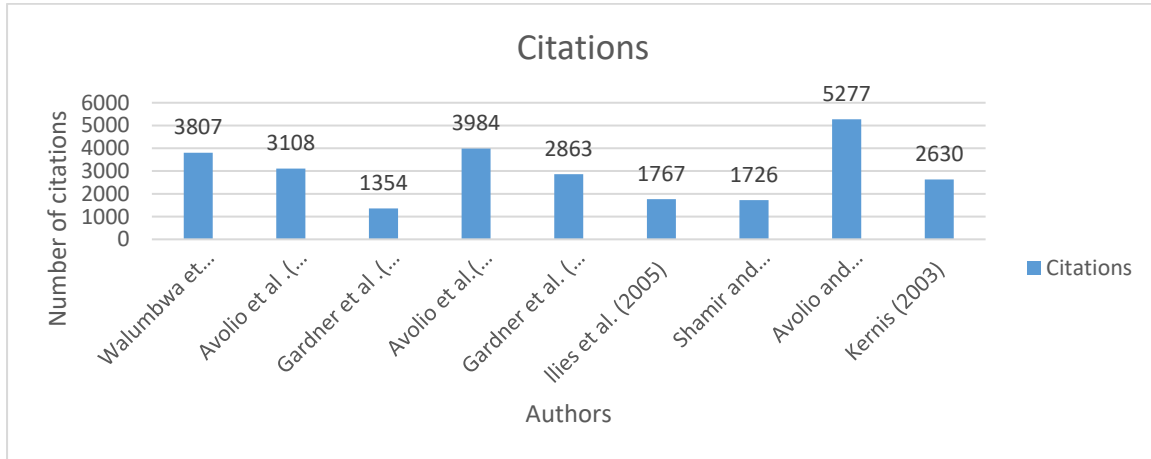
<i>Developing country</i>	<i>Number of Articles</i>	<i>Researcher</i>
Pakistan	2	Mehmood et al. (2019), Bakari et al. (2017)
South Africa	3	Olckers et al. (2020), Hendricks and Toth-Cohen (2018), Wulffers et al. (2016)
Nigeria	2	Emuwa and Fields (2017), Balogun et al. (2020)
India	2	Khilji et al. (2015), Shrivastava (2018)
Korea	2	Joo and Nimon (2014), Joo and Jo (2017)
China	1	Zhang et al. (2012b)
Isreal	1	Shamir and Eilam (2005)
Lebanon	1	Sidani and Rowe (2018)

Citations

The number of citations varied across the selected studies. The article with the most citation was written by Avolio and Gardner (2005). This article "Authentic leadership development: Getting to the root of positive forms of leadership" is often considered a seminal work because it provides an overview of the authentic leadership field describing the factors that have contributed to the emergence of the construct. The article describes in detail the conceptual foundations, definitions, components, and features of authentic leadership. The article has

5,277 citations. In contrast, three articles do not have any citations and this is not surprising as these articles were published in 2020. 28 articles within the review have over 100 citations each. Figure 5 outlines the 9 most cited articles within the review and this figure shows the prominence of some authors within the domain.

Figure 5. Overview of citations



Literature Sources

The articles reviewed were published across a variety of 50 journals. The Leadership Quarterly published the most articles in the review. The most prominent journals are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Overview of literature sources

Details	Description
The Leadership Quarterly	17 articles
Leadership (Sage)	5 articles
Journal of Leadership and Organisational behaviour	4 articles
Journal of Business Ethics	3 articles
Leadership and Organisational Development	2 articles
Australian Journal of Management	2 articles
SA Journal of Human Resource Management	2 articles
Journal of Management	2 articles
Advances in Developing Human Resources	2 articles
Strategic HR Review	2 articles

Interestingly, 6 of the most cited papers were published by The Leadership Quarterly.

3.2 Answering the review questions

This section outlines the findings that address the review questions of the SLR. The section is divided into four key parts in line with the review questions.

RQ1. What is authentic leadership?

The construct of authentic leadership has received considerable scholarly and practitioner attention yet, it is plagued with criticisms, such as lack of conceptual clarity, embodying philosophical ambiguity, and demographic limitations (Crawford *et al.*, 2020, Iszatt-White and

Kempster, 2019). Therefore, suggesting that future studies pursue construct clarity. This has led to the proliferation of research that has contributed immensely to the development as well as the confusion on its conceptualisation. To address the research question, a thematic analysis was conducted on all the included articles of the SLR. The analysis was done using Braun and Clarke (2006) six-stage process for conducting a thematic analysis. The themes from the findings reveal that authentic leadership has been examined from different perspectives. The perspectives are outlined in Table 5.

Table 5. Perspectives on authentic leadership

Perspective	Description	Authors
<i>An ideal leadership approach</i>	Authentic leadership is described based on positive characteristics, features, emotions, and outcomes for both leaders and followers.	Al Zaabi et al. (2016), Avolio et al. (2004), Avolio and Gardner (2005), Beddoes-Jones and Swailes (2015), Duignan (2014), Gardner et al. (2005), Gaddy et al. (2017), Gill and Caza (2018a), Iszatt-White and Kempster (2019), Joo and Nimon (2014), Suhonen et al. (2018), McFarlane (2011).
<i>A four-dimensional phenomenon</i>	Authentic leadership is described as a four-dimensional behaviour that is mutually reinforcing. These dimensions or components include self-awareness, internalised moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency. It is argued that further investigation on the components that constitute authentic leadership is important to the field because there are divergent views on what components constitute authentic leadership.	Agote et al. (2016), Alilyyani et al. (2018), Alvesson and Einola (2019b), Crawford et al. (2020), Gardner et al. (2005), Ngunjiri and Hernandez (2017), Sims et al. (2017), Walumbwa et al. (2008a), Sidani and Rowe (2018), Peus et al. (2012), Avolio et al. (2009).
<i>A type of transformational leader</i>	Scholars that adopt this perspective argue that authentic leadership and transformational leaders are closely linked. Authentic leadership is described as a form of transformational leadership. Earlier studies on authentic leadership used the concept of authenticity to describe worthy transformational leaders.	Avolio et al. (2009), Joo and Nimon (2014), Banks et al. (2016), Sidani and Rowe (2018).
<i>A dynamic process</i>	It is described as a dynamic process that emerges from the interactions between leaders and followers. An outcome of a legitimate process. Authentic leadership was explored as a relational process where the self-concept is socially constructed.	Ngunjiri and Hernandez (2017), Sims et al. (2017), Sidani and Rowe (2018).

<p><i>A root construct</i></p>	<p>Authentic leadership is described as a root construct for other positive forms of leadership such as transformational, servant, charismatic, spiritual, and ethical leadership. It is argued that the incorporation of ethics in authentic leadership enabled the construct to transcend the limitation of transformational leadership to become a root construct that is not limited by style.</p>	<p>Avolio and Gardner (2005), Banks et al. (2016), Beddoes-Jones and Swailes (2015), Gardner et al. (2005), Peus et al. (2012), Shamir and Eilam (2005), Tibbs et al. (2016).</p>
<p><i>A battle of self</i></p>	<p>Authentic leadership is argued to emerge from authenticity. There two prevailing arguments with regards to authenticity namely the existentialist and the psychological perspectives. These two different perspectives offer wide-ranging implications for the construct of authentic leadership.</p>	<p>Algera and Lips-Wiersma (2012), Joo and Nimon (2014), Sparrowe (2005), Stewart et al. (2017).</p>

Definitions of Authentic Leadership with extant literature

Consequently, definitions of the construct have been proposed by several scholars. The most prominent definition was advanced by Walumbwa *et al.* (2008a) which is arguably is the most quoted, cited, and referenced definition (Agote *et al.*, 2016, Sims *et al.*, 2017, Crawford *et al.*, 2020, Joo and Nimon, 2014, Joo and Jo, 2017). The definition draws from Luthans and Avolio (2003) initial definition to offer a comprehensive description of the construct. Walumbwa *et al.* (2008) argue that self-awareness, internalised moral perspective self (which reflect self-regulatory processes), balanced processing of data, and relational transparency are key components of authentic leadership. See Table 6.

Table 6. List of definitions

Author(s) Year	Definition
Avolio <i>et al.</i> (2004)	Authentic leaders "act following deep personal values and convictions, to build credibility and win the respect and trust of followers" (p. 806)
Avolio <i>et al.</i> (2009)	Authentic leadership is "a pattern of transparent and ethical leader behaviour that encourages openness in sharing information needed to make decisions while accepting input from those who follow" (p. 424)
Bishop (2013)	Authentic leadership is "much more than being true to oneself. Authenticity involves integrity, ethics, morals, values, self, relationships, and learning" (p.5)
Gill and Caza (2018a)	"AL is defined as a set of interrelated behaviours concerning how leaders act toward followers, make ethical decisions, and use information"
Sidani and Rowe (2018)	Authentic leadership represents legitimated follower perceptions of a leader's authenticity which are activated by moral judgments.
Walumbwa <i>et al.</i> (2008)	Authentic leadership refers to "a pattern of leader behaviour that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of Information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development" (p. 94)

Several of the definitions above include outcomes, which have been described as a shortcoming in the conceptualisation of the construct of authentic leadership (Alvesson and Einola, 2019b).

RQ2. What are the factors that inspire authentic leadership development in leaders?

The factors that inspire authentic leadership development have received considerable attention from scholars within extant literature. This reiterates the relevance of authentic leadership and reflects an interest in stimulating authentic leadership development of leaders. The findings on the factors are classified into two broad categories; internally and externally motivated factors.

Internal Factors: Within organisations, male managers easily perceive themselves as authentic leaders and can identify easily with their organisations. In contrast, female managers are constrained by role incongruity (Monzani *et al.*, 2015). Consequently, female leaders working in male-dominated sectors or roles are inspired to develop authentic leadership to

succeed and be effective (Tibbs *et al.*, 2016). Leaders may also be inspired to develop authentic leadership to advance their ambitions (Stiers *et al.*, 2019b). For instance, with political leaders, the perception of authenticity is closely linked to the success of their political ambition. In the same vein, personal encounters also described as the "power of influence" with authentic leaders inspire authentic leadership development (McFarlane, 2011). In one of the early works on authentic leadership by Gardner *et al.* (2005) factors that inspire authentic leadership development were identified. These factors identified include; both positive and negative trigger events, experiences which span over personal life, career, and educational and trials.

The actions of Rudolph Giuliani in the USA who portrayed authentic leadership characteristics after the September 11 terrorist attack support this argument (Wright, 2015). In the same vein, Shamir and Eilam (2005) suggest that authentic leadership development is stimulated by four key factors namely; hardship, purpose or cause, active learning, and natural stimulation. These internal factors are outwardly stimulated, however, the stimulation is not preplanned but a reaction or response to the external exigencies.

External Factors: With regards to external factors, simulation can be done to inspire authentic leadership development (Wulffers *et al.*, 2016). Consequently, several scholars have proposed and tested several authentic leadership interventions. These interventions vary across leadership programs (Wulffers *et al.*, 2016), research centers (Glowacki-Dudka and Griswold, 2016), training context (Baron and Parent, 2015), and camping (Hendricks and Toth-Cohen, 2018). These interventions are usually conducted in a controlled environment where coaches, colleagues, and other specialists are positioned to guide the process of transformation (Fusco *et al.*, 2015, Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012, Hendricks and Toth-Cohen, 2018). Herein lies the key difference between internally and externally inspired authentic leadership development processes. As internal factors evolve and are managed by the authentic leaders personally while the externally inspired authentic leadership development is guided externally from inception (Baron and Parent, 2015).

Also, several external factors can be simulated. For instance, wilderness experiences of leaders led to increased awareness of self, values, connectedness' and presence triggered the intent to develop authentic leadership (van Droffelaar and Jacobs, 2017). This demonstrates that nature can also trigger authentic leadership development. In summary, authentic leadership development may be inspired by trigger events and crucibles which may be internally or externally inspired (Shannon *et al.*, 2020). These internal and external factors require further research to be well understood. There are several unanswered questions as to the number of trigger events or crucibles required to stimulate and sustain authentic leadership. In the same vein, there is a dearth of research on the long-term effects of these factors. Are these factors heightened by environmental pressure? Hence, the underlying processes need to be explored as they may have practical implications for authentic leadership development. Table 7 below provides an overview of papers that have examined these factors across extant literature.

Table 7. Factors that inspire authentic leadership development

Author(s) Year	Factors the inspire authentic leadership development
Bakari <i>et al.</i> (2017)	Leaders may be inspired to develop authentic leadership to shape employees perception in readiness for change with organisations
Baron and Parent (2015)	Training context
Copeland (2014)	Experiential education
Duignan (2014)	Encounters with authentic leaders

Gaddy et al. (2017)	The Perception of Authentic Leadership on Subordinate Resilience
Gardner et al. (2005)	Personal experiences and trigger events
Glowacki-Dudka and Griswold (2016)	Research centers
Hendricks and Toth-Cohen (2018)	Camping
Monzani et al. (2015)	Role incongruity
Puente et al. (2007)	Positive and negative trigger events
Shrivastava (2018)	Stimulation by creating interventions (programs)
Stiers et al. (2019b)	Candidate Authenticity: 'To Thine Own Self Be True
Shannon et al. (2020)	Trigger events and crucibles
van Droffelaar and Jacobs (2017)	Wilderness experiences in leaders' inspire authentic leadership development
Wood et al. (2020)	Trigger events and crucibles
Wright (2015)	Personal experiences and frightening global events
Wulffers et al. (2016)	Leadership authenticity programs
Baron and Parent (2015)	Training context

RQ3. What are the followers' perceptions of authentic leadership?

Perceptions describe a person's understanding of a phenomenon. A few papers in the review examined the followers' perceptions of authentic leadership (Tate, 2008, Hendricks and Toth-Cohen, 2018). However, most of these papers have leaned towards examining primarily how the perceptions of followers are influenced to attain organisational goals or increase leadership effectiveness (Kurian and Nafukho, 2021). Scholars argue that employees' perception of their managers or leaders as authentic has positive implications for the authentic leader (Banks *et al.*, 2016). In particular, it is argued that the extent to which leaders' and followers' perception of authentic leadership agree would lead to positive performance (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008a).

The perceptions of followers have been described primarily in two perspectives. The first is rooted in the behaviour of the leaders and how followers' perceptions are shaped by the leaders' behaviour. This has been explored extensively by researchers where the emphasis has been on identifying behaviours of leaders that lead to authentic leadership perceptions. This outlook can be traced to the early conceptualisations of the construct. Where scholars conceptualised the construct in terms of behaviours. These behaviours are called dimensions (Alilyyani *et al.*, 2018). The most prominent definition of authentic leadership as advanced by Walumbwa *et al.* (2008a) defines the construct in terms of behaviours that should be demonstrated. This is reiterated by other scholars. For instance, Gill and Caza (2018b) suggest that followers perceive leaders as authentic when the four-dimensional behaviour is demonstrated. In the same vein, followers' perceptions of authentic leadership are impacted by a leader's inconsistent behaviour across diverse contexts (Mehmood *et al.*, 2019). Also, it is argued that authentic leaders' behaviours are linked to the followers' perception of authentic leaders.

The second perspective argues that the follower perceptions of authentic leadership emerge from their sense-making and interpretations within organisations, however, this area is under-researched (Fields, 2007). Within the review, it was found that followers' perceptions of

authentic leadership differ over time and across followers (Tate, 2008). In addition, the self-perceptions of authentic leaders did not influence the perception of followers (Tate, 2008) but these perceptions for the leaders increased within groups. The role of the followers in the leadership process is recognised but often neglected within the field of leadership. The process of person perception is argued to consist of components such as acquaintance, overlap, shared meaning, consistency, extraneous information and communication (Fields, 2007). Hence, examining leadership perceptions is important to the advancement of leadership. As such studies need to uncover the nature of social views of followers. The benefit of researching the sense making process will facilitate the identification of individuals within organisations that have a higher potential to be ascribed influential within organisations as the sense-making process develops and varies over time (Tate, 2008). It will uncover what followers regard as authentic leadership, how they understand and interpret authentic leadership. This is significant as perceptions are processual and further research is necessary to uncover the nature of these processes and contribute to theory development. See Table 8 for the list of authors that have examined followers' perception

Table 8. List of authors

Author(s) Year	Title of Article
Agote et al. (2016)	Authentic leadership perception, trust in the leader, and followers' emotions in organizational change processes
Bakari et al. (2017)	How does authentic leadership influence planned organizational change? The role of employees' perceptions: Integration of theory of planned behavior and Lewin's Three-step model
Černe et al. (2014)	Congruence of leader self-perceptions and follower perceptions of authentic leadership: Understanding what authentic leadership is and how it enhances employees' job satisfaction
Fields (2007)	Determinants of follower perceptions of a leader's authenticity and integrity
Gaddy et al. (2017)	The perception of authentic leadership on subordinate resilience
Gill and Caza (2018)	An investigation of authentic leadership's individual and group influences on follower responses
Glowacki-Dudka and Griswold (2016)	Embodying authentic leadership through popular education at Highlander research and education center: A qualitative case study
Hendricks and Toth-Cohen (2018)	Perceptions about authentic leadership development: South African occupational therapy students camp experience
Joo and Jo (2017)	The effects of perceived authentic leadership and core self-evaluations on organizational citizenship behaviour
Kurian and Nafukho (2021)	Can authentic leadership influence the employees' organizational justice perceptions? – a study in the hotel context
Mehmood et al. (2019)	Employees' perceptions of their manager's authentic leadership
Olckers et al. (2020)	Authentic leadership, organisational citizenship behaviours, and intention to quit: the indirect effect of psychological ownership
Raso et al. (2020)	Clinical nurses perceptions of authentic nurse leadership and healthy work environment
Tate (2008)	A longitudinal study of the relationships among self-monitoring, authentic leadership, and perceptions of leadership

RQ4. How do follower perceptions shape authentic leadership development?

In attempting to answer this research question, it became apparent that there is a dearth of research on the active role of followers' perception with specificity to how these perceptions shape authentic leadership development. Within the review, 27 studies examined the perceptions of followers. This represents 34% of the articles included in the study. A further appraisal of these articles revealed that 22 papers which represent 27% out of the initial 34% of studies identified have mostly examined the impact of authentic leadership on followers' perceptions. These studies vary from resilience to organisational citizenship behaviour, followers' authentic leadership development, emotions, change, job satisfaction, setting engagement, organisational justice and healthy work environment. Only 6% of the studies included in the review attempted to examine how followers' perceptions shape authentic leadership development (Hanold, 2017, Ngunjiri and Hernandez, 2017, Sidani and Rowe, 2018, Stiers *et al.*, 2019a, Tate, 2008). These findings are described below.

Leadership effectiveness is positively linked to positive follower perceptions (McFarlane, 2011). This relationship has been examined extensively, with particular reference to how it leads to positive organisational outcomes (Mehmood *et al.*, 2019) and leadership effectiveness. Balanced processing and relational transparency are described as factors that enhance positive perceptions, which in turn boost the development of an authentic leader (Avolio *et al.*, 2004). This argument suggests that followers' perception acts as the tool in evaluating how authentic a leader is perceived. In addition, employee perceptions of leaders are crucial to organisational success and the extent to which it relates to a leader's self-perception is crucial for the advancement of authentic leadership (Černe *et al.*, 2014).

The perspective though significant in the advancement of the field has neglected the iterative and active role the followers' perception play in shaping authentic leadership development. This may be attributed to an underlying assumption that followers are passive and are waiting for leaders to stimulate their perceptions. With regards to the increase in followers perceptions, McFarlane (2011) argues that the followers' perception increase when authentic leaders demonstrate qualities of exemplary leaders. This is usually assessed by the parameters followers instinctively adopt in assessing what a leader should be and how leadership practices affect the followers both at an individual level and group level. This is important as leadership perception is influenced by cultural context and social players (Khilji *et al.*, 2015, Zhang *et al.*, 2012a, McFarlane, 2011). Furthermore, empirical evidence reveals that authentic leadership evolves from both leader and follower interaction. More research is necessary to understand this interactions and how the followers' perception contributes to the development process. See Table 9 for relevant authors.

Table 9. List of relevant articles

Year	Title of article
Avolio et al. (2004)	Unlocking the mask: a look at the process by which authentic leaders impact follower attitudes and behaviours
Černe et al. (2014)	Congruence of leader self-perceptions and follower perceptions of authentic leadership: Understanding what authentic leadership is and how it enhances employees' job satisfaction
Mehmood et al. (2019)	Employees' perceptions of their manager's authentic leadership
Sidani and Rowe (2018)	reconceptualization of authentic leadership: Leader legitimation via follower-centered assessment of the moral dimension

Giordano-Mulligan and Eckardt (2019)	Authentic Nurse Leadership Conceptual Framework: Nurses' Perception of Authentic Nurse Leader Attributes
Kempster et al. (2019)	Authenticity in leadership: Reframing relational transparency through the lens of emotional labour', Leadership
Khilji et al. (2015)	Self, follower, organization and the context – a cross-cultural view of authentic leadership
Kiersch and Byrne (2015)	Is Being Authentic Being Fair? Multilevel Examination of Authentic Leadership, Justice, and Employee Outcomes
McFarlane (2011)	Impressed and Inspired: Encountering Genuine Leadership with Dr. Barry Posner and Dr. Agueda Ogazon
Steffens et al. (2016)	True to what we stand for: Championing collective interests as a path to authentic leadership.
Weischer et al. (2013)	To thine own self be true: The effects of enactment and life storytelling on perceived leader authenticity

Implication for research

Several scholars have contributed to the advancement of authentic leadership theory and it has emerged as a preferred leadership approach for scholars and practitioners. However, emphasis has shifted from uncovering what it means, what constitutes the construct to a broad examination of behavioural competencies of authentic leadership and the consequences for organisations. Scholars continue to emphasise that the construct is yet to develop theoretically ever since its inception (Alvesson and Einola, 2019a, Iszatt-White and Kempster, 2019). A few definitions of authentic leadership have emerged with each highlighting an aspect of the theory. For instance, intrapersonal (Shamir and Eilam, 2005) or developmental aspect (Avolio and Gardner, 2005, Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008a). These definitions provide a careful representation of the different perspectives of leadership. However, they may be subjective as it mirrors the choices of the authors which in most cases cannot be established or validated (Shamir and Eilam, 2005). A clearer conceptualisation of authentic leadership is required to advance the field (Gill and Caza, 2018a). As the current definitions are fragmented and complicated. Similarly, an unambiguous definition of authentic leadership is key to aiding a rigorous examination of the construct and giving clarity to the object of leadership interventions that may focus on the person or process as the current definitions consist of outcomes alongside cause and effect.

In the same way, the identified components or behaviours of these authentic leaders are neither substantive enough to serve as a theoretical base for the construct nor constitute a logical whole in describing the construct of authentic leadership. Thus, a reconceptualization of the construct is proposed to address these gaps. In sum, it is argued that there might be further dimensions to authentic leaders that scholars should seek to explore and uncover (Crawford *et al.*, 2020). It is suggested that the implication and impact of specific components to followers' perception and the leaders themselves be examined in broader detail (Peus *et al.*, 2012). In the same way, context determines how leaders enact leadership thus the exact components of leaders and followers require further examination (Crawford *et al.*, 2020) especially in environments of diversity. It is also important to evaluate subcultures of established areas of research such as western societies. In particular, scholars have argued that the components of authentic leadership be examined with specific focus on impacts, outcomes of these components, and the relationships that exist amongst these components as there still exists debates on the specific components that create authentic leadership (Cooper *et al.*, 2005, Peus *et al.*, 2012).

To a large extent, recent scholarly efforts have examined the outcomes of authentic leadership which have been mainly explored within western contexts (Yammarino *et al.*, 2008, Avolio *et al.*, 2009, Liu *et al.*, 2017). The predominantly western approach does not account for diversity and differences across demographics, thus the process of enacting leadership that is influenced by contextual factors must be separated from leaders (Crawford *et al.*, 2020). In addition, authentic leadership is positively associated with engagement as it impacts follower's self-confidence, skills through alignment with the leader and organisation with increased engagement as a consequence (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Gardner *et al.*, 2005).

There are calls for more studies that examine the factors that influence the subjective perceptions of authentic leadership (Peus *et al.*, 2012). Further research should be undertaken to understand how followers' perceptions contribute to authentic leadership development consequently broadening the scope of authentic leadership. As further studies are required to clarify the multi-dimensional construct of authentic leadership with particular efforts to uncovering the effective approaches for authentic leadership development (Copeland, 2014). An increased understanding of the followers' perceptions and how these perceptions shape authentic leadership development have practical implications for leadership development and theoretical contributions to the domain (Steffens *et al.*, 2016). Additional research in the developmental aspect of authentic leadership would be beneficial to the policy and practice dimension of the construct.

Limitations

With every methodology, the systematic literature review certainly has its limitations. In the first instance, the scope of the review does not cover the full range of literature on authentic leadership as the selection of included studies were based on specific predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria. However, the study aimed to be comprehensive in scope as the search strategy was conducted across 10 data bases which have been validated by scholars within extant literature (Harrison *et al.*, 2016). Secondly, the study covered a 50 year period (1970 – 2021) which may have limited the range of articles available for the research. An attempt was made to address this gap by conducting backward, forward and citation searches in order to identify articles that may be relevant to the review. Finally, the purpose of the SLR was to explore the concept of authentic leadership; investigating its meaning to leaders, followers, and configurations within organisations thus it did not examine the emergence of authentic leadership in depth as this was not relevant to the review.

Conclusion

The review examines extant literature on authentic leadership, factors that inspire its development, the followers' perceptions, and how these perceptions influence authentic leadership development. The arguments in the review provide an in-depth appraisal of past and current research within the leadership domain. This is necessary as the plurality of views provides a robust outlook on authentic leadership construct. A brief description of the key themes on what constitutes authentic leadership is provided. In summary, the paper has examined authentic leadership and outlined findings from a systematic literature review. The review probes the form and practice of authentic leadership and maps out future research agenda.

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