

**Gordon Institute  
of Business Science**  
University of Pretoria

# **Perceived barriers to authentic leadership in the South African business environment**

Bradley Janse van Rensburg

16391897

A research project submitted to the Gordon Institute of Business Science,  
University of Pretoria, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Business Administration.

6 November 2017

## **Abstract**

The recent decades have seen continuing ethical failures of leadership in business, civil and government spheres causing significant economic loss as well as acute damage to trust and social capital between leaders and followers around the world. Authentic leadership theory was conceived to improve the trust and quality of the relationship between leader and followers, but good examples are rare in the South African business environment.

This exploratory qualitative study was conducted through the use of semi-structured interviews with eleven experienced South African business leaders to ascertain their understanding of the theory and to explore the barriers to its successful implementation. An inductive analysis was utilised to identify and discuss emergent themes.

The study found that the strongest perceived barriers to authentic leadership were the organisation's culture, the need to conform, cultural awareness and the history of the country. The strongest potential enabler to authentic leadership was to create an environment for authenticity, which cascades and reinforces itself throughout the organisation and produces multiple benefits. Other strong enablers that were identified were organisation driven leadership development and leadership self-development, with a future focus and an emphasis on multi-skilled development.

## **Keywords**

Authentic leadership, leadership development, organisational culture

## **Declaration**

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

Bradley Janse van Rensburg

6 November 2017

---

## Contents

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Abstract.....   | ii  |
| Keywords .....  | ii  |
| Declaration.....  | iii |
| Contents.....   | iv  |
| List of Tables.....   | vi  |
| Chapter 1: Introduction .....                                   | 1   |
| 1.1. Definition of Problem and Research Purpose .....           | 1   |
| 1.2. The business need for the study .....                      | 3   |
| 1.3. The theoretical need for the study .....                   | 3   |
| 1.4. Research problem.....                                      | 4   |
| 1.5. Research objectives .....                                  | 4   |
| 1.6. Scope of research .....                                    | 4   |
| 1.7. Out of scope of research .....                             | 5   |
| 1.8. A brief outline of the document to follow.....             | 5   |
| Chapter 2: Theory and Literature Review .....                   | 6   |
| 2.1. Introduction .....   | 6   |
| 2.2. Understanding and definitions of authentic leadership..... | 6   |
| 2.3. Benefits of authentic leadership .....                     | 12  |
| 2.4. Authentic leadership in the South African context.....     | 13  |
| 2.5. Barriers to authentic leadership in South Africa .....     | 16  |
| 2.6. Conclusion .....   | 18  |
| Chapter 3: Research Questions .....                             | 19  |
| Chapter 4: Methodology .....                                    | 20  |
| 4.1. Choice of methodology.....                                 | 20  |
| 4.2. Research Design.....                                       | 21  |
| 4.3. Universe and Population .....                              | 21  |
| 4.4. Sampling.....  | 22  |
| 4.5. Data Collection.....                                       | 23  |
| 4.6. Data Analysis .....  | 26  |
| 4.7. Research Limitations.....                                  | 30  |
| Chapter 5: Analysis of Interviews .....                         | 32  |
| 5.1. Introduction .....   | 32  |
| 5.2. Research Question 1 .....                                  | 32  |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 5.3. Research Question 2 .....  | 39 |
| 5.4. Research Question 3 .....  | 43 |
| 5.5. Research Question 4 .....  | 47 |
| 5.6. Research Question 5 .....  | 51 |
| Chapter 6: Discussion of Results.....                                 | 56 |
| 6.1. Introduction .....   | 56 |
| 6.2. Discussion of Research Question 1.....                           | 56 |
| 6.3. Discussion of Research Question 2.....                           | 60 |
| 6.4. Discussion of Research Question 3.....                           | 65 |
| 6.5. Discussion of Research Question 4.....                           | 67 |
| 6.6. Discussion of Research Question 5.....                           | 71 |
| 6.7. Overall findings and final discussion.....                       | 75 |
| Chapter 7: Conclusion.....  | 77 |
| 7.1. Introduction .....   | 77 |
| 7.2. Principal findings .....   | 77 |
| 7.3. Implications for management .....                                | 78 |
| 7.4. Limitations of the research .....                                | 79 |
| 7.5. Suggestions for future research .....                            | 79 |
| 7.6. Conclusion .....   | 80 |
| References.....   | 82 |
| Appendix A: Ethical Clearance Approval .....                          | 86 |
| Appendix B: Consent Form for Respondents.....                         | 87 |
| Appendix C: Final Interview Schedule .....                            | 88 |
| Appendix D: Final Coding Scheme with Strength Score and Ranking ..... | 90 |

## **List of Tables**

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Table 1: Respondents and interview statistics – ordered by chronology of interview ... | 24 |
| Table 2: Summary of respondents' information .....                                     | 26 |
| Table 3: Codes used for four components of Authentic Leadership .....                  | 33 |
| Table 4: Codes used for potentially new components Authentic Leadership definition     | 33 |
| Table 5: Codes used for identified benefits of AL .....                                | 39 |
| Table 6: Codes used for relative level of AL .....                                     | 44 |
| Table 7: Codes used for perceived barriers to Authentic Leadership .....               | 47 |
| Table 8: Codes used for perceived barriers to Authentic Leadership .....               | 52 |

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1. Definition of Problem and Research Purpose**

#### **1.1.1. How leadership has shaped the world**

Major periods of human history have been defined by the leaders of the most powerful societies throughout civilisation. They have accomplished great things, or who devastated other groups and committed to most terrible atrocities in our documented history. Through war, religion, invention, law, economics, politics and social movements, our leaders have enabled their followers to change the course of history, to the benefit or detriment of humanity.

Our leaders can permit us and enable us to act against our noblest or basest desires, and in turn, we may attribute the accomplishments or atrocities directly to those leaders, often exonerating the followers from any wrongdoing directly while often attributing none of the glory to the followers either.

Some of our most terrible historical and contemporary leaders are a testament to this fact. Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Kim Jong Il, Pol Pot, Idi Amin, Muammar Al-Gaddafi and Bashar al-Assad are only a few examples of the dark destruction that can befall our countries when power is given to the wrong leaders.

By the same token, there are some wonderful examples where great things have been accomplished under leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr., Sir Winston Churchill, Benjamin Franklin, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, John F. Kennedy. Under their leadership humanity has achieved averted war, achieved liberation and liberty, empowered democracy and accomplished amazing goals.

#### **1.1.2. The importance of good leadership**

Besides our world history of immoral, unjust and even evil leadership from the political and military realm, business leaders and capitalists have access to significant resources and have the ability to affect millions of people's lives. For this reason, they should be as accountable to the people as our political leadership.

In recent decades, the failures of corporate leadership have provided a stark view of the lack of accountability in our existing leaders. Barings Bank, WorldCom, Enron (and with them Arthur Anderson), Tyco, Lehman Brothers (as well as several other financial institutions involved in the sub-prime mortgage crisis) are only some examples of malfeasance and negligent management which have cost the world economy trillions of dollars in financial losses.

These large failures of leadership have caused people of the world to form a distrust of their leaders. This century requires a new type of leader if we are to continue our growth and success (George, Sims, McLean, & Mayer, 2007).

These crises have highlighted the need for better leadership, both from practitioners and theorists in the field, as well as the general public and the media. From academia, we have seen the emergence of “leadership emphasizing ethical and moral leader behaviour” (Hoch, Bommer, Dulebohn, & Wu, 2016, p. 2) which includes ethical, authentic, spiritual and servant leadership. Furthermore, a differentiation between authentic and pseudo-transformational leadership was established based on the fact that transformational leadership, which has a major component of charisma, may not intrinsically contain a moral element – and this needs to be specifically highlighted in development of this theory (Hoch, Bommer, Dulebohn, & Wu, 2016).

Authentic Leadership (AL) specifically has been constructed to describe a leadership style with a strong ethical and moral component (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004), an important element which has been continuously reinforced through the construct development (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), and reinforced as a core component of the construct during development of a theory-based measure, the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) which has been used for the majority of the empirical research conducted to date (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008).

### **1.1.3. Benefits of authentic leadership**

The research has tested the effect of AL on employee behavioural and attitudinal outcomes and has established several benefits (Banks, McCauley, Garner, & Guler, 2016), namely an improvement in: task performance, group or organisation performance, organisational citizenship behaviours (OCB), employee voice, satisfaction with leader, trust in leader, leader effectiveness, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, employee creativity, employee empowerment, improved psychological capital.

There was also a tested reduction in counterproductive work behaviours (CWB), turnover intentions, burnout or stress.

Even when accounting for potential redundancy with other leadership theories, such as transformational and ethical leadership (Banks, McCauley, Garner, & Guler, 2016), AL showed a strong correlation with organisational citizenship behaviours and organisational outcomes, both in firm financial performance and openness of organisational climate (Gardner, Cogliser, Davis, & Dickens, 2011).

#### **1.1.4. Why authenticity may be constrained in reality**

Despite the benefits a leader believes they can create by being more authentic, there are several potential barriers or constraints to authenticity when fulfilling a leadership role in reality. From a legal perspective, there may be several key issues a leader may not be able to be open about, whether internally to their management or staff or externally to the marketplace or media. A leader may believe that some issues and problems faced by the organisation may be best left to the board, executive committee or senior managers so as not to distract the front-line staff from their day to day duties. Finally, a leader may feel their status may be threatened if they were to show vulnerability or lack of knowledge around a particular topic.

From the literature review conducted, there does not appear to be any acknowledgement of the potential barriers to AL which may prevent leaders from being their authentic selves. Rather, the literature offers advice for developing AL rather than anticipating constraints for its expression.

#### **1.1.5. Perceptions of constraints vs real constraints**

What is important to appreciate is that the perceptions of barriers or constraints can prevent a leader from being truly authentic, whether the constraints are real or imagined or misunderstood. For this reason, interviewing the leaders directly on their own perceptions will provide valuable information, as opposed to assessing the environment directly to ascertain these constraints.

### **1.2. The business need for the study**

According to Bank et al. (2016), AL showed a greater dominance in the positive effect on group or organisational performance as well as organizational citizenship behaviours when compared with traditional transformational leadership. These two outcomes would be extremely beneficial for leaders to produce within their organisations, especially in South Africa, so all progress in this field will be important.

At a national level, our country has recognised the need for effective leadership, and this has been identified as a key ingredient for success to develop the country (National Planning Commission, 2011).

### **1.3. The theoretical need for the study**

Most of the academic research has been conducted by a high proportion of North American scholars it is suggested that research by individuals with more diverse backgrounds “might facilitate the application of alternative theoretical perspectives for

understanding how AL is manifest within and across cultures” (Gardner, Cogliser, Davis, & Dickens, 2011, p. 1127).

In addition, it is suggested that “more extensive use of qualitative methods to provide thick narrative descriptions of leadership processes and contexts” (p. 1141) can add value to the field and can be used to link the discrete but overlapping concepts of authentic leadership and personal resilience.

It is also proposed that the theory needs to be more properly tested before the development of authentic leadership is pushed into practice (Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm, & McKee, 2014).

#### **1.4. Research problem**

In the South African business environment, what are the perceived barriers to authentic leadership? In the context of this problem, how important do South African business leaders believe authenticity is? Finally, are there suggestions to overcome these perceived barriers, either suggestions based on real-world experience or conceptually derived from the conversations?

#### **1.5. Research objectives**

In the context of the reviewed literature and the assessment of the research problem, this researcher aims to:

- 1) Explore how South African leaders understand the field of authentic leadership, and look for alignment and differences with the academic definition of the field.
- 2) Establish the perceived benefits of authentic leadership in the South African environment.
- 3) Understand the current perceived levels of Authentic Leadership in the respondent’s companies as well as the broader country.
- 4) Understand the perceived barriers to Authentic Leadership within the South African business context.
- 5) Determine whether the interviewed leader have suggestions to overcome these perceived barriers.

#### **1.6. Scope of research**

This researcher will interview South African business leaders of JSE listed companies, who are established in their positions and would reasonably understand the realities and limitations of the role. Their current knowledge of the field will be discussed, whether they

determine AL to be important to the country and to the performance of their organisation, what perceived barriers there are to authenticity, and then suggestions from them to overcome the discussed barriers.

### 1.7. Out of scope of research

The following is outside of the scope of research and will not be explored, investigated or tested:

- Interviewing the leader in the context of any other theories of leadership
- Culture of the leader's organisation
- Follower authenticity
- Actual performance of the specific companies
- Effectiveness of the proposed methods to overcome perceived barriers

### 1.8. A brief outline of the document to follow

The researcher has established the need for the research, a brief overview of the relevant academic and practitioner literature, defined the research problem and research objectives and defined what is in the scope of the research and what is outside of the scope.

What follows is:

- a more in-depth **literature review** of the research field to be covered and the specific issues to be explored (**Chapter 2**);
- an overview of the specific **research questions** identified (**Chapter 3**);
- an in-depth assessment of the **research design and methodology** selected (**Chapter 4**);
- an overview of the **findings** of the research (**Chapter 5**);
- a discussion of the results (**Chapter 6**);
- and finally the conclusions and recommendations for future research (**Chapter 7**).

## **Chapter 2: Theory and Literature Review**

### **2.1. Introduction**

The main purpose of this research was to improve the understanding of authentic leadership (AL) in the South African context. The researcher explored the background and various variations of authentic leadership, as well as a brief review of broader leadership theory. The current understanding of the benefits of authentic leadership was explored, and whether there was sufficient consistency across the various approaches to AL or whether this should be further explored. South Africa was explored as a potential context for research, and a review was conducted of the potential benefit to further exploratory research in this context. A review of the literature was conducted to further explore the knowledge of barriers to AL development and success.

### **2.2. Understanding and definitions of authentic leadership**

#### **2.2.1. Overview of leadership theory**

Leadership and leadership development is an extremely vast field which has seen even greater theoretical development and proliferation in the last decade and a half. In an article by Meuser, Gardner, Dinh, Hu, Liden and Lord (2016) which analysed 864 articles in 10 top journals published over fourteen years (2000 through 2013) over 49 leadership approaches/theories were identified, many of which show a high level of correlation and redundancy. This literature review was conducted in this context, with an acknowledgement that not all theories contribute substance to the field and theoretical integration and pruning is probably required.

#### **2.2.2. Overview of authenticity**

The concept of authenticity has its roots in ancient Greek philosophy and is reflected in the inscription in the Temple of Apollo at Delphi where the Greek aphorism “Know Thyself” can be seen (Gardner, Cogliser, Davis, & Dickens, 2011). The concept of authenticity has been explored by a variety of specialists in various fields is present in many schools of thought. An interesting multicomponent conceptualization of the concept has been defined by Kernis & Goldman (2006). In their construct, authenticity contained the components of awareness, unbiased processing, behaviour and relational orientation, which became the foundation of later leadership constructs of authenticity.

#### **2.2.3. Transformational vs Transactional Leadership**

Transformational leadership is an extremely prolific and well-researched field, recently being identified as one of the six focal theories as identified in the network analysis by Meuser, Gardner, Dinh, Hu, Linden & Lord (2016) out of a total identified 49 leadership

theories. These two core leadership styles trace their origins to Bass (1990) and were tested in depth for their validity via meta-analysis Judge & Piccolo (2004), firmly establishing and differentiating the styles for the field.

#### **2.2.4. Development of values-based leadership**

In 2003, the wake of the failures of corporate leadership at the beginning of the century, with examples such as WorldCom, Enron, Arthur Anderson, etc. Bill George, former Medtronic Chairman and CEO and Leadership Development practitioner wrote his book *Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value*. In it, he explained his definition of an authentic leader, focusing on character, integrity, self-awareness and the desire to serve others (George, 2003).

#### **2.2.5. Authentic leadership origins**

This was further developed academically by Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans & May (2004) who believed the current theories of Transformational Leadership did not necessarily contain a moral component and needed to be further developed in order to ensure long-term sustainable results in the organisations with leaders who reflected the style.

Several academics worked to clarify and define the construct of Authentic Leadership. Notably, Avolio et al. (2004) noted that the initial groundwork had not yet been laid and proposed that AL would improve personal and social identification, have a positive influence on hope, trust and positive emotions which would, in turn, have a positive impact on follower work attitudes and positive follower behaviours.

At this early stage, it was noted the overlap with other positive, moral or values-based leadership theories, such a servant, spiritual and transformational leadership and that further work would be required to distinguish AL from these other leadership theories. Avolio et al. specifically state that “From our point of view, the main differentiation is that we view authentic leadership at the very base or core of what constitutes profoundly positive leadership in whatever form it exists” (2004, p. 818).

Avolio et al. (2004) called for a special issue of *The Leadership Quarterly* (Vol. 16, Issue 3, 2005) in with a focus on articles which would develop the field. The journal issue was proposed and accepted as a result of the inaugural summit focusing on Authentic Leadership Development (ALD) hosted by the Gallup Leadership Institute at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 2004 (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

In this special edition of the journal, a seminal article, *Authentic leadership development: Getting to the root of positive forms of leadership*, laid the foundation of much of the field

as it stands today. A background on authenticity was provided as were the conceptual foundations and definitions of the construct. A comparison with other forms of positive leadership development was also provided, namely transformational leadership, behavioural theory of charismatic leadership, self-concept based theory of charismatic leadership, servant leadership and spiritual leadership theory (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

Although argued in future articles (Banks, McCauley, Garner, & Guler, 2016), it is important to note that a key component to AL at these early stages was always a “Positive moral perspective” (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 324). They argued that AL and ALD contained an inherent ethical and moral component and that the inclusion of this component is crucial to the development of the emerging field.

Further work was done to differentiate AL from related leadership theories, specifically putting it forward as a root construct which they take to mean “that it forms the basis for what then constitutes other forms of positive leadership” (p. 328). One of the key differentiation with transformational leadership is that it “may or may not be charismatic” (p. 329) which is congruent to its origins, in the history of highly charismatic leaders demonstrating poor moral qualities. Avolio & Gardner (2005) also point out that an authentic leader can build enduring relationships while leading with purpose, without necessarily being described as charismatic.

#### **2.2.6. Theory-based measure development and refinement of definition**

For the purposes of this research the main construct used will be that developed by Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing and Peterson based on a deep and structured theoretical analysis and defined as: “a pattern of leader behavior 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” (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008, p. 94)

In this article, Walumbwa et al. also reaffirmed the inclusion of a strong moral component to the construct and restated that authenticity as it has been “defined and operationalised by social psychologists, is associated with advanced levels of cognitive, emotional and moral development” (p. 94).

In addition to developing a clear definition for AL and reaffirming the inclusion of a strong moral component, Walumbwa et al. (2008) identified four distinct components of the construct which could be further elaborated on and developed into a theory based

measure. This paper also developed a measure to assess higher order AL, known as the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008). The ALQ was developed by an extensive literature review of the existing theory and practice, use of recently completed dissertations on the field and in-depth discussions with a leadership research group consisting of faculty and graduate students.

The four distinct components were summarised as follows:

**Self-Awareness:** determines how one makes meaning of the world and how that meaning impacts the way one views oneself.

**Relational transparency:** refers to the authenticity with which a leader presents themselves to others.

**Balanced processing:** when making decisions, this component allows all relevant data to be assessed objectively, despite previously held beliefs in order to improve decision making.

**Internalized moral perspective:** refers to self-regulation guided by internal moral standards as opposed to the group or society.

Using the AL literature as well as ethical and transformational leadership literature, 35 items of identification were established, then reduced to 22 based on those “considered least ambiguous and most behavioural” (p. 97). After a reclassification exercise to confirm correct allocation to the four components, six were dropped leaving a total of 16 unique items to measure authenticity against. This formed the base of the ALQ.

This measure was initially tested against five different samples from three separate studies. The samples were obtained from China, Kenya and the United States. The initial tests showed that the ALQ could be used to measure authenticity and identified several positive outcomes which could be attributed to AL such as Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB), Organisation Commitment and Follower Satisfaction.

It is proposed by Hernandez, Eberly, Avolio & Johnson (2011) that in order to better understand leadership theory, the researcher should understand the loci and mechanisms for leadership. The loci have been identified as the leader, context, followers, collectives and dyads, while the mechanisms have been specified as affect “to feel”, cognition “to think”, behaviours “to do”, and traits “to be”. Within this context authentic leadership has been placed in the dyads loci and is spread across the affect,

cognition and behaviours mechanisms. This highlights that an important distinction of authentic leadership is that the theory is defined by the leader-follower relationship.

### **2.2.7. Various alternate versions of authentic leadership**

Although the work of Avolio and Gardner is most prolific and potentially tested more extensively, there are alternate theories regarding AL as discussed by Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm & McKee (2014). The difference between these theories and the definition of AL as a clear, discrete construct needs to be resolved to ensure its practical application.

There has been concern from Algera & Lips-Wiersma (2012) that AL may be in danger of not reaching its stated objective due to the way it is currently theorized and have suggested establishing a more radical form of AL. They argue that authenticity is inherently a “complex and multileveled concept” (p. 129) and the implications have potentially been glossed over this may lead to the original objectives of the theory of “enhancing meaningful work and ethical behaviour” (2012).

Algera & Lips-Wiersma (2012) argue that there is an inherent tension between authenticity and power, and if a leader is truly authentic this may undermine their effectiveness as a leader, especially when required to direct the priorities of the employees of the organisation.

Authentic Leadership has also been described as Conscious, Competent, Confident and Congruent by Fusco, O’Riordan & Pamler (2015) which may be particularly useful in the group coaching format. As can be seen from the variety of approaches, even within the context of a single style of authentic leadership, clarification and integration are required in order to ensure effective development under a selected style.

Based on research conducted with senior leaders in the UK, Beddoes-Jones & Swailes (2015) proposed a new three-pillar model of authentic leadership in response to criticism concerning his published empirical data. They stated that in order for leaders to be successful, self-awareness, self-regulation and ethics are pre-requisites which need to be in place, they based their three-pillar model on this concept.

### **2.2.8. Criticism of authentic leadership and possible redundancy**

It has been noted that there is potential redundancy between AL and Transformational Leadership (Banks, McCauley, Garner, & Guler, 2016) but this article also states that several leadership theories “lack distinctiveness among the components” and there is an “absence of theory regarding differential effects” (p. 643). Banks et al. state that the potential redundancy may be caused by common method bias (2016).

Despite this assessment, the meta-analysis did find that, despite possible redundancy of construct, AL had a strong correlation with collective outcomes, specifically OCB (organizational citizenship behaviors) and group or organisation performance (Banks, McCauley, Garner, & Guler, 2016).

This potential redundancy was also highlighted by Henandez, Eberly, Avolio & Johnson (2011) who stated that much more agreement and alignment is required in the field in order to understand the various leadership theories and how to identify them. This was a general criticism of the field, and they did note that authentic leadership was arguably the most developed theory at the time. This alignment could be done through many different approaches and using a variety of constructs (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009), productively assessing next steps (Avolio & Walumbwa, 2014), performing a meta-analysis (Banks, McCauley, Garner, & Guler, 2016) or through a network analysis (Meuser, et al., 2016).

It is important to note that the field has had a dense proliferation of new theories and constructs developed over the recent decades, and possible integration of these theories is required (Meuser, et al., 2016). Although AL was not identified as one of the six focal theories (out of 49 discrete leadership theories identified in the literature), it was identified as one of the main middle-range leadership theories that were well developed and contributing to the research field.

Another study by Senjaya, Pekerti, Härtel, Hirst & Burtarbutar (2016) stated that authentic leaders might not be moral, especially if Machiavellianism is high within the leader then the positive outcomes of authentic leadership may not be present. If accurate this would be a worrying variation to the original definition of authentic leadership.

Although not published in a prestigious journal, the analysis of the various ethical leadership theories by Zhu, Zheng, Riggio & Zhang (2015) performed an interesting review of the different theoretical perspectives and measurements of ethics-related leadership models. Models included in the review were ethical, transformational, authentic, servant, spiritual and virtues-based leadership models. They agreed with more respected authors in the field that much more development was needed to properly understand and differentiate this field.

### **2.2.9. Research question 1: Definition of AL by South African business leaders**

As can be seen throughout the literature, there are several potential definitions of authentic leadership. How strongly do these components emerge when business leaders in the South African context are asked for their understanding of the field and the term?

What new themes and components emerge which may assist in the integration of the field and identification of possible oversight in the definition?

**Research question 1:** How do South African business leaders define the term “Authentic Leadership” and how closely does that definition align to the four components of Authentic Leadership as proposed by Avolio & Gardner?

## **2.3. Benefits of authentic leadership**

### **2.3.1. Official construct benefits**

What is important to note is that AL was always put forward as a leadership approach which would provide strong positive outcomes: for the organisation, the followers and the leader themselves. Specifically, Avolio & Gardner believed AL would help people find meaning and purpose in their work, improve self-awareness, restore and build optimism, confidence and hope while promoting transparent relationships and decision making which would build “trust and commitment among followers” (p. 331). They also adopted a developmental focus which would ensure the construct would allow more authentic leaders to be developed. This set the foundation for the development of the framework, and these benefits should generate in organisations which showed a high level of AL.

### **2.3.2. Benefits from alternate constructs**

Fusco, O’Riordan & Palmer (2015) have stated that the benefits of AL are numerous and identified several studies where the benefits included trust in leadership, communication climate and knowledge sharing, follower job-satisfaction and organisational commitment, follower citizenship and work engagement, follower job performance, group creativity, team productivity, psychological well-being and overall company performance. They state that the application of AL for use in leadership development needs to be developed further to be applicable.

To achieve the full benefits of AL, there needs to exist a high level of trust between leader and followers. Hsieh & Wang (2015) state that employee trust fully mediates supervisor-perceived authentic leadership and employee work engagement.

### **2.3.3. Employee engagement and inclusivity**

One of the benefits of authentic leadership is that of employee engagement. Alfes, Shantz, Truss & Soane (2013) discussed the benefit of the style of leadership determining the level of employee engagement, stating that transformational, charismatic and authentic leadership are directly related to how engaged individuals are with their job.

There have been several benefits regarding perceived inclusion within organisations according to Cottrill, Lopex & Hoffman (2014). Employees are likely to experience greater self-worth and are more likely to help their co-workers to “manage and prevent problems, demonstrate initiative, show up on time, overlook inconveniences and care about their organisation’s status in the marketplace” (p. 285).

They have stated that inclusivity can be promoted by organisational leaders explicitly engaging with followers and employees regarding their unique perspectives about organisational issues which will enhance employee self-esteem.

#### **2.3.4. Ability to deal with complexity**

Metcalf & Benn (2013) argue that it is essential to the human capacity to deal with the complexity that a leader requires strong ‘emotion management’ to make good judgements, which could be seen as aligned with the balanced processing component of authentic leadership as per Avolio & Gardner (2005).

#### **2.3.5. Research question 2: Perceived benefits of AL**

The potential benefits of authentic leadership on numerous and have been tested for validity with a variety of approaches. What benefits do South African business leaders believe are generated by AL? Specifically, what benefits are there to the organisation, the leaders and the followers themselves? Can exploration of these benefits allow further opportunities for integration of the field?

**Research question 2:** What benefits do those business leaders believe that Authentic Leadership creates for the organisation, for the leader themselves and for their followers?

### **2.4. Authentic leadership in the South African context**

#### **2.4.1. Historical example of AL study in South Africa**

The need for integration and implementation of diversity in South Africa is not new. Luthans, Van Wyk & Walumba (2004) discussed more than a decade ago that the country needed strong organisational development and support (in this example through the development of hope in order to build positive organisational behaviour). In the current context, much of this need is unfortunately still present. In this article, it was believed that the country’s diversity could be an asset and the organisations within the country could be great than the sum of their parts by leveraging off this diversity.

#### **2.4.2. The South African context**

South Africa is an interesting and unique environment in which to study the implementation and applicability of Authentic Leadership. In the country's attempts to overcome its developmental challenges it is caught between trying to navigate between overcoming local challenges while gaining global relevance (Nkomo, 2015). There is a strong need to ensure management education and leadership development is not only geared towards the effectiveness of the organisation but also assisting in transforming the nation as discussed by Nkomo (2015).

Within this context, companies and parastatals have an important role to play in ensuring the transformation of the country. According to Bosch, Nkomo, Carrim, Haq, Syed and Ali (2015), organisations in South Africa are seen as catalysts to implement the moral-based imperative to improve the participation of its racial majority.

#### **2.4.3. Diversity in South Africa**

It is noted that South Africa's diversity management approaches are "influenced by the contextual and historical uniqueness of the country" (Bosch, et al., 2015, p. 425) but are very few high-quality diversity interventions available good examples to be modelled, and these have generally not received prioritisation by South African organisations, which needs to be resolved in order to correct the climate of fear and suspicion prevalent in the country. This can be seen as a highly complex environment as discussed by Metcalf & Benn (2013).

As part of their attempt to manage diversity in South Africa, many organisations make use of diversity training but this has been developed based on theories from international literature, specifically North America and Europe and there is a need for greater alignment to local contexts according to Bosch, et al. (2015). For this reason, any exploratory work that seeks to better understand the South African context will add value to the theory and practice of leadership, whilst adding tremendous value to the field (Avoilio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009). In this context, AL has been shown to have a strong impact on the effectiveness of corporate social responsibility initiatives according to Metcalf & Benn (2013) which could indicate that this leadership style is of particular importance in the South African context.

#### **2.4.4. Opportunities for AL in South Africa**

Despite its challenges, South Africa specifically has a strong base with which to work in order to improve its diversity and inclusion. Its constitution is progressive, and it has laws and incentives in place to eradicate all forms of discrimination (Bosch, et al., 2015).

In order to create the required change through the organisations of the country, the right type of leadership will be required. Nkomo (2015) states that it would be beneficial to expand the management training of South Africa to include topics related to the local context, such as African philosophy, African precolonial and postcolonial history and general South African history. This, together with mandatory in-service community-learning interventions and expanding the goal of diversity across the various business schools and faculties, it is believed by Nkomo that our solutions to our diversity problems could be greatly enhanced.

Besides transformation of the organisations of South Africa, another important component of the business environment in South Africa is the imperative of corporate social responsibility (CSR). Metcalf & Benn (2013) have stated that in order to manage the competing priorities of CSR requirements, leading for sustainability requires extraordinary abilities. They proposed authentic leadership as a potential leadership style which could contribute to complex systems leadership theory.

#### **2.4.5. Benefits of exploratory research related to South Africa:**

Avolio & Walumba (2014) acknowledge that the majority of research has been conducted in the context of Western cultures and exploring how authentic leadership emerges in different cultures around the world would be beneficial to the field. Several authors in the field recommend exploratory research in a variety of contexts.

Hsieh & Wang also suggest that researchers should consider individual difference variables and contextual factors such as the climate and structure of the organisation as mediators when considering the effectiveness of the supervisor-employee relationship (2015). This would mean that studies in unique environments such as South Africa would add value to the field and are recommended.

Avolio & Walumba (2014) have stated that areas that require further exploration are the “impact of gender, ethnicity, and race on the perceptions of authentic leadership” (p. 351). The South African context is ideal for this sort of exploratory research, and the nuances of the responses may add insight into the impact of these variances.

Specifically, in the field of research related to inclusion and diversity, collecting data across different national and cultural contexts is recommended in order to identify differences across a variety of regions (Cottrill, Lopez, & Hoffman, 2014).

#### **2.4.6. Authentic leadership in non-business environments and other contexts**

When looking for relevant articles in similar emerging countries identified that AL has strong applications in non-business complex environments such as when enabling group

cohesion and group identification in emergency and security teams (López, Alonso, Morales, & León, 2015). Group cohesion has been shown to be an essential part of managing complex environments, and the AL model has even been explored in non-standard operating environments such as security and emergency forces. This study was highlighted specifically as it was in a different context, both regional and in the social sector where it was applied.

#### **2.4.7. Research question 3: Current levels of AL in SA**

In an exploratory way, the researcher would like to establish the current perceived level of AL in the South African business sphere, according to business leaders. How do they compare their own organisations to the rest of the business environment? What themes emerge when they provide reasoning for their ranking?

**Research question 3:** What are the current perceived levels of Authentic Leadership in their organisations and in South African business as a whole?

### **2.5. Barriers to authentic leadership in South Africa**

#### **2.5.1. Leadership development**

By making use of the available ALQ tools, current levels of authenticity within organisations could be measured in order to provide valuable feedback to developing leaders who wish to be more authentic as leaders (Avolio & Walumba, 2014).

In the broader field of leadership development, authentic leadership development has an important position if it were to achieve the benefits discussed above. Hsieh & Wang (2015) state that organisations should “treasure and develop authentic leaders” (p. 2342) as being essential resources in today’s business environment and with higher complexity and uncertainty. They are needed to draw the correct conclusions to complex problems and situations.

Beddoes-Jones & Swailes (2015) believe that leadership development can be accelerated within organisations with “interventions such as coaching, mentoring and programmes designed around the individuals or groups such as talent pools of high-potential future leaders”.

#### **2.5.2. Literature exploration for barriers to authentic leadership**

Although discussed in passing by George in the originating work on authentic leadership (2003) it was not clearly raised as an issue to be acknowledged and addressed in establishing the practice of authentic leadership.

When searching for barriers to authentic leadership development, it was identified by George, Sims, McLean & Mayer that there were several challenges that leaders needed to overcome in their personal development, some of which were known as “trigger events” which later became important to their model of themselves (2007). They also identified other challenges which leaders often grappled with in their day to day lives. None of these was seen as barriers to authentic leadership as the researcher was searching for.

In this literature review, the researcher has found very little indication of barriers to authentic leadership being identified with suggestions to overcome these barriers. Kernis & Goldman discussed that fear-of-intimacy reflects a potential barrier to authentic relationships, but this is not reflected in the leadership literature (2006). Algra & Lips-Wiersma specifically suggest the potential organisational barriers should be identified (2012). They also state that overcoming these barriers may be appreciating the ongoing complexity that exists in the organisational context and that approaches should be explored rather than permanent solutions found.

Based on the above review of the authentic leadership literature, it is the view of the researcher that barriers to the development of authentic leaders have not been explored by the subject matter experts in the field and there is potential to explore this in a qualitative way with business leaders.

#### **2.5.3. Research question 4: Perceived barriers to AL in SA**

The first part of the exploratory discussion related to the above would be to discuss:

What do South African business leaders perceive to be barriers to authentic leadership in South Africa, both from a general and personal perspective? Can discussion of these barriers improve the understanding of the context of South Africa and allow a better understanding of the applicability of various leadership theories?

**Research question 4:** What are their perceptions of barriers to Authentic Leadership and have they experienced any of these barriers personally?

#### **2.5.4. Research question 5: Suggestions to overcome barriers to AL in SA**

Once barriers have been discussed and explored there may be an opportunity for the business leaders to provide suggestions for overcoming these barriers. Within the South African context, are there specific applicable suggestions that would be unique enablers for AL? Would any of these enablers be applicable in other contexts?

**Research question 5:** Do they have suggestions for other leaders to overcome those barriers and do they have any personal experience in overcoming these barriers?

## **2.6. Conclusion**

Authentic leadership as an existing construct established by Avolio & Gardner (2005) needs to be further explored in the South African context. The understanding of the field within the minds of South African business leaders should be inspected, as well as how the emergent definition aligns to the main construct, or what new themes emerge. The perceived benefits to AL in the South African context should be explored, as well as what current leaders in the environment believe the levels of AL are in the country.

Furthermore, there does not appear to be any acknowledgement of the potential barriers to AL which may prevent leaders from being their authentic selves from the literature review conducted. Rather, the literature offers advice for developing AL rather than anticipating constraints for its expression. There is the additional opportunity to explore suggestions for overcoming these barriers as a part of the research.

### Chapter 3: Research Questions

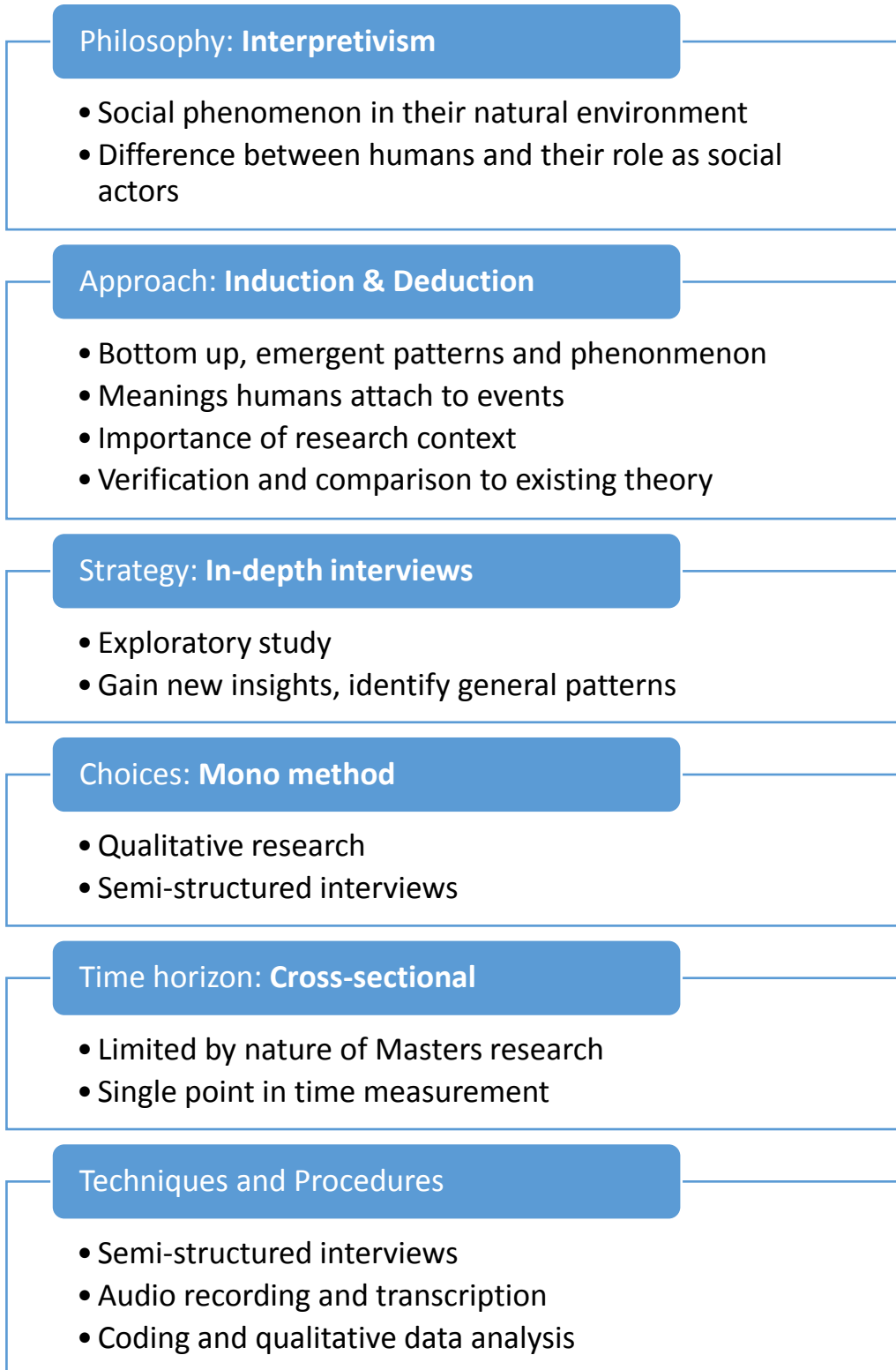
- 1) How do South African leaders **define** the term “Authentic Leadership”, and how closely does that definition align to the four components of Authentic Leadership as proposed by Avolio & Gardner?
- 2) What **benefits** do those business leaders believe that Authentic Leadership creates for the organisation, for the leader themselves and for their followers?
- 3) What are the **current perceived levels** of Authentic Leadership in their organisations and in South African business as a whole?
- 4) What are their perceptions of **barriers** to Authentic Leadership and have they experienced any of these barriers personally?
- 5) Do they have suggestions for other leaders to **overcome those barriers** and do they have any personal experience in overcoming these barriers?

## **Chapter 4: Methodology**

### **4.1. Choice of methodology**

*Below based on insight and guidance from (Saunders & Lewis, 2012)*

*Figure 1: Summary of Research Design & Methodology*



## **4.2. Research Design**

### **4.2.1. Research Method**

Due to the exploratory nature of the research, a qualitative approach should be used, and a semi-structured interview would be appropriate when the researcher wishes to discover new phenomenon (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

In addition, Cresswell, Hanson, Clark Plano & Morales (2007) recommend that when one wishes to probe phenomenon in more detail, then semi-structured interviews can help one interpret the explanation of the various themes being researched, in this case, the barriers as they are perceived. The interview method would also allow more exploratory discussions around overcoming those barriers.

### **4.2.2. Data collection and measurement instrument**

Due to the exploratory nature of the research, the identified measurement instrument used for the research was a semi-structured interview. This instrument allowed themes to emerge and unexpected findings to be possible, aligning to the inductive components of the research, which was mostly inductive in nature, with a small component being deductive.

A copy of the used instrument, an interview schedule, has been attached as “Annexure A”. After an introduction to the field, with the assurance of confidentiality and confirmation of permission to record the interview, the researcher collected demographic information, the interview schedule explores:

- the respondent’s understanding of Authentic Leadership;
- ascertains the perception of the importance of AL from the respondent;
- attempts to ascertain current levels of AL, both within the South African business environment and in the respondent’s organisation;
- explores the current perceptions of barriers to AL in the country and in their organisation;
- then explores suggestions from respondents to overcome the perceived barriers.

## **4.3. Universe and Population**

The overall population is senior and executive managers in large companies in South Africa, with more than 3 years’ experience in senior leadership positions. By holding an executive position for this tenure, the respondents were believed to have been well versed in the realities of the position, whether they believe they and their leadership

teams can be truly authentic, and what they believe to be barriers to achieving this authenticity.

There are currently almost 400 companies listed on the JSE and AltX (The Johannesburg Stock Exchange, 2016). JSE listed companies were identified as the ideal companies to interview leaders from, but the researcher was open to local senior leaders from multi-national companies whose head offices were not based in South Africa and large state-owned enterprises.

#### **4.4. Sampling**

##### **4.4.1. Sampling method**

Directors of publicly listed companies are in the public domain and can be found from several sources, as can many other senior leaders in South African businesses. A list of executive directors on the boards of JSE listed companies, as well as the duration that they have held the position, will be accessed directly from the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE), the Institute of Directors South Africa (IoDSA) or the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC).

The researcher approached a leadership coach whom he had personal experience with and requested introductions to leaders who may be interested in the research and be willing to participate. The researcher also made use of his professional networks and directly approached leaders he was familiar with who suited the profile and may be interested in the field

The nature of sampling was purposive non-probability sampling. Saunders & Lewis (2012) define purposive sampling as a “type of non-probability sampling in which the researcher’s judgement is used to select the sample members” (p. 138). As the potential respondents were made aware of the field being researched, namely Authentic Leadership, there may have been an element of self-selection sampling as they were aware of the subject matter before they agreed to participate in the research.

##### **4.4.2. Sampling unit**

In this context, the executive leaders are the unit of observation and the unit of analysis are the perceptions of barriers to the authenticity of the executive leaders, as determined by coding and analysing the interview responses. Additional units of analysis include:

- Useful constructs to define authentic leadership, as elaborated on by the respondents
- Benefits of AL, to the organisation, the leader and the followers

- Barriers to AL, as per above. This is the main task of the research
- Proposed suggestions to overcome the discussed barriers

#### **4.4.3. Sampling size**

Guest, Bunce & Johnson (2006) recommend 6 to 12 interviews if the selected group is relatively homogeneous in nature. As selected individuals were to be executives of South African companies of relatively similar experience, age, status, etc. there can be an argument that the group is very homogeneous. The researcher countered this potential homogeneity by selecting a variety of individuals within the guidelines of respondents and purposefully introduced an element of heterogeneous variability in his samples. This variability is reflected in the industry and size of the companies these senior leaders take charge of, and was introduced based on age, gender, ethnicity, and other explicit differences.

With the above taken into consideration, this researcher's aim was to conduct 10-15 semi-structured in-depth interviews in with senior South African business leaders until data saturation was reached. The coding and analysis portion of the research overlapped with the interview portion of the research in order to establish data saturation while interviews continued.

#### **4.5. Data Collection**

##### **4.5.1. Summary of interviews conducted and interview method**

It was the original intent of the researcher to conduct 10-15 interviews until it was believed data saturation would be reached and by which time substantial valuable insights would have emerged. A total of eleven interviews were conducted with individuals who were considered by the researcher to be business leaders in the South African context, all of whom have held a senior management position at a large local company for at least three years. Whenever possible respondents were sought who could provide a diverse response on the topic, so a good mix of gender, race, backgrounds, education, professional experience and experience in a leadership position was sought.

By the end of the eleventh interview, no new major themes were being identified, and the researcher believed a rich and diverse set of data had been collected, and data saturation had been reached, so no further respondents were required.

Table 4.1 shows information regarding the interviews conducted, sorted according to the chronological order of the interviews as they were conducted. In order to retain the confidentiality of the respondents while maintaining the personal nature of the various

responses, an alias was created for each respondent and has been specified in the Table below.

All respondents held senior positions in large organisations for at least three years. If they had been in their current positions for less than three years, which was the case for Xolani, Ruth and Virosha, it was confirmed whether their previous position was of a similar seniority and if so how long they had held those positions. In all three cases when factoring in their current positions and previous positions the respondents met the criteria.

**Table 1: Respondents and interview statistics – ordered by chronology of interview**

| <b>Interview</b> | <b>Alias</b> | <b>Interview Conducted</b> | <b>Transcribed</b> | <b>Duration</b> | <b>Word Count</b> |              |
|------------------|--------------|----------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------|
| A                | Xolani       | 09-Aug-17                  | 15-Sep-17          | 73 min          | 6285              |              |
| B                | Ruth         | 18-Aug-17                  | 13-Sep-17          | 27 min          | 3095              |              |
| C                | Taryn        | 20-Aug-17                  | 13-Sep-17          | 18 min          | 3056              |              |
| D                | Tumang       | 22-Aug-17                  | 17-Sep-17          | 12 min          | 1195              |              |
| E                | Manqoba      | 25-Aug-17                  | 19-Sep-17          | 35 min          | 5573              |              |
| F                | Frank        | 31-Aug-17                  | 23-Sep-17          | 45 min          | 6278              |              |
| G                | Kenjamen     | 04-Sep-17                  | 19-Sep-17          | 17 min          | 2678              |              |
| H                | Deon         | 06-Sep-17                  | 20-Sep-17          | 23 min          | 3573              |              |
| I                | Cameron      | 11-Sep-17                  | 21-Sep-17          | 30 min          | 4189              |              |
| J                | Claycia      | 28-Sep-17                  | 29-Sep-17          | 20 min          | 2382              |              |
| K                | Virosha      | 29-Sep-17                  | 29-Sep-17          | 29 min          | 3789              |              |
|                  |              |                            |                    | <b>Average</b>  | <b>30 min</b>     | <b>3827</b>  |
|                  |              |                            |                    | <b>Total</b>    | <b>329 min</b>    | <b>42093</b> |

All interviews were conducted within a time period of seven weeks, from 9<sup>th</sup> August 2017 to 29<sup>th</sup> September 2017. A total of 329 min (6.5 hours) of interviews was conducted, producing transcripts of 42,093 words of material for analysis. The longest interview was 73 minutes long, and the shortest was completed in just over 12 minutes, the average interview lasting 30 minutes. The discrepancy between the longest and shortest interviews are discussed below.

The interviews were conducted using the interview guide developed and guidance on how to conduct a “Long Interview” was used when applicable (McCraken, 1988). The interviews were all conducted face to face and one on one with the respondents, the majority of which were conducted in a private meeting room. Four interviews were conducted in a public space such as a restaurant or canteen area, but without bystanders being close enough to overhear our discussions.

#### 4.5.2. Details of respondents interviewed

As stated previously, when selecting potential respondents, the researcher attempted to establish a broad background of respondents along obviously diverse lines (age, gender, education, race, time in position, etc.), the final diversity can be seen in the table below.

This information has also been provided to establish a sense of who the respondents were, what their backgrounds, positions and experience was at the time of the interview. Demographic and biographical questions were asked at the beginning of the interview as recommended by McCracken in order to “cue the interviewer to the biographical realities that will inform the respondent’s subsequent testimony” (1988, p. 34). This serves multiple purposes:

- It begins to establish rapport between the researcher and respondent;
- It broaches some sensitive topics such as race, gender, age, in a non-threatening way which should make these topics easier to discuss in the upcoming interview. The researcher identified a slight tensing and tightness of voice by some respondents while asking these sensitive questions. The tension seemed to dissipate quickly as the follow-on questions were asked which gave the impression that some sensitive topics had been breached and were more open to subsequent discussion;
- It allows the respondents to define themselves on their own terms. For example, some respondents defined themselves as “Black” while others defined themselves as “Black African” or “African”. This can assist the researcher to use the same terms in during the interview in order to reinforce rapport and avoid causing offence.

For the first three interviews, the demographic and biographic information was asked first, as per the original interview schedule after which the introduction and background to the research were conducted. This proved unwieldy and interfered with the flow of the interview, for this reason, the order was changed slightly from the fourth interview, and the introduction and research background was covered first, after which demographic and background information was asked (See Appendix C)

Please note that the results have not been grouped by any of the categories discussed below. Due to the sample size and the nature of the questions asked it was anticipated that any sort of attempted triangulation or analysis by grouping would not prove worthwhile or fruitful.

**Table 2: Summary of respondents' information**

| <b>Alias</b> | <b>Age</b> | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Race</b>           | <b>Current Level</b>        | <b>Tenure</b>          | <b>Qualification</b> |
|--------------|------------|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| Xolani       | 49         | Male          | Black                 | Executive                   | 4 m (+3y) <sup>α</sup> | Masters              |
| Ruth         | 37         | Female        | White                 | Senior Director             | 2 y (+4 y)             | Honours              |
| Taryn        | 49         | Female        | White                 | CIO/COO                     | 4.5 years              | Masters              |
| Tumang       | 54         | Male          | Black                 | Chairman <sup>β</sup>       | 11 years               | 2 x Doctorates       |
| Manqoba      | 50         | Male          | Coloured <sup>γ</sup> | CEO                         | 5.5 years              | Doctorate            |
| Frank        | 59         | Male          | White                 | Managing Exec               | 3 years                | Masters              |
| Kenjamen     | 46         | Male          | White                 | Country Manager             | 4.5 years              | Doctorate            |
| Deon         | 47         | Male          | White                 | CFO                         | 4 years                | CASA                 |
| Cameron      | 40         | Male          | Black <sup>δ</sup>    | Exec Director               | 6 years                | Masters              |
| Claycia      | 49         | Female        | Coloured              | Senior Manager <sup>ε</sup> | 8 years                | Diploma              |
| Virosha      | 36         | Female        | Indian                | Director                    | 10 m (+3y)             | 2 x Masters          |

α – Respondent was asked the seniority of his previous position, but not duration in that position. This information was gleaned from his LinkedIn profile

β – Respondent stated his position as “Cofounder” of his current company and “Chairman of a number of companies”

γ – Respondent called themselves “So-called Coloured”

Δ – Respondent called themselves “Black African”

ε – Respondent originally termed their position as “Wellness practitioner”, when queried she elaborated her role as “Specialist”. In discussions with a mutual associate, her role was described as Senior Manager with multiple reports, which the researcher decided qualified her to be included in the population

In addition to the above demographic information collected, the respondents were asked their nationalities. All respondents were South African except for Tumang who stated his nationality as “A mixture – Nigerian and British”.

## **4.6. Data Analysis**

### **4.6.1. Interview transcription preparation and verification**

All interviews were recorded using multiple digital recording devices in order to ensure a backup of the recording would be available in the event of device failure or loss. The recordings were backed up to multiple secure cloud-based hosting services within 24 hours of the interviews being conducted; the majority backed up before leaving the interview location. In one situation (interview with Kenjamen) the primary recording device failed to start recording, and the researcher needed to make use of the backup recording. The primary recording device application was changed after the first interview with Xolani. Interviews for Kenjamen and Xolani have been preserved in .m4a format and the remainder in .mp3 format.

The recordings were all of a high quality and clearly audible except for the interview with Frank which was conducted in a noisy environment and this lengthened the time taken to transcribe the interview and verify the content of the transcript. After the initial

transcribing and additional review and corrections some components of this interview could still not be heard clearly after multiple repeat audio reviews. When this occurred, it was highlighted on the transcript as being **[unclear]** and the exact time of the inaudibility was highlighted, for example:

*“Ja, I do, I think in a big organisation people take on a leadership role with a benefit for the staff and a benefit for the organisation **[unclear 10.09.4]** for themselves.”*  
(Frank, 59, M, Managing Executive)

During the first interview (interview with Xolani) the researcher made notes regarding various key points, in addition to the recordings of the interview. This proved to slow down the interview and interfere with the flow of the questions being asked as well as unnecessarily lengthening the interview. This can be seen by comparing the interviews for Xolani and Frank which have a similar wordcount, but the interview with Xolani is almost 30 minutes longer.

From the second interview onwards the researcher decided to rely on the recordings and transcripts, and no notes were taken regarding the interview responses for later analysis. Key shorthand notes were captured to trigger follow up questions and used throughout the remainder of the interview.

Two sample interviews were provided by a professional transcription service and then verified for accuracy while listening to the recordings. The quality of the transcripts proved to be very high, and the remainder of the interviews were shared with the company for completion. All transcriptions took approximately two weeks to complete, the last transcript being completed on the same day as the last interview, with the result that all interviews and transcripts were completed on the same day (see Table 4.1 for details regarding interview and transcript dates)

The standard preamble for each of the transcripts as well as the initial standard questions regarding demographics was removed from the transcripts once pertinent details were captured for reference, this was done in order to reduce the unnecessary information imported in Atlas.ti for analysis.

Researcher questions were identified with a hard return and a “Q:” identifier, and the responses were identified with a hard return and the relevant interview identifier “A:”, “B:”, “C:”, etc. The reviewed and cleaned transcripts were saved in standard Microsoft Word (.docx) format and uploaded into Atlas.ti for analysis.

An example of the final transcript format imported into Atlas.ti for analysis, for clarity sake this extract is from Interview G (Kenjamen):

**Q:** Okay so from your point of view how would you define authenticity?

**G:** Genuine. Real.

**Q:** And from a leadership point of view, what would you define as leadership?

**G:** Ooh that is a tough one – I'm trying to come up with a definition for an explanation that isn't something that comes directly out of a textbook that I've read in the past. I would say it is inspiring a group of people to follow a common cause for a greater good.

#### **4.6.2. Method of analysis**

All transcripts of interviews were imported as primary documents into an Atlas-ti project and were coded appropriately.

- a. Data units were selected;
- b. Expected codes were pre-emptively created for deductive analysis;
- c. Meaningful codes were created used to describe the data inductively where relevant;
- d. Codes were categorised into cohesive categories and sub-categories;
- e. Emergent themes and concepts were identified;
- f. Assertions, theories and conclusions were formed.

According to Braun & Clarke (2006), “Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (p. 81) which is extremely applicable to exploratory research of a qualitative nature.

Transitioning from coding to categorising is the “primary heuristic for qualitative data analysis” (Saldana, 2016), similar to a quantitative parallel of determining a mean. Aligned to exploratory research and identifying the emergent nature of patterns, categorising of data is an important step in moving from commonalities to themes.

Much of the analysis was conducted based on the recommendations of Creswell (2012) who recommends (while conducting a phenomenological study, original *italics* preserved) that the “use of systematic *data analysis* procedures of statements, meanings, themes, and an exhaustive description of the essence of the phenomenon” (p. 116)

Initial deductive coding for RQ1 was based on the Avolio & Gardner (2005) components of AL, and potential discrepancies with these identified components as well as new themes were identified. The current levels of AL in South Africa, the perceptions of barriers and the suggestions to overcome these barriers are specific to the South African context and was the inductive portion of the research, for that reason coding for this

portion of the response was coded directly from the data, and formed the inductive portion of the research.

Codes were divided into their various research questions that were being asked, for example when research question 1 was being answered a prefix “RQ1:” was attached to the relevant code when it was created. Codes were also grouped into responses to the specific research questions to assist with analysis and for example, subsections of the research questions when relevant, for example, “**RQ2: Leader Benefits**”.

#### **4.6.3. Coding and theme consolidation and refinement**

After the initial pass of coding of the transcripts, there was a large number of total codes used (over 220). After reflection and review, it was believed much of the coding contained duplication and had the potential for consolidation and refinement.

A brief review of the research questions was conducted to confirm exactly what the researcher was attempting to discover and identify codes or themes that were not relevant to the research objectives and which could be deleted. After further review and analysis more opportunities for consolidation were identified and an awareness that several of the important responses coded were in out of context of the order of the research questions but definitely pertinent to the research objectives (for example a respondent pre-emptively identifying a perceived barrier to authenticity while discussing the current levels of AL in the South African business environment).

The coding was consolidated and reduced down to less than 80 codes overall. Including “flag” type codes that were used to interpret the function of various phrases for later use. Examples include “**QQ**” for quotable quotes and “**example.given**” when a specific example was given in the context of a specific research question.

#### **4.6.4. Code Strength Score Creation**

Once coding was complete and consolidated an effort was made to represent the amount of time specific codes were discussed, how many interviews the themes emerged in, how many individual quotes were coded using those codes and the total word count of all the codes. This quantitative representation of the discussions around various codes was converted into a “strength score” by multiplying numbers of interviews discussed, with number of quotes coded and total word count of all quotes. The final product was divided by 1000 to give a usable score, and then a grading scale was developed to represent this score as a subjective category of how much the code emerged, ranked as “Very, very strong”; “Very strong”; “Strong”; “Medium” and “Weak”. The researcher

reviewed the ranking for each code and adjusted it to reflect the quality of the responses and reduce the impact of overly long-winded replies providing little new information.

Care was taken not to misinterpret this self-developed “Strength Score” with how important it was as a theme. There were many important themes which were discussed by respondents throughout the interview process which received a low strength score but were deemed to be an interesting and important finding of the research. This score was used as an additional measure to represent qualitative data but was not solely relied on to interpret the findings.

See Appendix D for the complete list of the final codes, with strength score and strength ranking.

#### **4.7. Research Limitations**

Due to the nature of the Masters research and the timeframes available to the students, the research needed to be cross-sectional in nature, provide data at a single point in time, rather than valuable longitudinal data which may be applicable in a variety of situations.

Due to the non-probability sampling method and the need to make use of the researcher’s own professional networks, the individuals who were selected and agreed to participate in the research may be overly homogenous in nature with regards to backgrounds, education and upbringing. For this reason, results may have been overly similar due to sampling method rather than generalizable.

The research outcomes were dependent on both the calibre of the interviewer who is not very experienced in conducting academic research, as well as the quality and accuracy of the information the respondents chose to disclose, with a reminder that the subject matter was professionally sensitive in nature. The interview schedule was structured to be less direct in nature but unwillingness to disclose information may be a real shortfall to the final validity of the findings.

According to Saunders & Lewis (2012, p. 127), the following should be addressed when assessing the potential validity of proposed research, and once identified should be mitigated in the research design and execution, the researcher attempted to mitigate these throughout the research process:

**Subject selection:** An important concern in this type of research. As there is an element to self-selection in the research, subjects may select themselves based on their interest or commitment to authenticity once they see the scope or field of the proposed research. In addition, of the list of potential executive directors and senior managers, there is the

potential for the researcher to make use of their extended professional network to access the potential subjects, thereby making the sampling method closer to a convenience than a purposive sampling method. If not addressed carefully during the subject selection process this is a real concern to the validity of the research.

**History & Mortality:** As the proposed research is cross-sectional in nature, these validity factors are not a concern.

**Testing:** There is a real concern that the research subjects may want to appear more authentic than they would behave in day to day situations, and may want to portray their own management team as examples of authentic leaders when in fact they may not be good examples by academic or practitioner standards. This is something addressed in detail by Thomas & Kilman (1975) and is difficult to overcome. At several key points in the interview schedule, the questions are phrased to reflect the subjects' views in the "broader South African context". It is believed that phrasing questions in this way will improve the honesty of the responses as there is no direct benefit or threat when responding to questions in this way. If the subjects present a stark difference in the way that they answer questions in relation to their own organisations as opposed to the broader South African context, then the researcher will give preference to the responses as they relate to the broader context.

**Ambiguity about causal direction:** As this research is not attempting to establish causal linkages between any items researched and is not specifically looking for any specific antecedents or outcomes this is unlikely to be a concern for validity.

## **Chapter 5: Analysis of Interviews**

### **5.1. Introduction**

The interviews conducted for this research project have provided valuable insight into the understanding of Authentic Leadership in the context of South African businesses, based on the perspective of experienced South African business leaders.

This chapter begins by providing a summary of the respondents conducted, with pertinent details regarding the background of the respondents and a discussion of the process followed by the researcher to ensure accuracy and validity of the data collection and transcripts.

This is then followed by a discussion of the interviews in the context of the research questions listed in Chapter 3, with a deductive approach used for research question 1 (RQ1) and an inductive approach used for research questions 2 to 5 (RQ2 to RQ5).

### **5.2. Research Question 1**

How do South African leaders define the term “Authentic Leadership”, and how closely does that definition align to the four components of Authentic Leadership as proposed by Avolio & Gardner?

#### **5.2.1.1. Coding for Research Question 1**

As discussed in Chapter 2, the most commonly accepted definition of Authentic Leadership (AL) is that proposed by Avolio & Gardner (2005), and the proposed definition is made up of four different components, namely:

**Self-Awareness:** determines how one makes meaning of the world and how that meaning impacts the way one views oneself.

**Relational transparency:** refers to the authenticity with which a leader presents themselves to others.

**Balanced processing:** when making decisions, this component allows all relevant data to be assessed objectively, despite previously held beliefs in order to improve decision making.

**Internalized moral perspective:** refers to self-regulation guided by internal moral standards as opposed to the group or society.

It's important to note that none of the respondents had heard of an official academic definition of Authentic Leadership nor were they familiar with the work of Walumba,

Gardner, Avolio or other AL field experts. This highlights the need raised by (Meuser, et al., 2016) for more integration of the practice and theory of leadership.

As this coding was based on existing academic material, this was seen as deductive analysis and the codes were created before coding.

During analysis of the transcripts, the following codes were used to identify the four official elements of AL.

Table 3: Codes used for four components of Authentic Leadership

|   |
|---|
| RQ1: AL.official.self-awareness                 |
| RQ1: AL.official.relational.transparency        |
| RQ1: AL.official.balanced.processing            |
| RQ1: AL.official.internalized.moral.perspective |

Coding was then inductively conducted for any new definitions of authentic leadership based on the understanding of the respondents themselves. As the codes and themes were emergent from the analysis inductive coding was used. Throughout the analysis, 15 codes were created using the prefix “**RQ1: new.**”

The resulting codes have been listed in Table 5.2 below.

Table 4: Codes used for potentially new components Authentic Leadership definition

|                                   |
|-----------------------------------|
| RQ1: new.accountability           |
| RQ1: new.adaptability             |
| RQ1: new.balanced.individual      |
| RQ1: new.contextual.awareness     |
| RQ1: new.delivery.of.objectives   |
| RQ1: new.depends.on.culture       |
| RQ1: new.depends.on.vantage.point |
| RQ1: new.leadership               |
| RQ1: new.humility                 |
| RQ1: new.no.universal.definition  |
| RQ1: new.org.values               |
| RQ1: new.original                 |
| RQ1: new.true.nature              |
| RQ1: new.under.pressure           |
| RQ1: new.wanting.to.lead          |
| RQ1: unsure.of.definition         |

### 5.2.1.2. Self-Awareness

This was one of the least discussed or weakest component of AL throughout the research.

For coding for self-awareness, the researcher looked for phrases where the respondents discussed an understanding of the inner feelings and beliefs of themselves, for example:

*“authentic leadership is kind of an ability to be **true to self**..... for me; I guess it is like being able to bring your true **underlying persona**” (Deon, **emphasis added**)*

And:

*“I think an element of authenticity **requires consciousness**, you know because you have **control of your faculties** you know” (Xolani, **emphasis added**)*

Some respondents were less elaborate in their responses by clear on their meaning:

*“So, it is just **being yourself** in other words; that’s how I see authentic leadership.” (Kenjamen, **emphasis added**)*

In some cases, respondents provided several definitions in one response, when this occurred multiple codes were used, including the relevant code for self-awareness:

*“Well, I suppose I see authenticity as a characteristic of a person in terms of whether you are **an authentic human being or not** which I guess goes to things like value systems, morals, ethics and **the thing about being true to yourself**.” (Taryn, **emphasis added**)*

### 5.2.1.3. Relational transparency

This was the strongest theme which emerged out of the official components of AL. Almost all the respondents discussed this theme, and it received a large amount of airtime.

The researcher believed that this component of AL would be a strong theme in the responses due to the nature of the lay understanding of ‘authenticity’ and this proved to be the case. Whenever responses discussed an openness in feelings, emotions, beliefs or ideas, this was interpreted to mean relational transparency and was coded as such. Some examples:

*“I guess the benefit of working in an organization like the one that I am in, is I don’t feel like I need to **dress up my attitude or my belief set or my values** to conduct myself at work.” (Deon, **emphasis added**)*

And:

*“Ja so I think ‘authenticness’ (sic) to me is really just conveying and letting **the people know what you feel and what you do**.” (Kenjamen, **emphasis added**)*

And:

*“I think for me it’s about being **open and honest** and also just having **open conversations** with people reporting to you.” (Claycia, **emphasis added**)*

Many respondents used the word ‘transparent’ themselves in their responses:

*“via a process that is transparent” (Tumang)*

There was also a theme that emerged in that there was consistency of transparency so that the individual “did not change” the longer you interacted with them:

*“You only know that the person is an authentic leader by being close up to them, because the person you shook hands **with three years ago**, three years later their **belief system has not shifted.**” (Xolani, **emphasis added**)*

A related, strong theme which emerged in relational transparency was that the leader would be comfortable with being vulnerable in the workplace:

*“Let me just expand on that a little bit; an authentic leader when asked a question that he doesn’t know the answer to, **says I don’t know.**” (Manqoba, **emphasis added**)*

And:

*“I would say that who I most respect as leaders are those that are able to be both **vulnerable in terms of who they are** and where **they are deficient**” (Ruth, **emphasis added**)*

Some respondents believed that their relational transparency was an important factor in determining how they were employed, and how they decide whom to employ for their organisations:

*“because people **employ you for what you are, the way you behave** and kind of the contribution that you make” (Deon, **emphasis added**)*

An interesting approach to this question was contrasting high authenticity with being a politician, a theme which emerged later in the interviews when the respondents rated the authenticity of government to be very low, even when not asked to do so:

*“I would say it is the **opposite from** (sic) **being a politician** and talking what the people want to hear” (Kenjamen, **emphasis added**)*

An important concept connected to relational transparency was that of treating everyone in the organisation the same, no matter their seniority:

*“An authentic leader greets people irrespective - it’s a silly example – but irrespective of **the level that they are at** (sic). So, one of the things that I do for example and I’m not trained to be an authentic leader, **whether it is the cleaner or my CIO** when I walk in in the morning I greet them **exactly the same.** I don’t ignore the cleaner and*

*greet the CIO because the cleaner will know, ‘Okay you have greeted him but not me, so **clearly you think he is better than me**’.*” (Manqoba, **emphasis added**)

What was emphasised by the respondents was that a leader could demonstrate a high level of relational transparency, while still being adaptable to the context:

*“it is ultimately about in my opinion, about **being real depending on the circumstances**”* (Manqoba, **emphasis added**)

#### 5.2.1.4. **Balanced processing**

This was the least talked about official component of AL, and it emerged as the weakest official AL component theme.

This component to AL has a strong relationship to how the leaders make decisions, for coding purposes the theme of how leaders handle information and emotions in decision-making situations was identified:

*“I suppose that is the measure of a leader that when...*

*Q: How they respond to fear?*

*A: Ja, **fear or a crisis**.”* (Xolani, **emphasis added**)

And:

*“Some people when they are under pressure they **dwel on their fears** more than the problem at hand; and that **can cloud judgement**.”* (Xolani, **emphasis added**)

A theme that emerged here was also the ability to gain information from more sources before a decision was made:

*“rather to take the opportunity to the other end and say listen I’m going **to take everyone’s position** and let me hear **what you guys are thinking** before I give you my view.”* (Manqoba, **emphasis added**)

And:

*“you have to consider **a whole range of variables**.”* (Tumang, **emphasis added**)

#### 5.2.1.5. **Internalized moral perspective**

This was a very strong theme which emerged based on the official component of AL. Almost all respondents discussed this theme, and it received a large amount of airtime.

This theme was an important one to note. One of the main founding principles (and contentious component of the definition) is that AL contains a strong moral component and this emerged strongly from the respondents.

When respondents discussed anything related to strong, positive morals or ethics when defining AL, it was coded under this theme. Some examples:

*“**values and beliefs to the workplace**” (Deon, **emphasis added**)*

*“**a highly principled way of leading and making decisions.**” (Cameron, **emphasis added**)*

*“I see authenticity as a characteristic of a person in terms of whether you are an authentic human being or not which I guess goes to things like **value systems, morals, ethics and the thing about being true to yourself.**” (Taryn, **emphasis added**)*

A few respondents talked about having a strong moral element to their leadership styles or decision making but used external guidance as a standard:

*“Therefore, it is being authentic **to my core values** and to myself and to **those that I am accountable to** and those that **I hold in high regard**, be it my wife, be it my kids, be it my parents, be it my spiritual leaders.” (Cameron, **emphasis added**)*

Some respondents believed that the value set could be established by the organisation that they are a part of and, in this context, aligned to:

*“if I am being authentic as a leader I think I am **being true to my own values, the values of the organisation**” (Taryn, **emphasis added**)*

An interesting subtheme related to an internalized moral perspective is the concept of community involvement, support and upliftment, an extremely important topic in the South African context:

*“**giving back to the communities** and doing things not just because you have to because you’ve got BEE points to score but doing it because it **is really the right thing to do.**” and, “Again, just sort of moving **to a value system** for me and then managing people according to **that value system** in the interests of them and the **broader social environment** I would think” (Taryn, **emphasis added**)*

#### **5.2.1.6. New Component of Definition: Accountability**

Accountability as a new component was identified as an important new theme in that the respondents spoke of being publicly accountable for their own decisions as well as the actions of the organisations which they led. Although it was spoken about by two individuals (Manqoba and Cameron) they dedicated a large portion of their interviews to discussing this topic (457 and 501 words respectively). The way that they expressed this view was slightly different in that Manqoba discussed being publicly accountable for the actions of their organisations:

*“...it goes pear-shaped, authentic leaders stand up and say we got it wrong. We are sorry. We will try and fix it; we will do our best not to make it happen again. But you*

*never duck responsibility, you never **duck accountability**, you never hide behind the fact that oh I was too far away to know what was going on. I think that is one aspect of authenticity.”* (Manqoba, **emphasis added**)

Cameron used the view of the general public as a guideline for good decision making, stating that if private decisions and discussions were made public, would the leaders of the organisation stand by their decisions as well as being proud of how the decisions were made:

*“I always ask a simple question, if I wouldn’t want this type of decision to be made against me or specific decision I wouldn’t be **proud for my kids to know that I made this decision**, then I **am not being authentic with myself** as an individual because I’m doing the wrong thing.”* (Cameron, **emphasis added**)

This theme was interpreted as different to relational transparency in that rather than individual transparency in one on one dealings and the leadership interacting with small groups of followers, the leader here is seen as the head of an organisation and accountable for what that organisation does.

#### **5.2.1.7. New Component of Definition: Contextual awareness**

Another new component of AL as raised by the respondents was that of contextual awareness. The respondents discussed at length about the importance of understanding the context the leader, follower and organisation are in and being authentic within the context or environment in which they were operating. Five of the respondents discussed this component of AL for a total word count of 509, Manqoba discussed it the most out of respondents.

*“an **appreciation of the environment** and their ability to take that, and also where an organization is.”* (Xolani, **emphasis added**)

*“I think in the South African context the sort of **broader economic and I suppose social environment** where you sort of have to give back.”* (Taryn, **emphasis added**)

#### **5.2.1.8. New Component of Definition: Leadership**

A component discussed by four of the respondents was one of being able to gain results through people. This was raised as an important component of the leadership component of authentic leadership and was emphasised throughout the interviews for a total word count of 260.

*“So, I think authentic leadership is the combination of two very powerful words; **authenticity and leadership**..... So, it is being able therefore to be **authentic in oneself** in a way that **successfully gets results through people**.”* (Ruth, **emphasis added**)

An additional slight variation on this theme was that of specifically inspiring followers to get results:

*“Inspiring and guiding and directing a **group of people** towards a **common cause**,*  
*a*

***common goal.**” (Frank, **emphasis added**)*

#### 5.2.1.9. New Component of Definition: Humility

A new strong theme which emerged was that of humility. The researcher saw this as a distinct new component as opposed to self-awareness and an internalized moral perspective in that it could debatably be considered a combination of these two components:

*“to not act as though everyone understands and accepts that is a CEO, so you’re in a senior position, but **not to act as though that places you in a sense as better than them**” (Manqoba, **emphasis added**)*

### 5.3. Research Question 2

What benefits do those business leaders believe that Authentic Leadership creates for the organisation, for the leader themselves and for their followers?

This specific research question was split into three different parts, benefits to the organisation, benefits to the leader themselves and benefits to the followers. As no specific preparation was given to the respondents besides the topic of the research, it was anticipated the benefits discussed would be given from their own experience rather than from the academic literature. All coding was completed inductive from the data.

#### 5.3.1.1. Coding for Research Question 2

Coding for the benefits of AL inductively produced from the transcripts and was grouped into three categories as per outline above and the interview guide.

Table 5: Codes used for identified benefits of AL

|   |
|---|
| <b>Benefits to the organisation</b>       |
| RQ2: org.success.alignment                |
| RQ2: org.success.critical.for.performance |
| RQ2: org.success.org.sustainability       |
| RQ2: org.success.right.leaders            |
| RQ2: org.success.staff.retention          |
| RQ2: org.success.talent.maximisation      |
| RQ2: org.success.without.AL               |
| RQ2: anti.org.success.uncertainty         |
| <b>Benefits to the leader</b>             |
| RQ2: leader.benefit.accomodating.staff    |

|   |
|---|
| <b>Benefits to the leader (cont.)</b>       |
| RQ2: leader.benefit.congruence              |
| RQ2: leader.benefit.easier.to.lead          |
| RQ2: leader.benefit.personal.growth         |
| RQ2: leader.benefit.personal.wellbeing      |
| RQ2: leader.benefit.visible.success         |
| RQ2: anti.leader.benefit.burden             |
| <b>Benefits to the followers</b>            |
| RQ2: follower.benefit.certainty             |
| RQ2: follower.benefit.follower.authenticity |
| RQ2: follower.benefit.staff.growth          |
| RQ2: follower.benefit.transparent.culture   |
| <b>General</b>                              |
| RQ2: example.given                          |

### 5.3.1.2. Benefits to the organisation

When discussing the benefits to the organisation, a large majority of the respondents believed that AL was critical to performance or success of the organisation. This code was also used when the respondents described it as “important” or “crucial” to the success of the organisation:

*“I do think it is **critically important**.” And “So, the consistency is **exceptionally important** and I believe that consistency can only come from **practising authentic leadership in many ways**. So, it’s almost as if you can’t have one without the other; so, I do believe **it is critically important**.” (Virosha, **emphasis added**)*

Although the question about benefits to the leader themselves was asked later in the interview schedule, many respondents tied the wellbeing of the leader to the long-term success of the organisation:

*“I think **it is critical** because I think anyone who is in a leadership position who is not able to be authentic will eventually compromise their own wellbeing and **therefore the wellbeing of the organization**.” (Ruth, **emphasis added**)*

A very strong theme which emerged which discussing this question was that of talent maximisation. It was discussed by many respondents that an authentic leader would generate the most performance and growth out of her staff which would have a strong positive impact on the organisation:

*“But I think it **creates value for the organization** because the fundamental being of an organization or a company is that it has got to **be able to tap into the expertise of the people**” and “That is what authentic leadership does because the very thing... and **that is the challenge for the organization right**, the very thing that people you say you **want good engineers, you want smart engineers, and the next thing you***

**want is to tell them how to think, how to communicate, how to articulate those things”** (Xolani, **emphasis added**)

Another important theme that emerged with regards to benefit to the organisation was a theme of alignment. Sub-themes of alignment of purpose, alignment of values, staff alignment and consistency were consolidated into this theme when identified.

**“It sets the roles, the definition of roles, the expectations of roles, is sets the way in which objectives are put together, it provides that framework”** (Tumang, **emphasis added**)

Alignment of values was also a strong theme which emerged, often in relation to identifying and selecting the correct staff.

**“If you are an authentic leader and you demonstrate that, your staff will demonstrate that and your staff will start to follow that, and your staff will start to live those values.”** (Manqoba, **emphasis added**)

A very interesting contrary view was that of Xolani, who believed being authentic in an environment that was not suited to it would actually be detrimental to the organisation as it causes uncertainty when members of that organisation had become accustomed to a certain type of behaviour:

**“but for the organisation, it’s harder because the very nature of being authentic means that you don’t go to a textbook, you don’t follow a formula because it goes with who you are. And at different times there is comfort in predictability, and when there is no certainty of how you will handle situations there will be nervousness”** (Xolani, **emphasis added**)

### 5.3.1.3. Benefits to the leader

When asked if there were any benefits to the leaders themselves when demonstrating the qualities of AL, as they were defined during the interview, the respondents overwhelmingly believed there were strong benefits for the leader.

One of the most common themes that emerged was that of congruence in the leader, both personal congruence and congruence of communications:

**“I think because it sits well with you, you are being true to how you think, your own philosophies, your way of doing things, and you see the fruits of that, you see the results of that. So, I do think it creates that congruence.”** (Virosha, **emphasis added**)

Some described congruence as being a “freedom from baggage” or stress and that it made it easier to be a leader:

**“The benefit to the leader is that you don’t carry the baggage that you shouldn’t be carrying because you know that if you are authentic and you are transparent you can say with all confidence that when I put my issues on the table I am not worried that I am going to be judged and I am not worried”** (Cameron, **emphasis added**)

The respondents also stated that there was a benefit to the leader in that they could achieve personal wellbeing and the benefit that staff will be more accommodating to their humanity:

*“People see that and at night you go home and you wrestle with the fact that ooh I remember when I said that... **I go home and I sleep, I sleep peacefully.** So benefits for me, I never sleep without anything other than restful. I can be who I am and **I don’t have to put up a front.** The nice thing about being like that is people accept you for who you are and therefore when you have bad hair days they will forgive you.”* (Manqoba, **emphasis added**)

From some respondents, there was an impression that the growth has been difficult but that they and their organisations have benefitted personally from it:

*“It has been good for me. Tough... but I’ve have **learnt a lot about myself** and I think I have started to make a bit of a difference in the organization.”* (Frank, **emphasis added**)

Of interest, one of the respondents believed that the burden to the leader in being authentic and it might hurt a leader’s career development:

*“No, I don’t think it is a particularly... it is almost **like a burden** and I don’t know, something, because it’s one of those **double-edged swords** where you really build a lot of trust by being authentic but a lot of times a lot of people say **you don’t have a game face.**”* (Kenjamen, **emphasis added**)

#### 5.3.1.4. Benefits to the followers

When respondents were asked about benefits to followers with regards to AL, several strong themes emerged. The initial theme that was most striking was the creation of a transparent culture within the organisation:

*“Absolutely. I think authentic leadership will create a **culture of authenticity and transparency** in an organization which will inevitably encourage people to speak more, have **more open conversations**”* (Ruth, **emphasis added**)

An open and transparent culture created an environment where it was easier for the followers to be authentic:

*“Absolutely because it becomes a safe space for people to be the **very best of who they can be as opposed to being carbon copies** of what we define as success. You see a carbon copy of an individual will **never be as good as that individual.**”* (Cameron, **emphasis added**)

That open culture and the authenticity of the follower was said to improve the relationship between the leaders and the follower, and make it easier to follow:

*“So, I think for the followers if there is a kind of **personal connection**, they understand more of you as a person rather than sort of a figurehead or as an appointee, I think there can be a **richer relationship**.” (Frank, **emphasis added**)*

A strong emergent theme was that this open and transparent culture, which allowed follower authenticity and improved the relationship between leaders and their followers created an environment where there was much personal growth in the staff:

*“to develop themselves more, give them more opportunities.” (Ruth)*

Manqoba relayed a story where this personal growth ended up in a junior staff member being unexpectedly involved in a bid for a new large contract and her personal development leading to the eventual winning of the contract:

*“The response she gave was one of the reasons we won the contract. Now if we were inauthentic there was no way that she could come across as authentic. **She was just herself**; she said look I started out here as a cleaner and **the company developed me. They gave me the opportunity**, I got promoted to this, I got promoted to that, I got this training, I can now provide an education for my kids you know, from this company, they sent me to literacy classes, and **I love working for this company**” (Manqoba, **emphasis added**)*

#### 5.4. Research Question 3

What are the current perceived levels of Authentic Leadership in their organisations and in South African business as a whole?

##### 5.4.1.1. Coding for Research Question 3

Respondents were asked to provide their view of the current level of AL in the South African business climate based on the definition of AL that was established during the interview. In addition, they were asked to rank the level of AL in their own organisations.

While discussing research question 3 many respondents pre-emptively provided answers to research question 4 (perceived barriers to AL) and research question 5 (suggestions to overcome perceived barriers), in addition many respondents elaborated on research question 1 and 2 (definition of AL and benefits of AL), for example:

*“**Very low**, sadly, I have to say that, **and I will tell you why** I say very low because when you look at the **trust deficit between three crucial players**, the society and business, the society and government and business and government you can really see already we live in different worlds.” (Cameron, **emphasis added**)*

During the first pass of coding, these insights were coded as being related to RQ3 and an “RQ3:” prefix was attached to all of these inductively created codes. This proved to be a mistake as these codes and themes were not related to RQ3 but rather were insights into other research questions. During iterative reviews of the coding schema these codes

were merged into the correct codes related to the correct research questions, and hence the number of codes created for RQ3 were significantly reduced.

Due to the above flow of events, the sections of the transcripts dedicated to this part of the interview was highly coded with insight into other research questions.

Table 6: Codes used for relative level of AL

|                                       |
|---------------------------------------|
| RQ3: AL.in.org.high                   |
| RQ3: AL.in.org.low                    |
| RQ3: AL.in.org.low.CEO.only           |
| RQ3: AL.in.org.medium                 |
| RQ3: AL.in.SA.high                    |
| RQ3: AL.in.SA.low                     |
| RQ3: AL.in.SA.medium                  |
| RQ3: AL.level.different.across.groups |

#### 5.4.1.2. Level of authentic leadership in South African business environment

The strongest qualitative response when the respondents were asked to assess the current level of AL in South Africa was that it was poor and needed a lot of improvement. This came through as a very strong theme, significantly more than medium or low, even though some of their responses were brief and clear on the matter:

*“I think the minority of them.”* (Manqoba, **emphasis added**)

The respondents often talked about the political climate in South Africa and often they would state, without being asked, that AL in the SA political spectrum was low. Despite this, all respondents did give a view of their assessment within a business context:

*“But I do think that South Africa as an economy and taking away the political system, I think that the authenticity in leadership **comes at a premium** and there is **not a whole lot of it.**”* (Xolani, **emphasis added**)

*“I would say **it is lacking.** I would say in **South African business ja**; certainly, if I look at **South African government** and **parastatals** and **those sorts of places it is dismal.**”* (Frank, **emphasis added**)

Some respondents compared it to other environments they had worked in and assessed it low:

*“I can give a **comparison here** because I also work a lot with **European customers right**, so I think that I can give a comparison in terms of the C-level that I engage within the **European context** and the C-level that I **engage with here.** I would say that in South Africa in terms of **authentic leadership we engage lower than what I would see in more developed countries**”* (Ruth, **emphasis added**)

There was a respondent, Tumang, who believed the levels of AL in SA were average:

*“I think as average by definition there are **some people who are obviously more authentic** leaders than others, and there are **some who are less authentic**, but nonetheless all people in positions of leadership are nonetheless leaders in some way. **Some just happen to be more authentic than others. That is why I say average**” (Tumang, **emphasis added**)*

Two of the respondents believed that the current level of AL in SA was high:

*“I think when you look at sort of politically what’s going on, and you know leadership standing up against government where they believe things aren’t being done properly, **I think there is a strong authenticity there in terms of doing the right thing for the country and the nation and thereby the people.**” (Taryn, **emphasis added**)*

*“So, I suppose **I see that authenticity more often than not** particularly in business leaders as well, which is what is fascinating for me actually talking to other business leaders, listening to them. When you can hear that passion coming through, when you can see the achievements or the results of somebody having a vision, **those are all manifestations of authentic leadership in my view.**” (Virosha, **emphasis added**)*

It’s important to note that a part of Virosha’s position is to consult directly with executives and directors of their clients on major issues. In the quote above she is discussing her personal experience in these interactions with these leaders.

#### **5.4.1.3. Level of authentic leadership in their own organisations**

In stark contrast, the majority of the respondents believed their organisations were relatively high when assessing their level of AL, using the same definition and by the same standard.

*“So, senior management team definitely, **very authentic because that is the whole plan.** So, we’ve got a certain culture and of that culture being authentic is a big part of it.” (Kenjamen, **emphasis added**)*

When this was discussed, the respondents often believed their executive or management teams demonstrated high levels of AL:

*“if I think of **our ExCo that I participate in, certainly.** When we engage in conversation, and we are working with the local team, there is a **good level of transparency** and people are encouraged to bring individual thought, individual style to the things that they do.” (Ruth, **emphasis added**)*

And:

*“I believe the **executive level does**; I think really is trying to grow people (sic), **live to the value system**, you know **support the environment, support the bigger***

**ecosystem and all of that. So, I think within my organization at that level, yes”**  
(Taryn, **emphasis added**)

Some respondents talked about strong authenticity in their organisation over an extended period:

**“Look I am really privileged to work here, and we get to deal with not just the generational leaders of today but the people that went before them because those stakeholders have become shareholders and influences. So, we get to see how those people kind of conduct themselves; so, I think we have tried to live those virtues consistently over a 20-year period”** (Deon, **emphasis added**)

Some respondents interpreted the question to refer to them specifically and individually, and answered the question in that context:

**“The leaders of this organization? Well, I am the leader of the organization – I would like to think based on the definition that I set that I am an authentic leader. I do my very best to set realistic objectives on a subjective and with an ethical manner and transparently to the people that follow me”** (Tumang, **emphasis added**)

One respondent assessed his organisation as demonstrating a medium level of AL and that it needed to be improved if they were to live up to the values of their organisation:

**“When I look at the things we do and I evaluate how we go about doing them, and the core values that we have defined as an organization, I can honestly say half of what we define as the core values of the organization we don’t fully live that.”** And **“We should be aspiring to improve and get to 100% assimilation of those core values. It may be a bit harsh what I have just said – that is my honest assessment – is that there is a gap, there is a gap in living those core values versus how we have articulated them”** (Cameron, **emphasis added**)

Another took the question to be asking about their direct manager or the overall leader of the organisation and answered the question in that context while discussing the impact that leader has across the organisation:

**“Very high ja, my direct boss, the MD of the organization, I think he is an ideal picture of authentic leadership. He stands very true to his morals, to his principles, we even refuse work if it doesn’t fit into the culture of the business. So, it permeates through all levels. We won’t compromise on quality, we won’t compromise on certain things and if the contract threatens that then you know we won’t get involved in that. So that is one example of it, and with him being obviously at the head that is sort of a precedent that is set throughout the different levels as well in terms of people”** (Virosha, **emphasis added**)

Two respondents assessed their organisations as demonstrating a low level of AL. This assessment was either due to the top leader being new in the organisation or the organisation having new leadership or management within the organisation:

“Right now, we’re **not yet at even the middle**; we’ve still got a lot of work to do with our **new leaders**. Again, **it’s the millennials, and they only want to do the fluffy stuff**, the really nice things, but when you go to meetings, and you sit around a table, and you actually talk **about issues that are quite serious you immediately see the difference**.” (Claycia, **emphasis added**)

And:

“Then I think the next level down is difficult because it is that sort of **senior management** layer where you have got people who are good broking or insurance people **battling to grow into that sort of role of an authentic leader**. I think that is **often a challenge for people**” (Taryn, **emphasis added**)

## 5.5. Research Question 4

What are the interviewed leaders’ perceptions of barriers to Authentic Leadership and have they experienced any of these barriers personally?

These questions were phrased in that they could be identified as perceived barriers rather than real barriers. This may have affected the specific responses received but added a level of insight that could help developing leaders overcome barriers that may be non-real but still challenging for an emerging leader.

### 5.5.1.1. Coding for Research Question 4

Codes were inductively created as the transcripts were reviewed and analysed. Any barriers that were identified were coded.

If respondents identified barriers to AL throughout the interview, even before this question was asked, then it was coded under this research question.

Table 7: Codes used for perceived barriers to Authentic Leadership

|                                       |
|---------------------------------------|
| RQ4: barrier.cultural.awareness       |
| RQ4: barrier.economic.situation       |
| RQ4: barrier.education.system         |
| RQ4: barrier.foreign.businesses       |
| RQ4: barrier.lack.of.role.models      |
| RQ4: barrier.large.organisations      |
| RQ4: barrier.need.to.conform          |
| RQ4: barrier.organisational.culture   |
| RQ4: barrier.poor.self.awareness      |
| RQ4: barrier.prejudice                |
| RQ4: barrier.premature.promotion      |
| RQ4: barrier.South.Africa.history     |
| RQ4: barrier.upbringing               |
| RQ4: barrier.what.society.has.created |
| RQ4: barrier.willingness.to.sacrifice |

### 5.5.1.2. Barrier Identified: Organisational Culture

The strongest theme that emerged as a barrier was the culture of the organisation and whether it accommodated or rewarded the culture of the leader:

*“So, we’ve boxed ourselves into all of these things, and I suppose you could argue from a different perspective that it is based on **institutional culture of where a person is from**. And usually, you find a lot of times a person from a different **background would be judged differently, where we use race being one**” (Xolani, **emphasis added**)*

What came across quite strongly was the impact that leaders had on each other, and how the culture of the organisation would affect how the leaders would make decisions, from a position of authenticity or conformity:

*“So when you **take decisions at any given time** if you **make a choice to be authentic** you also need to be conscious that you will leave with a certain amount of concern where the rest, especially your **colleagues in the leadership team, may be a little apprehensive, may be uncertain**; because if you have a team of five senior people some have been in an organization for a while, one of them does not fit the mould, breaks away from the ranks, **the first instinct without fail** is always **‘you need to reign him in’**.” (Xolani, **emphasis added**)*

Some of the respondents talked about the culture of the organisation being determined by the broader culture of the country:

*“In the **African culture**, there is quite an **authoritative type narrative** so you know leaders are the **leader of the tribe** for example will listen that will **rule from the top down** and sometimes that **comes out in business as well**” (Ruth, **emphasis added**)*

Respondents also discussed that leaders were often promoted through the ranks based on how well they aligned to the culture, and if the culture was inauthentic then the leaders would be more likely to be inauthentic:

*“So as a consequence the behaviours that we reward in order to **get to the top of organizations are inauthentic behaviours** and as a consequence... and there are some brilliant CEOs out there but I think we have **created a cadre of senior leadership that got to the top by displaying inauthentic behaviours**” and “The guy gets one up eventually and **gets to the top in many cases**, and that’s why I think there is a **lack of authentic leadership** and it is part of why certainly since the financial crisis of 2007 there is this sense that **senior leadership globally, these are not nice people**” (Manqoba, **emphasis added**)*

Some respondents discussed that the culture of the organisation was often determined by the size of the organisation, the larger variations being harder to be authentic in (this was also identified as a separate barrier discussed below):

*“So, it is **tough to be true to self**, the **bigger the corporate you work for** the larger the number of shareholders and stakeholders and **the more difficult it is to be authentic in a truly public way**” (Deon, **emphasis added**)*

#### 5.5.1.3. Barrier Identified: Need to Conform

One of the strongest barriers discussed thematically was that of the need to conform to the norms and values of the organisation. This was thematically identified as a very strong barrier.

For some of the respondents, the root cause of the need conform was that the organisations were large:

*“But the fact that a fair chunk of our economy is also about **big companies**, you know to be in a **big company requires a conformist attitude**. I don’t know you so I must know your title and where you fit.” (Xolani, **emphasis added**)*

*“I think for large organizations (and there are exceptions), but I think **people are expected to behave in a particular way** in order to get ahead even if they ideally would not.” (Manqoba, **emphasis added**)*

Others stated that it was necessary to conform in order to achieve career progression or to remain employed:

*“let’s say there are two people up for a CEO role and one person is 100% authentic, and the other one is a good politician. I think **the politician will probably get it more than not**. So, I think the **barriers are it is difficult to be yourself and to drive a performance-driven culture**” (Kenjamen, **emphasis added**)*

And:

*“the **leader does set the tone** of how people are to behave in an organization and what is acceptable and what is not acceptable, again whether that is good or bad, **another barrier could be that that may not fit in with how I want to express my leadership** in many ways. But the **pressure to keep my job in many ways**, so I will do it in this way even though it doesn’t fit with me” (Virosha, **emphasis added**)*

#### 5.5.1.4. Barrier Identified: Cultural Awareness

A very strong theme which emerged when discussing barriers to authenticity was that of cultural awareness:

*“Whilst I was still reporting to him he had a management team and he had one of his **directors was Muslim**. Every Friday we would have an Exco and of **course, my Muslim colleague was a very conservative Muslim needed to go to mosque**. I won’t say the guy’s name, but the **fellow would poke fun at him for his religious beliefs**” (Manqoba, **emphasis added**)*

Many of the discussions around cultural awareness were related to the history of South Africa, which emerged as a separate theme later:

*“I think there is still a big residue of that. Again, **even in the African culture there is this kind of embedded hierarchy and therefore with the embedded hierarchy there comes expected required respect, and I think a lot of that gets in the way**” (Frank, **emphasis added**)*

#### 5.5.1.5. Barrier Identified: South African History

Some of the limited cultural acceptance was attributed to the historical context of the country, which came through as a very strong theme:

*“I think our **cultural differences** is a huge barrier; I think just **for me it was just apartheid... was a huge... is a huge barrier** because we are still trying to find, after so many years, you know we are still trying to deal with **all our historical stuff**. And we are still battling you know, unfortunately, I can see it in leaders as well.” (Claycia, **emphasis added**)*

#### 5.5.1.6. Barrier Identified: Prejudice

There was also a theme of gender prejudice which was identified as a barrier to authenticity, especially for females:

*“I am working in quite a **male-dominated industry** I often see fellow female colleagues who are **you know living up to what they believe they need to be**. You know I... ja... I could give the example of being in Saudi-Arabia in meetings as the **only female in the office, let alone in the meeting room** you know.” And, “So, I think that I’ve experienced it more from a **gender point of view than anything**, in terms of the early days of my career I definitely felt that I needed to... stupid things, I needed to **wear a suit rather than a skirt**, you know, just... and I have worked a lot with the Arab cultures as well, and the learning there has really been about not **compromising my own integrity** in order to interact with other cultures” (Ruth, **emphasis added**)*

In addition to gender prejudice, there was also a recurring theme of racial prejudice being a barrier. Racial prejudice emerged in discussions throughout the interviews, not just when discussing perceived barriers:

*“The moment we **know the race we stop thinking**.” (Xolani, **emphasis added**)*

#### 5.5.1.7. Barrier Identified: Poor Self-Awareness

A strong theme which emerged was that of poor self-awareness being a barrier to authenticity, and it had the potential to not allow a leader to benefit from the potential of their teams:

*“If you **portray that there are no deficiencies**, then inevitably you are **not going to be leveraging the strengths of others** who could potentially do better than you in those areas.” (Ruth, **emphasis added**)*

When respondents talked about ego being an issue and a barrier to authenticity this was interpreted by the researcher as poor self-awareness:

*“Okay, I think all leaders **battle with authenticity** just because of **our own ego issues and stuff**, you know our **own psychological things** that we bring to the table you know around shadows and... oh sorry it's maybe getting a little bit too psychological, but I think **our inner selves are our worst barriers to that authenticity**” (Taryn, **emphasis added**)*

#### 5.5.1.8. Barrier Identified: Premature Promotion

A medium strength theme which emerged was that of premature promotion. Some respondents felt that if a leader was not ready for a new role, then this could have a negative effect on their authenticity:

*“I also think that we have a large group of people who have **moved very quickly into senior leadership roles**, and the success is sometimes related to history and politics **more than to leadership competence**” (Ruth, **emphasis added**)*

When premature promotion was discussed, it was often mentioned in the context of affirmative action, known as ‘BEE’ in South Africa:

*“I think **the environment, again BEE**, I think maybe whilst the principle is right I think it makes it hard for managers to sometimes buy into it. You know **bringing in people who you don't necessarily want or people who are not necessarily performing** – again this is the stereotypical view of BEE.” (Taryn, **emphasis added**)*

#### 5.5.1.9. Barrier Identified: Education System

Although many respondents recommended leadership development when discussing how to overcome the perceived barriers, when the education system of the country was discussed it was not a strong theme of being a barrier to authenticity, with the exception of one respondent:

*“Yes, I do I think there are barriers be it that we... I think our **education is a huge barrier**” (Claycia, **emphasis added**)*

One respondent explicitly stated that he did not believe the education system was a barrier:

*“There is a view which I **don't share that our school system is a barrier**. I don't think our school system is different from our higher education system; you know they both **come out of the same production line**.” (Xolani, **emphasis added**)*

### 5.6. Research Question 5

Do they have suggestions for other leaders to overcome those barriers and do they have any personal experience in overcoming these barriers?

#### 5.6.1.1. Coding for Research Question 5

Codes for research question 5 were inductively created as the transcripts were reviewed and analysed. Any suggestions to overcome the perceived barriers that were identified for research question 4 were coded along similar themes.

If respondents identified ways that AL was developed or encouraged in their experience throughout the interview, then it was coded under this research question.

Table 8: Codes used for perceived barriers to Authentic Leadership

|                                   |
|-----------------------------------|
| RQ5: change.reward.system         |
| RQ5: diversity                    |
| RQ5: environment.for.authenticity |
| RQ5: innovation                   |
| RQ5: leadership.development       |
| RQ5: mentorship                   |
| RQ5: personal.sacrifice           |
| RQ5: public.communications        |
| RQ5: self-development             |
| RQ5: strong.teamwork              |
| RQ5: types.of.authenticity        |

#### 5.6.1.2. Enabler Identified: Environment for Authenticity

An extremely strong theme which emerged was to create an environment for authenticity. This theme was discussed by almost all of the respondents this theme was given a large amount of time during the discussion. It's important to note that Xolani, Deon and Frank both gave this topic a large amount of airtime and their interviews account for a large proportion of the word count.

*“creating a culture which **is open to differences and in fact embracing**, maybe not even open but embraces the benefit or the advantage that **diversity can have in all its forms**; you know in personality, approach and style. I think that a **culture which is open and embraces that kind of thing will inevitably provide the space** for people to be more authentic leaders” (Ruth, **emphasis added**)*

Some respondents discussed an authentic culture in the context of their own organisation as well as contrasted to other organisations they've been leaders in:

*“I think there are very few of those that have been privileged to **work in environments that allow us to be genuinely authentic**. So, I have worked in different places, I have always celebrated kind of the goods and the bads that have come with each of the organisations, and I think **it's only when you work at places that truly allow for authenticity that you start to better reflect on what is not authentic**.” (Deon, **emphasis added**)*

A recurring theme was one of an authentic culture being self-reinforcing:

*“you also **create an environment where it is easier to be yourself** when you see **somebody else being themselves**” (Xolani, **emphasis added**)*

The respondents also provided specific suggestions for how to create an authentic culture and some suggestions as to the organisational design:

*“So, if you are able to **lessen the hierarchy, bureaucracy, allow people to fail, allow a little more latitude, give a bit more power to others** in the organization, **encourage people to take responsibility** for their own roles etc., **encourage people to be leaders** in their own little small space, I think that helps a lot because there is definitely a **sort of waterfall cascade effect and I think it amplifies as it cascades.**” (Frank, **emphasis added**)*

### 5.6.1.3. Enabler Identified: Leadership Development

Another strong theme that emerged when discussing suggestions to overcome the perceived barriers to authenticity was that of leadership development. If an organisation wants to create an authentic culture then the right leaders need to be identified and developed:

*“I think one way is to **educate boards** that sanction the appointment of the most senior people in organizations, **get them trained, get them exposed, get them to understand what authenticity is, what the long-term benefits of authenticity are, how to test for authenticity** so that you **don’t wind up with a BP situation** where you have the biggest oil crisis or the biggest incident ever to happen to BP; the leader of BP goes ‘I just want to get my life back’, that you have got a **board going, ‘sorry china you can’t get this job with that kind of an approach.’**” (Manqoba, **emphasis added**)*

Leadership development, as it was raised, was seen by the researcher as the organisation actively participating in or driving the development of the leaders.

A topic that was raised was that the previous leadership development approaches might not be applicable to a futuristic context:

*“all of us **grew up with a different form of training, different experiences of leadership.** A lot of us I think get locked into the **old models**, and a lot of it was more hierarchical kind of model control stuff rather than sort of **persuade and inspire and kind of motivate.** There is no doubt that that is what **gets my sons going** as opposed to **people in my organization.**” (Frank, **emphasis added**)*

In addition, there was acknowledgement that this development needed to be in the context of future requirements of the business as well as the future types of leaders that would be required:

*“So, the authenticity debate tends to be on how do you take that message to the **new leaders of tomorrow**, and trying to shape their view **not just in terms of***

**technical leadership** so you know people that come from strong academic backgrounds you know make great cases” (Manqoba, **emphasis added**)

There was also an appreciation that leadership development needed to create multi-skilled leaders who could apply their skills to a variety of problems:

“when leaders come into business we need to have a **leadership program** but it needs to cover **all the areas that leaders need to know**. An intense leadership program that you are giving them **all the skills**, the soft and hard skills, to be able to equip them with what they need to do to be able to be relevant in the business.” (Claycia, **emphasis added**)

#### 5.6.1.4. Enabler Identified: Self Development

Separate to leadership development was the complimentary theme of self-development, the difference seen by the researcher as being that the development was driven by the individual, not by the organisation. This theme was discussed by almost all the respondents and emerged as a very strong theme:

“I don’t think we ever stop learning about ourselves, but I have definitely come across people that are **more committed to that journey than others**. Those that are more committed in my experience **tend to be more successful**. Whether it be in terms of confidence or just in terms of **learning and exposure**” (Ruth, **emphasis added**)

Some respondents talked about their own development and how it’s given them reserves to draw on when they were in challenging situations:

“I know I have a past of I was the youngest in my Masters class which was really a difficult thing to comprehend for some people; **so, I am already carrying that baggage in terms of my age in the workplace** kind of thing, and what I’ve done and **what I’ve achieved in relation to my age**.” (Virosha, **emphasis added**)

When the topic of self-development was discussed, it was often highlighted that it needs to happen in the context of the real world and that it’s not necessarily done with a formalised program:

“I don’t think leadership is an art or a science I think it is something **you kind of make up every day you go along**, as long as you are receptive to... as long as you **acknowledge your failings and try and build on your successes** and muddle your way through.” (Frank, **emphasis added**)

As this theme was identified as being self-directed, it was also noted when the respondents recommended that personal accountability was an important part of the self-development, and a developing leader shouldn’t expect it to be an easy journey:

“So, my advice to everybody is really, if **you want to be authentic go for it**, there is **a lot of risks involved**, and it **doesn’t make sense in a way to be really caring and trusting and authentic in this dog eat dog world**. But I’ve decided to do it

***no matter what the consequence and it has worked; I love it, I couldn't do it any other way***” (Kenjamen, ***emphasis added***)

#### 5.6.1.5. Enabler Identified: Diversity

A very strong theme which emerged as an enabler is to create an environment of diversity in your organisation, with a greater variety of ideas in an authentic environment, a high level of diversity may be very beneficial to the organisation:

***“Another probably most powerful thing that I have learnt along the way is that you must always add truth to your truth because your truth is not absolute and complete. It doesn't mean you discard what you already know just add truth to your existing truth. It is never complete. That is how I see the world”*** (Cameron, ***emphasis added***)

And:

***“But it is not always going to be the same old circle of people that knows stuff; the answers may lie from somebody who brings a different perspective. You can't have a different perspective from the same people.”*** (Xolani, ***emphasis added***)

## **Chapter 6: Discussion of Results**

### **6.1. Introduction**

Research findings from Chapter 5 will be compared and contrasted to Chapter 2 in this Chapter. The insights and themes gleaned from the analysis of the eleven semi-structured interviews conducted with South African business leaders are used to validate or differentiate the academic literature as it relates to Authentic Leadership (AL). The coding and analysis of these interviews have allowed the researcher to propose tentative answers to the proposed research questions clarified in Chapter 3. Due to the sample size of the respondents, the exploratory nature of the research, as well as the natural limitations of qualitative approaches, care is taken by the researcher not to imply generalisations to the general population. Throughout this discussion, when generalisations are made they are about the sample group only. The researcher will ensure continued focus on the specifics of the individual responses, especially as they pertain to context.

To begin with, we will review the key models and concepts raised by the literature review.

### **6.2. Discussion of Research Question 1**

How do South African leaders define the term “Authentic Leadership”, and how closely does that definition align to the four components of Authentic Leadership as proposed by Avolio & Gardner?

#### **6.2.1. Strong confirmative themes which emerged from the analysis**

The strongest component of AL that was confirmed by the respondents was that of **relational transparency**. This was expected by the researcher as a natural component of the colloquial understanding of *authenticity*. Especially when one thinks of an authentic leader, it is expected that the respondent will often put themselves outside of the shoes of the leader themselves and ask, “how do I know this person is authentic?” That transparency is expected to come through in the answering of that question. Very few of the leaders who discussed the definition of leadership put themselves in the shoes of the leader when they responded. They often talked about their leaders, whether they were authentic or not and how they knew that they were authentic.

Another strongest component of AL confirmed by the respondents was that of **internalized moral perspective**. As this is a contentious component of authentic leadership (Senjaya, Pekerti, Härtel, Hirst, & Butarbutar, 2016), it was an important finding that this came through so strongly in the South African context. Deon discussed the importance of values, especially in the workplace. Cameron defined AL as “*highly*

*principled*”, and Taryn discussed being an “*authentic human being*” as being defined by “*value systems, morals, ethics*”. Their responses were not unique, and the requirement of a strong ethical and moral base was a theme that emerged again and again. This contradicts some of the arguments put forward by the literature (Banks, McCauley, Garner, & Guler, 2016).

In the South African context, the ethical and moral component also emerged as an enabler to accomplishing transformation and improving diversity in the organisation which has been raised as a key issue which needs to be addressed if the country is to survive and prosper (Bosch, et al., 2015). As Nkomo raised, transformation in South Africa is often seen as an obligation more than an essential initiative for organisations to undertake (2015), which provides an opportunity for AL to improve the purpose and delivery of transformation in the country. As Taryn stated, “*giving back to the communities... not because you have to because you’ve got BEE points to score but doing it because it is really the right thing to do*”.

#### **6.2.2. Weak confirmative themes which emerged from the analysis**

**Self-awareness** and **balanced processing** were components which received much less confirmation from the respondents. The lack of self-awareness coming through in the definition may be surprising given the origin of the word authentic to mean to “know thyself” (Gardner, Coglisser, Davis, & Dickens, 2011). When respondents discussed this component they often indirectly referred to self-awareness as in the case of Deon who implied self-awareness when he stated that it is “*an ability to be true to self..... being able to bring you true underlying persona (sic)*”

Balanced processing was weakly confirmed by the respondents. Mostly in the context of making decisions under pressure such as in the example from Xolani who discussed how “*when they are under pressure they dwell on their fears more than the problem at hand, and that can cloud judgement*”. Manqoba appreciated that a component of authenticity was that more opinions should be gained before decision making was conducted when he discussed “*I’m going to take everyone’s position and let me hear what you guys are thinking before I give you my view*”, reinforced by Tumang who stated, “*you have to consider a whole range of variables*”.

#### **6.2.3. Strong emergent themes which emerged from the analysis**

A strong emergent theme from the research conducted was that accountability, contextual awareness and getting results through people were important components to AL as a way of understanding the concept according to the respondents.

**Accountability** was deemed to be important for leaders who make mistakes or lead organisations who make mistakes, and who take responsibility for them and stand accountable for what their organisations bring about, as eloquently stated by Manqoba, “*you **never duck responsibility**, you **never duck accountability**”*. Cameron also discussed how accountability always has an external component, “*If I wouldn’t want this type of decision to be made against me or specific decision I wouldn’t be **proud for my kids to know that I made this decision**, then I **am not being authentic with myself as an individual because I’m doing the wrong thing.**”*

Although raised as a benefit to AL (Gardner, Coglisser, Davis, & Dickens, 2011) it was not included as a specific component. Accountability is also discussed in the context of being shared accountability as a quality of an inclusive organisation (Cottrill, Lopez, & Hoffman, 2014) but exploration as a component of the definition should be explored.

**Contextual awareness** was raised as an important theme for the respondents which was succinctly described by Xolani as, “*an **appreciation of the environment**”*, in conjunction with high self-awareness and a strong moral component this allowed leaders to adapt their style to the leadership situation without compromising their morals or adapting their personalities, this was also important to the South African context as in the case of Taryn who stated, “*in the South African context the sort of **broader economic and I suppose social environment** where you sort of have to give back”*. By putting these two concepts together, the researcher interpreted this be recommended an adaptable approach with consistent underlying principles.

Contextual leadership has been strongly associated with transformational leadership, and although it is a leadership style that also requires a high level of integration (Meuser, et al., 2016) this may be a potential overlapping leadership style to be explored.

#### **6.2.4. Other interesting themes which emerged from the analysis**

##### **Leadership:**

As clearly and powerfully stated by Ruth at the beginning of the second interview, “*I think **authentic leadership** is the combination of **two very powerful words; authenticity and leadership.**”*

Of much interest to the researcher and emphasised due to the surprising nature of the new awareness was the emphasis that the ‘leadership’ term was half of the description of ‘authentic leadership’ but seems to have been taken for granted in the academic literature as it is discussed very little. For the analysis, the coding of ‘**new.gain.results.through.people**’ was originally used but the main emphasis is that,

especially in business, the leader working to achieve results through the people of that organisation. This coding was subsequently changed to '**new.leadership**' once this realisation had occurred to the researcher.

As described by Frank, "*Inspiring and guiding and directing a **group of people** towards a **common cause**, a **common goal**."* And Ruth, "*So, it is being able therefore to be authentic in oneself in a way that **successfully gets results through people**."*

Why this component would be missing from the literature and not included as an important component is interesting (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008), and to the researcher baffling but it seems as if the leaders in the field are more concerned with defining their specific style rather than the essence of the field which is to lead. It might make sense to revisit the ALQ and the ALS and decide whether it should be paired with an "effective leadership scale" or expanded to include leadership measurements. It could prove useful to explore the leadership network analysis (Meuser, et al., 2016) for likely candidates for inclusion.

#### **Humility:**

It might be argued that humility would be a natural outcome of the components of AL, but this is not necessarily so. This was identified as a component of authenticity, and the researcher believes that its emphasis and inclusion adds value to the definition. As Manqoba explained, "***not to act as though that places you in a sense as better than them***" it will undoubtedly improve the relationship between leader and follower which should ensure the achievement of many of the benefits discussed in the literature and during the interviews.

Humility is an important component of Servant leadership (Van Dierendonck, 2011) and overlap with this theory should be undertaken.

#### **6.2.5. Conclusion – Research question 1**

From the discussions regarding the findings as they relate to research question 1, the researcher has determined that:

- When asked without knowing the academic background, leaders confirmed that relational transparency and an internalized moral perspective was an important part of the definition of AL for them. Self-awareness and balanced processing occurred to fewer respondents when they defined the term themselves.
- In addition, contextual awareness, and accountability emerged as strong new themes as did the important inclusion of the leadership components to the

definition. Humility was an interesting new component that could add value to the definition in future.

- A potential comparison based on the detailed network review (Meuser, et al., 2016) in order to integrate these theories should be explored, as well as the potential overlap with servant leadership (Van Dierendonck, 2011).
- It is important to look into integration opportunities in the context of the environment, with an appreciation that the country unit might be a very broad tool to use in a multi-cultural country such as South Africa (Avoilio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009)

### 6.3. Discussion of Research Question 2

What benefits do those business leaders believe that Authentic Leadership creates for the organisation, for the leader themselves and for their followers?

#### 6.3.1. Identified benefits to the organisation

##### **Critical to success or survival:**

In general, AL was perceived to be critical or very important to the success of the organisation. Many respondents talked to the organisation not being able to achieve any decent level of performance without having a strong level of AL. The literature does discuss the performance benefits of AL (Gardner, Cogliser, Davis, & Dickens, 2011) but it is not always stated as being crucial for organisation success (López, Alonso, Morales, & León, 2015). A good example of the emphasis of the overall criticality of AL to an organisation can be heard in the words of Virosha: “*it is **critically important**.... the consistency is **exceptionally important**.... I do believe **it is critically important**.”*

##### **Long-term sustainability:**

AL was also believed to improve the long-term sustainability of the organisation and ability to not only achieve results but to achieve those results over an extended time period, which is a reflection of some of the literature (Hsieh & Wang, 2015). This was tied to the wellbeing of the leader which would have a roll-on effect on the followers and the success of the organisation. As described by Ruth, “*I think **it is critical** because I think anyone who is in a leadership position who is not able to be authentic will eventually compromise their own wellbeing and **therefore the wellbeing of the organization**.”*

##### **Organisational alignment:**

AL was also believed to improve the alignment of the organisation, from a values, norms, behaviours and the right staff for the organisational culture. As succinctly described by

Tumang, “**It sets the roles**, the definition of roles, the expectations of roles, is sets the way in which objectives are put together, it **provides that framework**”

In addition to providing the framework, some respondents also considered that AL might ensure alignment of staff as they would follow the norms and standards of the organisation, “*If you are an authentic leader and you demonstrate that, your staff will demonstrate that and your **staff will start to follow that, and your staff will start to live those values.***”

There are examples of the literature disagreeing with authenticity enabling alignment, specifically of values and goals (Algera & Lips-Wiersma, 2012).

#### **Talent Maximisation:**

Respondents highlighted that one of the biggest benefits to the organisation was that of maximising its talent. It was believed that it would generate the most performance and growth out of their staff which would have a strong positive impact on the organisation, as elaborated on by Xolani in detail:

“*But I think it **creates value for the organization** because the fundamental being of an organization or a company is that it has got to **be able to tap into the expertise of the people**” and “*That is what authentic leadership does because the very thing... and **that is the challenge for the organization right**, the very thing that people you say you want good engineers, you want smart engineers and the next thing you want is to tell them how to think, how to communicate, how to articulate those things”**

According to Martin, Guillaume, Thomas, Lee & Epitropaki (2016), leaders believe more strongly that their relationship with their staff will have a large influence on the performance of those staff. But when measured in the opposite direction that is often not the case.

In a nursing study on the effect of the performance of staff in the context of AL, it was shown that staff performance was improved, through the mediating role of empowerment (Wong & Laschinger, 2013).

#### **Cost to the organisation:**

Unexpectedly raised by Xolani was that there was actually a cost to the organisation rather than a benefit. He described it as being caused by the leader following their own norms and values, rather than the norms and values of the organisation:

“**but for the organization it’s harder** because the very nature of being authentic means that you **don’t go to a textbook**, you **don’t follow a formula** because it goes with **who**

**you are.** And at different times there is **comfort in predictability** and when there is no certainty of how you **will handle situations there will be nervousness”**

### 6.3.2. Identified benefits to the leader

The respondents did believe that there were strong benefits to the leader, in the form of personal congruence as well as congruence in communication, the personal well-being of the leader while also making it easier to lead.

#### **Congruence:**

Congruence was raised and this is highlighted in the literature. This made it easier to make decisions and to lead the organisation. Out of all the respondents, this was most eloquently described by Virosha, “*I think because **it sits well with you, you are being true to how you think, your own philosophies, your way of doing things, and you see the fruits of that, you see the results of that. So, I do think it creates that congruence.***”

An expansion and elaboration on congruence was that it would reduce your stress, as described by Cameron, “*you **don’t carry the baggage that you shouldn’t be carrying.... when I put my issues on the table I am not worried that I am going to be judged and I am not worried***” which aligned to the benefit discussed next, that of personal wellbeing.

Congruence was identified as a benefit of AL from the outset based on social exchange theory (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

#### **Personal well-being:**

The personal well-being of the leader was identified as a strong benefit that would be created by AL. Specifically, lower stress levels were discussed, better sleep, less mental energy spent deciding how you should behave and more time behaving in the right way. As per Manqoba, “*I go home and I sleep, I sleep peacefully. So, benefits for me, I never sleep without anything other than restful. I can be who I am and I **don’t have to put up a front.***”

The well-being of the leader and the followers have been described as a “unique feature of AL theory that is not present within the transformational leadership literature” (Meuser, et al., 2016, p. 636). This makes this benefit extremely important to AL specifically, as it allows it to differentiate itself from transformational leadership.

#### **Personal growth:**

As discussed by Frank, it was believed that AL would enable personal growth, “*It has been good for me. Tough... but I’ve have **learnt a lot about myself** and I think I have*

*started to make a bit of a difference in the organization.*” This was highlighted as a benefit to AL as per the literature (Copeland, 2014)

#### **Cost to the leader:**

Similarly, to the discussion around benefits to the organisation, there was an occurrence of a respondent stating that being authentic was costly to the leader. Kenjamen stated, *“it is almost **like a burden** and I don’t know, something, because it’s one of those **double-edged swords** where you really build a lot of trust by being authentic but a lot of times a lot of people say **you don’t have a game face.**”*

It was interesting that Kenjamen then went on to describe a situation where he was almost unprepared due to the manipulations of a rival competing for a leadership position. He was ‘saved’ through having a strong network of supporters who ensured that he was well prepared and was eventually successful in winning the position. Kenjamen did not seem to appreciate that in this situation his authenticity had proved more of a benefit than a cost. This support structure was discussed as an important requirement for a leader to develop their authenticity (George, Sims, McLean, & Mayer, 2007).

#### **6.3.3. Identified benefits to the followers**

##### **Transparent culture:**

One of the biggest benefits identified was the creation of a transparent culture. This would allow members of the organisation to speak more, to be open and honest and to have more open conversations. As Ruth explained, *“I think authentic leadership will create a **culture of authenticity and transparency** in an organization which will inevitably encourage people to speak more, have **more open conversations.**”*

During original conception, it was believed that authentic leaders would have a positive impact on the followers’ attitudes and behaviours (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004).

##### **Follower authenticity:**

A transparent culture was seen to create an environment which encouraged authenticity in the followers, as described by Cameron, *“it becomes a safe space for people to be the **very best of who they can be as opposed to being carbon copies** of what we define as success. You see a carbon copy of an individual will **never be as good as that individual.**”*

It has been raised that the direction of authenticity would be unidirectional from the leader to the follower, but not the reverse (Algera & Lips-Wiersma, 2012) and it has been highlighted that “authentic followership” is central to the understanding of the authentic leadership process (Avolio & Walumba, 2014).

### **Improved leader/follower relationship and staff growth:**

This led to a better relationship between the leader and the followers in the organisation, which allowed more personal growth for staff which led to better organisational success. As Frank describes, “*for the followers if there is a kind of **personal connection**, they understand more of you as a person rather than sort of a figurehead or as an appointee; I think there can be a **richer relationship**.” Which then lead to more growth for the staff, as per Ruth, “*to develop themselves more, give them more opportunities.*”*

Many leaders talked about how staff growth would lead to better company performance. This was also established as an integral part of the development of AL (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

### **Conclusion – Research question 2**

From the discussions regarding the findings as they relate to research question 2, the researcher has determined that:

- AL was believed be critical to the survival or important to the success of the organisation. Benefits included long-term sustainability, organisational alignment, and talent maximisation.
- It was raised that there may be uncertainty within the organisation caused by the authenticity of the leader.
- There were potentially numerous benefits to the leader themselves in being authentic. Benefits discussed included congruence, personal wellbeing and personal growth.
- It was raised that AL could cause vulnerability in the leader which could be exploited by rivals.
- AL was believed to provide many benefits to the followers, including the creation of a transparent culture, the improvement of follower authenticity, improved leader/follower relationship and staff growth. These benefits were believed to lead to improved organisation performance.

- Many of the findings regarding benefits to the organisation, leader and followers have been corroborated by the literature.
- A potential reinforcing and wholesome cycle appeared to emerge out of these discussions.

#### 6.4. Discussion of Research Question 3

What are the current perceived levels of Authentic Leadership in their organisations and in South African business as a whole?

##### 6.4.1. Perceived levels in South Africa

Overall the level of AL in the South African business environment was perceived to be low. The vast majority of the respondents believed it was low; two respondents believed it was high, and one believed it was average or medium. Almost all respondents mentioned it was low in the government *sphere* without being asked, as can be seen in this quote from Frank, “*I would say **it is lacking**. I would say in **South African business ja**; certainly, if I look at **South African government and parastatals and those sorts of places it is dismal**.”*

The relationship between government and business in the South African context was eloquently summarised by Cameron, “***Very low**, sadly, I have to say that **and I will tell you why** I say very low because when you look at the **trust deficit between three crucial players**, the society and business, the society and government and business and government you can really see already we live in different worlds.”*

Respondents described the situation in a variety of ways. Xolani stated that authenticity in SA business, “***comes at a premium** and there is **not a whole lot of it**.”*

What is important when judging the level of any particular trait is what are you judging that entity against? Ruth compared the levels of AL in the SA business environment to developed countries, “*I can give a **comparison here** because I also work a lot with **European customers right**.... I would say that in South Africa in terms of **authentic leadership we engage lower than what I would see in more developed countries**”*

Tumang stated that overall it was average and there discrepancies between individual leaders, “*there are **some people who are obviously more authentic** leaders than others, and there are **some who are less authentic**... **Some just happen to be more authentic than others. That is why I say average**”*

The view of AL being low in the SA business environment was not universal. Taryn stated that, “*when you look at sort of politically what’s going on and you know leadership*

*standing up against government where they believe things aren't being done properly, I think there is a strong authenticity there in terms of doing the right thing for the country and the nation and thereby the people.”* Virosha discussed the level of AL in SA based on her interactions with business leaders, ***“I see that authenticity more often than not particularly in business leaders... When you can hear that passion coming through, when you can see the achievements or the results of somebody having a vision, those are all manifestations of authentic leadership in my view”***

#### **6.4.2. Perceived levels in leaders' organisations**

By contrast, the levels of AL within their own organisation was deemed quite high. If a respondent rated the country as high, then they also rated their organisations as high.

A recurring pattern was one of the senior executive teams being perceived as very high, as discussed by Kenjamen, ***“senior management team definitely, very authentic because that is the whole plan. So, we've got a certain culture and of that culture being authentic is a big part of it.”*** Ruth also had a similar view of her executive team, ***“of our ExCo that I participate in, certainly. When we engage in conversation and we are working with the local team, there is a good level of transparency”*** as did Taryn, ***“the executive level does; I think really is trying to grow people (sic), live to the value system, you know support the environment, support the bigger ecosystem and all of that. So, I think within my organization at that level, yes”***

Some of the respondents saw the question as asking about them specifically and responded in that way, such as Tumang, ***“Well I am the leader of the organization – I would like to think based on the definition that I set that I am an authentic leader... with an ethical manner and transparently to the people that follow me”***

Cameron had a unique view. He believed his organisation could do much better in improving its level of AL. This view was unique because he was the only respondent who had been in the position for an extended period and still believed his organisation could significantly improve on its level of AL, ***“I can honestly say half of what we define as the core values of the organization we don't fully live that... We should be aspiring to improve and get to 100% assimilation of those core values. It may be a bit harsh what I have just said – that is my honest assessment – is that there is a gap, there is a gap in living those core values versus how we have articulated them”***. This either demonstrated an increased level of self-awareness or his organisation was truly lower in its level of AL compared to the organisations of the other respondents.

Virosha took the question to be about her direct manager, who was the overall leader of the organisation, “*Very high ja, my direct boss, the MD of the organization, I think **he is an ideal picture of authentic leadership. He stands very true to his morals, to his principles, we even refuse work if it doesn’t fit into the culture of the business. So, it permeates through all levels. We won’t compromise on quality, we won’t compromise on certain things and if the contract threatens that then you know we won’t get involved in that. So that is one example of it, and with him being obviously at the head that is sort of a precedent that is set throughout the different levels as well in terms of people***”

Claycia and Taryn both assessed their organisation as having low levels of AL, either because the leader was new or because the entire leadership team was inexperienced.

### **6.4.3. Conclusion – Research question 3**

From the discussions regarding the findings as they relate to research question 3, the researcher has determined that:

- Generally, the level of AL in the South African business environment was deemed to be low.
- Generally, the level of AL within the respondents’ organisations was deemed to be high, especially within the senior executive teams or from the interviewed leaders themselves.
- Respondents judged the level of AL in the South African government environment to be extremely low, without being asked this question.
- Trust levels between the various spheres of South Africa was deemed to be low.
- New leaders seemed to appear to have lower levels of AL. This may imply it takes time for leaders to establish themselves as authentic within an organisation.

### **6.5. Discussion of Research Question 4**

What are the interviewed leaders’ perceptions of barriers to Authentic Leadership and have they experienced any of these barriers personally?

#### **6.5.1. Strongest barriers which emerged**

During the analysis, several strong barriers emerged from the respondents. The organisational culture, the need to conform, cultural awareness and the history of the country emerged as the strongest barriers.

### Organisational culture:

This emerged as the strongest potential barrier to AL, mostly framed around whether it accommodated, rewarded or prevented the authenticity of the leader. A good example of this type of theme can be seen in this response from Xolani, “*based on **institutional culture of where a person is from**. And usually you find a lot of times a person from a **different background would be judged differently, where we use race being one**”*

As Ruth discussed, this may be contextual to the country of the organisation, or a broader idea of culture which may extend to the continent: “*In the **African culture**, there is quite an **authoritative type narrative** so you know leaders are the **leader of the tribe** for example will listen that will **rule from the top down**, and sometimes that **comes out in business as well**”*

It was also highlighted that an organisational culture could be self-reinforcing. When leaders aligned closely to the culture of the organisation, they were more likely to be promoted and hence become the future leaders of the organisation, and most likely determine the future culture of the organisation. Manqoba elaborated on this at length in his discussion on the topic: “*the behaviours that we reward in order to **get to the top of organizations are inauthentic behaviours** and as a consequence... and there are some brilliant CEOs out there but I think we have **created a cadre of senior leadership that got to the top by displaying inauthentic behaviours**” and “*The guy gets one up eventually and **gets to the top in many cases**, and that’s why I think there is a **lack of authentic leadership** and it is part of why certainly since the financial crisis of 2007 there is this sense that **senior leadership globally, these are not nice people**”**

Although many factors may determine the culture of an organisation, one of the factors identified was the size of the organisation, the larger the organisation the less likely to be authentic as discussed by Deon, “*it is **tough to be true to self**, the **bigger the corporate you work for** the larger the number of shareholders and stakeholders and **the more difficult it is to be authentic in a truly public way**”*

### Need to conform:

The other strong theme with emerged from the interviews was the need to conform with their peers, within the organisation or with an idealised view of what a leader should be. Again, the size of the organisation emerged as a strong factor, as described by Xolani, “*our economy is also about **big companies**, you know to be in a **big company requires a conformist attitude**.” This was reinforced by comments from others, including Manqoba who says, “*I think for large organizations (and there are exceptions), but I think**

*people are expected to behave in a particular way in order to get ahead even if they ideally would not.*”

One of the factors that drove the need to confirm was that it was seen as necessary in order to get promoted, as discussed by Kenjamen, “*I think **the politician will probably get it more than not**. So, I think the **barriers are it is difficult to be yourself and to drive a performance-driven culture**”*

#### **Cultural awareness:**

As might be expected in a diverse country such as South Africa, cultural awareness (or the lack of cultural awareness) was deemed to be a strong barrier to AL. Frank discussed a local example of culture which can be seen as a barrier, “*Again, **even in the African culture there is this kind of embedded hierarchy and therefore with the embedded hierarchy there comes expected required respect, and I think a lot of that gets in the way**”* and Manqoba gave an example where he did not respect a previous leader of his that did not show a depth of cultural awareness, “*Whilst I was still reporting to him he had a management team and he had one of his **directors was Muslim**. Every Friday we would have an Exco, and of **course my Muslim colleague was a very conservative Muslim needed to go to mosque**. I won’t say the guy’s name but the **fellow would poke fun at him for his religious beliefs**”*

#### **History of South Africa:**

The history of South Africa being a barrier to AL emerged as a strong theme for many respondents, which Claycia elaborated on, “*I think our **cultural differences is a huge barrier; I think just for me it was just apartheid... was a huge... is a huge barrier because we are still trying to find, after so many years, you know we are still trying to deal with **all our historical stuff****. And we are still battling you know. Unfortunately, I can see it in leaders as well.*”

#### **6.5.2. Other important or strong barriers which emerged**

The other formidable barriers which emerged were prejudice and poor self-awareness.

#### **Prejudice:**

Also expected in the South African context, prejudice emerged as a strong potential barrier to AL. This prejudice came in the form of prejudice against race, gender, age and ascetics. An interesting quote on this theme came from Ruth, who discussed experiencing gender prejudice while working outside of the country, showing that South Africa is not the only context where this is a potential barrier: “*I am working in quite a*

**male-dominated industry** I often see fellow female colleagues who are **you know living up to what they believe they need to be**. You know I... ja... I could give the example of being in Saudi-Arabia in meetings as the **only female in the office, let alone in the meeting room** you know.....I've experienced it more from a **gender point of view than anything**, in terms of the early days of my career I definitely felt that I needed to... stupid things, I needed to **wear a suit rather than a skirt**.... I have worked a lot with the Arab cultures as well and the learning there has really been about not **compromising my own integrity** in order to interact with other cultures”

Gender prejudice also emerged in many discussions, as per Xolani, “**The moment we know the race we stop thinking**”

#### **Poor self-awareness:**

As another strong potential barrier, poor self-awareness was discussed often by the respondents, and this could limit your effectiveness, as Ruth explained, “**If you portray that there are no deficiencies**, then inevitably you are **not going to be leveraging the strengths of others** who could potentially do better than you in those areas.”

As discussed by Taryn, a leader's ego could be one of the main causes of poor self-awareness, “**I think all leaders battle with authenticity just because of our own ego issues and stuff**, you know our **own psychological things** that we bring to the table... **I think our inner selves are our worst barriers to that authenticity**”

#### **6.5.3. Weak or important barriers which emerged**

Some other less strong but interesting barriers were those of premature promotion and the education system in South Africa.

#### **Premature promotion:**

A medium strength barrier which emerged was the premature promotion of the leaders. The South African context is important in the discussion of this barrier. Ruth explained that “**we have a large group of people who have moved very quickly into senior leadership roles**, and the success is sometimes related to history and politics **more than to leadership competence**”

Within the discussions of premature promotion, BEE emerged as a potential cause of this, “**the environment, again BEE**, I think maybe whilst the principle is right I think it makes it hard for managers to sometimes buy into it. You know **bringing in people who you don't necessarily want or people who are not necessarily performing** – again this is the stereotypical view of BEE” was an example of this from Taryn.

### **Education system:**

One respondent mentioned that education was a potential barrier to AL in South Africa, as described by Ruth, *“I think there are barriers be it that we... I think our **education is a huge barrier**”*

Xolani disagreed and believed that the education system in South Africa was not a barrier, as he stated, *“There is a view which I **don’t share that our school system is a barrier.**”*

#### **6.5.4. Conclusion – Research question 4**

From the discussions regarding the findings as they relate to research question 4, the researcher has determined that:

- The respondents believed that the organisational culture, the need to conform, cultural awareness and the history of the South Africa emerged as the strongest barriers to AL.
- Other strong barriers which emerged were those of prejudice and poor self-awareness.
- Premature promotion and the education system were identified as potential barriers, but these did not emerge strongly throughout the interviews.

#### **6.6. Discussion of Research Question 5**

Do they have suggestions for other leaders to overcome those barriers and do they have any personal experience in overcoming these barriers?

##### **6.6.1. Strongest themes of suggestions to overcome barriers which emerged**

The researcher has phrased any suggestions to overcome the perceived barriers to authenticity as enablers to AL.

The strongest theme which emerged when asking suggestions for overcoming these barriers was to create an environment for authenticity. This was one of the most discussed themes in the entire research project, and it is believed this would encourage authenticity in the followers and leaders of the organisation.

#### **Create an environment for authenticity:**

As discussed under the benefits to AL, there is a strong reinforcing, wholesome environment created when authenticity. For this reason, it’s not surprising that one of the strongest enablers to AL that emerged when discussing suggestions for overcoming the perceived barriers to AL was the creation of an environment for authenticity. Xolani

described this succinctly, “*you also **create an environment where it is easier to be yourself when you see somebody else being themselves***”

Strongly related to the literature by (Bosch, et al., 2015), the creation of an environment supportive of diversity would assist the creation of an environment for authenticity. As eloquently explained by Ruth, “*creating a culture which **is open to differences and in fact embracing**, maybe not even open but embraces the benefit or the advantage that **diversity can have in all its forms**; you know in personality, approach and style. I think that a **culture which is open and embraces that kind of thing will inevitably provide the space** for people to be more authentic leaders”*

Some of the respondents were more specific in their recommendations regarding how to go about creating an authentic culture. An example of this approach was a deep and detailed discussion by Frank, “*if you are able to **lessen the hierarchy, bureaucracy, allow people to fail, allow a little more latitude, give a bit more power to others in the organization, encourage people to take responsibility for their own roles etc., encourage people to be leaders in their own little small space, I think that helps a lot because there is definitely a sort of waterfall cascade effect and I think it amplifies as it cascades.***”

A similar view was held by Walumba, Hartnell & Misati who believed strong leadership (in this example ethical leadership) would create an effective climate for group learning behaviour (2017).

#### **6.6.2. Other strong suggestions which emerged**

Other important potential enablers to AL which emerged were leadership development and self-development. The difference being that one is driven by the organisation and the other is that it is driven by the individual.

##### **Leadership development:**

The enabler of leadership development is well discussed in the literature (Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm, & McKee, 2014) Manqoba explained, “*I think one way is to **educate boards that sanction the appointment of the most senior people in organizations, get them trained, get them exposed, get them to understand what authenticity is, what the long-term benefits of authenticity are, how to test for authenticity***”

One of the components of leadership development discussed was the need for it to be aligned to the expected requirements of future leaders rather than current leaders. As Frank explained, drawing on his experience as a father, “*all of us **grew up with a different form of training, different experiences of leadership.** A lot of us I think get*

locked into the **old models** and a lot of it was more hierarchical kind of model control stuff rather than sort of **persuade and inspire and kind of motivate**. There is no doubt that that is what **gets my sons going** as opposed to **people in my organization**.” It has been discussed in the literature that authentic leaders are future-orientated (Copeland, 2014).

This was also emphasised by Manqoba, “*how do you take that message to the **new leaders of tomorrow**, and trying to shape their view **not just in terms of technical leadership**”*

Besides being suited to the future context, the leadership development required was expected to be multi-skilled as Claycia elaborated on, “*when leaders come into business we need to have a **leadership program** but it needs to cover **all the areas that leaders need to know**. An intense leadership program that you are giving them **all the skills**, the soft and hard skills, to be able to equip them with what they need to do to be able to be relevant in the business.*”

The necessity for developing capable managers and leaders has been emphasised in order to assist in solving our local challenges (Nkomo, 2015) as well as the importance of the role that our companies place on the success and transformation of the county (Bosch, et al., 2015).

### **Self-development:**

Distinct and contrasted to leadership development was the identified potential enabler, self-development, the distinction being identified by the researcher as being individual driven development rather than driven by the organisation.

This emerged as a very strong theme and was discussed by almost all respondents. This was seen as continual and evolving, as described by Ruth, “*I don’t think we ever stop learning about ourselves but I have definitely come across people that are **more committed to that journey than others**. Those that are more committed in my experience **tend to be more successful**. Whether it be in terms of confidence or just in terms of **learning and exposure**”*

Self-development was identified as one of the key intrapersonal content issues being in development and needing expansion (Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm, & McKee, 2014).

By developing the self, the leaders were anticipated to have greater reserves to draw on during challenging situations, as Virosha explained, “*what I’ve done and **what I’ve achieved in relation to my age**.*”

Self-development was also recommended as being done in the real world rather than in a formalised programme, as explained by Frank, “*I think it is something **you kind of make up every day you go along**, as long as you are receptive to... as long as you **acknowledge your failings and try and build on your successes** and muddle your way through.”*

What was important is that the process could be seen as difficult, and this should be expected by the developing leader, “*if **you want to be authentic go for it**, there is **a lot of risks involved** and it **doesn’t make sense in a way to be really caring and trusting and authentic in this dog eat dog world**. But I’ve decided to do it no matter what **the consequence** and it has worked; **I love it, I couldn’t do it any other way**”*

### 6.6.3. Other important or strong suggestions which emerged

Another strong theme which emerged was to encourage or establish diversity in the organisation which was highlighted before the creation of an environment for authenticity.

#### Diversity:

Creation of a highly diverse environment was expected to a variety of ideas in an authentic environment, a high level of diversity may be very beneficial to the organisation, which aligns to the literature (Bosch, et al., 2015). As Cameron explained, “**you must always add truth to your truth** because **your truth is not absolute and complete**. It doesn’t mean you discard what you already know **just add truth to your existing truth**. **It is never complete.**”

This was reinforced by Xolani who stated, “*it is **not always going to be the same old circle of people that knows stuff**; the answers may lie from somebody who **brings a different perspective**. You can’t have a **different perspective from the same people.**”*

Using a multi-cultural country such as South Africa to research leadership theories in a rich and diverse way could add tremendous value to the field (Avoilio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009).

### 6.6.4. Conclusion – Research question 5

From the discussions regarding the findings as they relate to research question 5, the researcher has determined that:

- The strongest potential enabler of AL in the South African business environment was to create an environment for authenticity. This was seen as reinforcing and cascading when it came to generating benefits for the organisation and more authenticity.

- Another strong enabler was that of leadership development, from the boards of organisations down, with a future focus and an emphasis on multi-skilled development, which has been elaborated on as being technical and soft skills.
- Self-development was also identified as a strong potential enabler, as a continuing, never-ending process, which requires personal accountability and an appreciation for the potential difficulty of the process.
- Finally, diversity was also identified as a strong potential enabler which can improve the variety of ideas available for decision making and can increase follower commitment and engagement.

### **6.7. Overall findings and final discussion**

Relational transparency and internalized moral perspective have been strongly confirmed as useful components of authentic leadership by the respondents. Self-awareness and balanced processing were very weakly confirmed by the respondents. Contextual awareness, accountability emerged as strong new themes as did the important component of leadership which are potentially useful components of the definition. Humility was an interesting component that could be explored for future understanding in the future.

AL was viewed as being critical or important to the success of the organisations. Benefits included long-term sustainability, organisational alignment and talent maximisation. In addition, there were various potential benefits identified for the leader, including congruence, personal well-being and growth. AL also appeared to offer many benefits to the followers, including the creation of a transparent culture, the improvement of follower authenticity, improved leader/follower relationship and staff growth. These benefits were believed to lead to improved organisation performance. This emerged as a potential reinforcing and wholesome cycle.

Generally, the level of AL in the South African business environment was deemed to be low, and the level of AL within the respondents' organisations was deemed to be high, especially within the senior executive levels. The perceived level of AL within the South African government was deemed to be extremely low, as was the trust levels between the various spheres of the country. New levels appeared to have lower levels of AL.

The respondents believed that the organisational culture, the need to conform, cultural awareness and the history of the South Africa emerged as the strongest barriers to AL, other strong potential barriers were prejudice and poor self-awareness. Premature promotion and the education system were identified as potential secondary barriers.

The strongest potential enabler of AL was to create an environment for authenticity. This was seen as reinforcing and cascading when it came to generating benefits for the organisation and more authenticity. Other strong enablers were that of leadership development and self-development, with a focus on technical and soft skills. Diversity was seen as a strong potential enabler which could contribute to the benefits to the organisation.

## **Chapter 7: Conclusion**

### **7.1. Introduction**

In this chapter, the findings of Chapter 5 and the discussions of the findings in relation to the in Chapter 6 are consolidated into a framework that intends to summarise the outcomes of this research. A discussion of the implications of the framework for management, limitations of this research and suggestions for possible avenues of future research then be discussed.

### **7.2. Principal findings**

#### **7.2.1. Summary of the research findings**

When interviews around authentic leadership (AL) were conducted with business leaders in the South African business environment several key findings emerged. The understanding of the field was established, as was the potential barriers to its success in an organisation and how these could be overcome.

#### **7.2.2. Definition of AL should be reviewed and further integration should be sought**

Relational transparency and internalized moral perspective have been strongly confirmed as useful components of authentic leadership by the respondents. Self-awareness and balanced processing were very weakly confirmed.

Contextual awareness and accountability emerged as potential new components of the definition which should be considered in exploring the opportunity to integrate the field further as recommended by Meuser et al. (2016) and Avoilio, Walumbwa & Weber (2009). The component of being an effective leader who gets results does not appear to be present in the construct, and this could also add value in exploring potential opportunities for integration. Humility as a potential component should also be explored.

Business leaders should be further involved in defining, developing, implementing and testing of leadership theories.

#### **7.2.3. AL maybe be essential to diversity and success of SA organisations**

The potential benefits described by the business leaders should be explored or tested. These descriptors may add a further opportunity for integration of the field. The South African context was interesting to explore due to its diversity, history and unique challenges.

The benefits raised for the organisation, leader and follower should be explored in a reinforcing and wholesome cycle of value creation and generation.

The current levels of AL in South Africa appear to be low, with the political sphere appearing extremely low and the respondents believing their organisations are higher than the business environment that they're in.

#### **7.2.4. Barriers and enablers to AL**

Perceived barriers to authenticity were established and explored with South African business leaders and analysed for their potential importance in the context. Suggestions to overcome these barriers were also identified and explored.

### **7.3. Implications for management**

#### **7.3.1. Creation of an authentic culture**

The correct environment for authenticity appears self-reinforcing and cascading. According to the respondents: By an organisation's leaders being authentic, the trust and relationship between leader and follower will improve, which will improve follower authenticity and follower growth and development. This will ensure future leaders of the organisation are more authentic and demonstrate the qualities and capabilities of AL, which further reinforces the authentic culture.

This authentic culture can also improve the diversity of the organisation which should improve the decision making of the leaders, the engagement and commitment of the staff and lead to greater organisational success.

#### **7.3.2. Leadership development and leader self-development**

Very strong themes that emerged out of the research was that of leadership development and leader self-development. A strong theme which emerged was that the development should be future focused and ensure it is focused on technical and soft-skills. As highlighted by (Hsieh & Wang, 2015), organisations should "treasure and develop authentic leaders" (p. 2342) in order to gain the benefits from their leadership, especially in today's environment with higher complexity and uncertainty.

These leadership development programmes espousing the benefits of AL as well as how to develop the capability should be implemented at board level down, and identification of leaders who self-develop should become a priority in the hiring and promotion mechanisms of organisations.

## **7.4. Limitations of the research**

### **7.4.1. Researcher bias**

By its very nature, exploratory research is subjective and influenced by the perspective and context of the researcher. The researcher should always acknowledge these potential biases as they will influence the design of the research (Creswell, 2012), the subjects selected for interviews (Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano, & Morales, 2007) as well as the interpretation and analysis of the results (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

The researcher is not an expert in the field of leadership theory and leadership development but has been a practitioner for several years and has his own strong views on the best approaches to leadership, employee engagement and gaining results through staff. Some of these beliefs may have affected the interpretations of some of the qualitative discussions and what the researcher decided to emphasise.

### **7.4.2. Sampling bias**

As the researcher used his professional network to select the subjects to interview, there exists the potential for the subjects to be overly homogenous and similar in their worldviews. As the subjects were aware of the topic of discussion, there was the potential for self-selection bias on behalf of the participants, they may have shown an uncommon interest in the subject of authenticity and might be unduly biased to the importance of authenticity as it relates to leadership.

### **7.4.3. Research timeframe**

As the research was not conducted longitudinally, there is the potential that the responses were biased to the specific environment in which they were conducted at that specific point in time. This is also potentially a problem for the frame of mind of the researcher at the point in time that the research was conducted.

## **7.5. Suggestions for future research**

The field of leadership and leadership development is large and requires continual exploration, theory formation and theory consolidation and refinement (Banks, McCauley, Garner, & Guler, 2016). It is suggested that the exploration and development of the various theoretical frameworks be conducted in as many contexts as possible, in order to ensure their validation and clarification as suggested by Avolio & Walumba (2014). It may prove useful to conduct a meta-analysis of leadership theories in context of additional exploratory data accumulated during this research.

The outputs of the exploratory discussions of this research could be used for comparison of authentic leadership with other theoretical frameworks and be used to identify points of parity and points of difference between AL.

The barriers identified by the respondents could be further tested for their existence and effect on the development of AL, as well as the effectiveness of the various enablers that were explored by the leaders that have the potential to overcome these barriers.

In addition, exploratory research could be conducted within other layers of the organisation (middle management and staff) and within other spheres (civil and government) in order to confirm the understanding, importance and applicability of AL in the South African context.

## **7.6. Conclusion**

The recent decades have seen continuing ethical failures of leadership in business, civil and government spheres causing significant economic loss as well as acute damage to trust and social capital between leaders and followers around the world. Authentic leadership theory was conceived to improve the trust and quality of the relationship between leader and followers, but good examples are rare in the South African business environment.

This exploratory qualitative study was conducted through the use of semi-structured interviews with eleven experienced South African business leaders to ascertain their understanding of the theory and to explore the barriers to its successful implementation. An inductive analysis was utilised to identify and discuss emergent themes.

The study found that the strongest perceived barriers to authentic leadership were the organisation's culture, the need to conform, cultural awareness and the history of the country. The strongest potential enabler to authentic leadership was to create an environment for authenticity, which cascades and reinforces itself throughout the organisation and produces multiple benefits. Other strong enablers that were identified were organisation driven leadership development and leadership self-development, with a future focus and an emphasis on multi-skilled development.

Furthermore, this research paper explored the potential for authentic leadership to generate great benefits to organisation, leaders and followers in South Africa by establishing what were the barriers to AL development in the South African business environment and how these barriers could be overcome. It established that the definition of AL needs clarification and possibly integration with other leadership theories. That leaders in the South African business environment believe that it is important and

generates multiple benefits, is low across the environment although they believe it is higher in their own organisations.

Several suggestions were put forward to assist leaders to create an environment for authenticity and recognise the potential benefits of the leadership style. This research may have also contributed to the field by providing qualitative data from a context not often researched and exploratively identified potential integration opportunities with other leadership theories.

## References

- Alfes, K., Shantz, A., Truss, C., & Soane, E. (2013, January). The link between perceived human resource management practices. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 24(2), 330-351.
- Algera, P. M., & Lips-Wiersma, M. (2012). Radical Authentic Leadership: Co-creating the conditions under which all members of the organization can be authentic. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 118-131.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2011.11.010>
- Avolio, B. J., Walumbwa, F. O., & Weber, T. J. (2009). Leadership: Current theories, research, and future directions. *Annual review of psychology*, 60, 421-449.
- Avolio, B. J., & Gardner, W. L. (2005, June 30). Authentic leadership development: Getting to the root of positive forms of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 16(3), 315-338.
- Avolio, B. J., & Walumbwa, F. O. (2014). 16 Authentic Leadership Theory, Research and Practice: Steps Taken and Steps that Remain. In D. V. Day, *The Oxford handbook of leadership and organizations* (pp. 331-356). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Avolio, B. J., Gardner, W. L., Walumbwa, F. O., Luthans, F., & May, D. R. (2004, December 31). Unlocking the mask: A look at the process by which authentic leaders impact follower attitudes and behaviors. *The leadership quarterly*, 15(6), 801-823.
- Banks, G. C., McCauley, K. D., Garner, W. L., & Guler, C. E. (2016, August 31). A meta-analytic review of authentic and transformational leadership: A test for redundancy. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 27(4), 634-652.
- Bass, B. M. (1990, December 1). From transactional to transformational leadership: Learning to share the vision. *Organizational dynamics*, 18(3), 19-31.
- Beddoes-Jones, F., & Swailes, S. (2015). Authentic leadership: Development of a new three pillar model. *Strategic HR Review*, 14(3), 94-99. doi:10.1108/SHR-04-2015-0032
- Bosch, A., Nkomo, S., Carim, N., Haq, R., Syed, R., & Ali, F. (2015). Practices of Organizing and Managing Diversity in Emerging Countries. *The Oxford Handbook of Diversity in Organizations*, 408-431.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Copeland, M. (2014). The emerging significance of values based leadership: A literature review. *International journal of leadership studies*, 8(2), 105-135.
- Cottrill, K., Lopez, P. D., & Hoffman, C. C. (2014). How authentic leadership and inclusion benefit organizations. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, 33(3), 275-2925.

- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage publications.
- Creswell, J. W., Hanson, W. E., Clark Plano, V. L., & Morales, A. (2007, March). Qualitative Research Designs: Selection and Implementation. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 35(2), 236-264.
- Day, D. V., Fleenor, J. W., Atwater, L. E., Sturm, R. E., & McKee, R. A. (2014, February 28). Advances in leader and leadership development: A review of 25years of research and theory. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 25(1), 63-82.
- Fusco, T., O'Riordan, S., & Palmer, S. (2015). Authentic Leaders are... Conscious, Competent, Confident, and Congruent: A Grounded Theory of Group Coaching and Authentic Leadership Development. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 131-148.
- Gardner, W. L., Coglisier, C. C., Davis, K. M., & Dickens, M. P. (2011, October 11). Authentic leadership: A review of the literature and research agenda. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 22(6), 1120-1145.
- George, B. (2003). *Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value*.
- George, B., Sims, P., McLean, A. N., & Mayer, D. (2007). Discovering your authentic leadership. *Harvard business review*, 85(2), p. 129.
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006, February). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59-82. doi:10.1177/1525822X05279903
- Hernandez, M., Eberly, M., Avolio, B. J., & Johnson, M. D. (2011). The loci and mechanisms of leadership: Exploring a more comprehensive view of leadership theory. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 22(6), 1165-1185.
- Hoch, J. E., Bommer, W. H., Dulebohn, J. H., & Wu, D. (2016, August 31). Do ethical, authentic, and servant leadership explain variance above and beyond transformational leadership? A meta-analysis. *Journal of Management*.
- Hsieh, C.-C., & Wang, D.-S. (2015). Does supervisor-perceived authentic leadership influence employee work engagement through employee-perceived authentic leadership and employee trust? *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 26(18), 2329-2348.
- Judge, T. A., & Piccolo, R. F. (2004, October). Transformational and transactional leadership: a meta-analytic test of their relative validity. *Journal of applied psychology*, 89(5), 755.
- Kernis, M. H., & Goldman, B. M. (2006, December 31). A multicomponent conceptualization of authenticity: Theory and research. *Advances in experimental social psychology*, 38, 283-357.
- López, G.-G., Alonso, M., Morales, M., & León, M. (2015). Authentic leadership, group cohesion and group identification in security and emergency teams. *Psicothema*, 27(1), 59-64.

- Luthans, F., Van Wyk, R., & Walumba, F. O. (2004). Recognition and development of hope for South African organizational leaders. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 25(6), 512-527.
- Martin, R., Guillaume, Y., Thomas, G., Lee, A., & Epitropaki, O. (2016). Leader–member exchange (LMX) and performance: A meta-analytic review. *Personnel psychology*, 69(1), 67-121.
- McCraen, G. (1988). *The long interview (Qualitative research methods)* (Vol. 13). London: Sage.
- Metcalfe, L., & Benn, S. (2013). Leadership for Sustainability: An Evolution of Leadership Ability. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 112(3), 369-384. doi:DOI 10.1007/s10551-012-1278-6
- Meuser, J. D., Gardner, W. L., Dinh, J. E., Hu, J., Liden, R. C., & Lord, R. G. (2016, July). A network analysis of leadership theory: The infancy of integration. *Journal of Management*, 42(5), 1374-1403. doi:10.1177/0149206316647099
- National Planning Commission. (2011). *National Development Plan*.
- Nkomo, S. M. (2015). Challenges for management and business education in a “Developmental” state: The case of South Africa. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 14(2), 242-258.
- Saldana, J. (2016). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. Sage.
- Saunders, M., & Lewis, P. (2012). *Doing Business Research in Business & Management*. Essex: Pearson Education Limited.
- Senjaya, S., Pekerti, A., Härtel, C., Hirst, G., & Butarbutar, I. (2016). Are authentic leaders always moral? The role of Machiavellianism in the relationship between authentic leadership and morality. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 133(1), 125-139.
- The Johannesburg Stock Exchange. (2016, December). *History and Company Overview - Johannesburg Stock Exchange*. Retrieved from JSE: <https://www.jse.co.za/about/history-company-overview>
- Thomas, K. W., & Kilman, R. H. (1975, December). The social desirability variable in organizational research: An alternative explanation for reported findings. *Academy of Management Journal*, 741-752. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/255376>
- Van Dierendonck, D. (2011). Servant leadership: A review and synthesis. *Journal of management*, 37(4), 1228-1261.
- Walumba, F. O., Hartnell, C. A., & Misati, E. (2017). Does ethical leadership enhance group learning behavior? Examining the mediating influence of group ethical conduct, justice climate, and peer justice. *Journal of business research*, 72, 14-23.
- Walumbwa, F. O., Avolio, B. J., Gardner, W. L., Wernsing, T. S., & Peterson, S. J. (2008, February 1). Authentic leadership: Development and validation of a theory-based measure. *Journal of Management*, 34(1), 89-126.

- Wong, C. A., & Laschinger, H. K. (2013). Authentic leadership, performance, and job satisfaction: the mediating role of empowerment. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 69(4), 947-959.
- Zhu, W., Zheng, X., Riggio, R., & Zhang, X. (2015). A Critical Review of Theories and Measures of Ethics-Related Leadership. *New directions for student leadership*(146), 81-96.

## **Appendix A: Ethical Clearance Approval**

A copy of the ethical clearance received for this research has been provided for reference purposes.

**Gordon  
Institute  
of Business  
Science**  
University  
of Pretoria

30 June 2017

Bradley Janse van Rensburg

Dear Bradley,

*Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been approved.*

*You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.*

*We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.*

*Kind Regards*

GIBS MBA Research Ethical Clearance Committee

## **Appendix B: Consent Form for Respondents**

A copy of the informed consent letter given to each respondent at the beginning of the interview (cell phone numbers were present on the original forms but have been removed for this copy).

### **Informed consent letter:**

I am conducting research on the perceived barriers to authentic leadership in the South African business environment. Our interview is expected to last about an hour, and will help us understand what can potentially be done to create a business climate in which our leaders can be more authentic.

**Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without penalty.**

Please note that I will create an audio recording of the interview which will be used for transcribing and analysis.

All your personal data as well as the recordings will be kept confidential and any data and results presented will be done so anonymously. If you have any concerns, please contact my supervisor or me. Our details are provided below.

#### **Researcher**

Bradley Janse van Rensburg  
[16391897@mygibs.co.za](mailto:16391897@mygibs.co.za)

#### **Research Supervisor**

Louise Whittaker  
[whittakerl@gibs.co.za](mailto:whittakerl@gibs.co.za)

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix C: Final Interview Schedule**

### **Introduction (5 min):**

Thanks for the opportunity to share your knowledge for this research project. The field being studied is known as Authentic Leadership. Specifically, I would like to discuss your understanding of the field as well as the barriers to authenticity in South African business leaders as you perceive them.

I would like to conduct a semi-structured interview in order to remain on topic, but allow the discussion to advance in the most natural way you see fit. The items for discussion in this interview have received ethical clearance from a committee associated with the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS) which is associated with the University of Pretoria.

Although I am collecting personal information and will be recording the interview, all your responses will be kept confidential, and the final research outcomes will protect the anonymity of all specific respondents.

Are you comfortable with everything I have explained and are you happy to proceed with the interview? Do you have any concerns about me recording this interview?

### **Demographic Information:**

Age:

Gender:

Race:

Nationality:

Current title / position held:

Duration in current position:

Highest qualification achieved:

### **Authentic Leader Understanding (5 min):**

As I'm sure you can appreciate, the term "Authentic Leadership" is extremely subjective and can be interpreted in different ways by different individuals. For the context of the discussion, please provide your own understanding of the term "Authentic Leadership" and what would constitute a good example of this type of leadership.

- Are you content with us using the discussed definition and are there any components of the definition you would like to discuss in more detail before we proceed?

Perception of Importance of Authentic Leadership (10 min):

- Based on the above definition and understanding of Authentic Leadership, how important do you think it is to the success of an organisation and why?
- Do you think being an Authentic Leader provides benefits to the leader themselves? Can you elaborate?
- Do you believe Authentic Leaders provide any benefits to their followers? Can you elaborate?

Current levels of Authentic Leadership (10 min):

- In general, how much do you believe South African business leaders demonstrate the qualities of Authentic Leadership as we've defined them?
- Similarly, how much do you believe the leaders of your own organisation demonstrate the qualities of Authentic Leadership as we've defined them?

Perceptions of Barriers to Authentic Leadership (10 min):

- Do you believe there are barriers to being an Authentic Leader in the context of South African business? Can you elaborate?
- Have you experienced any of these barriers yourself?

Suggestions to Overcome Perceived Barriers to Authentic Leadership (10 min):

- Can you suggest any ways South African business leaders might overcome the barriers discussed above?
- Do you have any personal experience overcoming the barriers described above?

Closing Remarks and Thanks (10 min):

- Do you have any closing remarks regarding Authentic Leadership in the South African business context?
- Thank you for your contribution and giving so generously of your time. Please feel free to contact me if anything occurs to you which may be relevant to the topic.

### **Appendix D: Final Coding Scheme with Strength Score and Ranking**

| <b>Codes Names</b>                              | <b>Theme Strength</b> | <b>Strength Score</b> | <b>Interviews</b> | <b>Quotes Coded</b> | <b>Total Wordcount</b> |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| QQ  | N/A                   | <b>1206.0</b>         | 9                 | 54                  | 2481                   |
| RQ1: AL.official.relational.transparency        | Very Strong           | <b>233.8</b>          | 10                | 27                  | 866                    |
| RQ1: AL.official.internalized.moral.perspective | Very Strong           | <b>94.9</b>           | 9                 | 19                  | 555                    |
| RQ1: AL.official.self-awareness                 | Medium                | <b>21.4</b>           | 6                 | 12                  | 297                    |
| RQ1: AL.official.balanced.processing            | Weak                  | <b>1.4</b>            | 3                 | 3                   | 155                    |
| RQ1: new.accountability                         | Strong                | <b>30.7</b>           | 2                 | 16                  | 958                    |
| RQ1: new.true.nature                            | Strong                | <b>38.1</b>           | 6                 | 14                  | 454                    |
| RQ1: new.contextual.awareness                   | Strong                | <b>82.0</b>           | 6                 | 19                  | 719                    |
| RQ1: new.humility                               | Strong                | <b>14.5</b>           | 3                 | 10                  | 483                    |
| RQ1: new.delivery.of.objectives                 | Medium                | <b>3.2</b>            | 5                 | 6                   | 106                    |
| RQ1: new.depends.on.culture                     | Medium                | <b>3.7</b>            | 3                 | 5                   | 246                    |
| RQ1: new.depends.on.vantage.point               | Medium                | <b>1.4</b>            | 1                 | 6                   | 236                    |
| RQ1: new.leadership                             | Medium                | <b>11.4</b>           | 5                 | 8                   | 286                    |
| RQ1: new.org.values                             | Medium                | <b>6.2</b>            | 5                 | 6                   | 208                    |
| RQ1: new.original                               | Medium                | <b>1.2</b>            | 2                 | 3                   | 205                    |
| RQ1: new.under.pressure                         | Medium                | <b>3.9</b>            | 3                 | 6                   | 218                    |
| RQ1: new.adaptability                           | Very Weak             | <b>0.1</b>            | 1                 | 2                   | 36                     |
| RQ1: new.balanced.individual                    | Weak                  | <b>0.8</b>            | 3                 | 3                   | 86                     |
| RQ1: new.wanting.to.lead                        | Very Weak             | <b>0.0</b>            | 1                 | 1                   | 28                     |
| RQ1: new.no.universal.definition                | Medium                | <b>12.1</b>           | 6                 | 9                   | 224                    |
| RQ1: unsure.of.definition                       | Weak                  | <b>0.4</b>            | 2                 | 3                   | 73                     |
| RQ1: example.given                              | N/A                   | <b>73.0</b>           | 7                 | 12                  | 869                    |
| RQ2: org.success.alignment                      | Strong                | <b>64.7</b>           | 5                 | 18                  | 719                    |
| RQ2: org.success.critical.for.performance       | Very Strong           | <b>203.9</b>          | 9                 | 27                  | 839                    |
| RQ2: org.success.org.sustainability             | Medium                | <b>25.9</b>           | 6                 | 11                  | 393                    |
| RQ2: org.success.right.leaders                  | Strong                | <b>62.2</b>           | 8                 | 13                  | 598                    |
| RQ2: org.success.staff.retention                | Strong                | <b>11.2</b>           | 3                 | 6                   | 623                    |
| RQ2: org.success.talent.maximisation            | Very Strong           | <b>80.0</b>           | 7                 | 13                  | 879                    |

| <b>Codes Names</b>                          | <b>Theme Strength</b> | <b>Strength Score</b> | <b>Interviews</b> | <b>Quotes Coded</b> | <b>Total Wordcount</b> |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| RQ2: org.success.without.AL                 | Medium                | 1.1                   | 2                 | 4                   | 141                    |
| RQ2: anti.org.success.uncertainty           | Weak                  | 0.1                   | 1                 | 1                   | 59                     |
| RQ2: leader.benefit.accomodating.staff      | Medium                | 12.1                  | 4                 | 8                   | 378                    |
| RQ2: leader.benefit.congruence              | Very Strong           | 156.7                 | 6                 | 24                  | 1088                   |
| RQ2: leader.benefit.easier.to.lead          | Strong                | 36.6                  | 5                 | 12                  | 610                    |
| RQ2: leader.benefit.personal.growth         | Weak                  | 3.0                   | 3                 | 6                   | 168                    |
| RQ2: leader.benefit.personal.wellbeing      | Strong                | 66.9                  | 7                 | 14                  | 683                    |
| RQ2: leader.benefit.visible.success         | Weak                  | 0.3                   | 1                 | 2                   | 147                    |
| RQ2: anti.leader.benefit.burden             | Weak                  | 0.5                   | 1                 | 3                   | 150                    |
| RQ2: follower.benefit.certainty             | Medium                | 12.4                  | 4                 | 8                   | 389                    |
| RQ2: follower.benefit.follower.authenticity | Medium                | 23.8                  | 7                 | 10                  | 340                    |
| RQ2: follower.benefit.staff.growth          | Weak                  | 1.5                   | 4                 | 4                   | 94                     |
| RQ2: follower.benefit.transparent.culture   | Strong                | 20.9                  | 5                 | 7                   | 598                    |
| RQ2: example.given                          | N/A                   | 2.0                   | 1                 | 2                   | 981                    |
| RQ3: AL.in.SA.high                          | Medium                | 3.3                   | 2                 | 5                   | 328                    |
| RQ3: AL.in.SA.medium                        | Very Weak             | 0.5                   | 2                 | 3                   | 78                     |
| RQ3: AL.in.SA.low                           | Strong                | 76.5                  | 8                 | 13                  | 736                    |
| RQ3: AL.in.org.high                         | Strong                | 44.1                  | 8                 | 9                   | 613                    |
| RQ3: AL.in.org.medium                       | Weak                  | 0.4                   | 1                 | 3                   | 119                    |
| RQ3: AL.in.org.low                          | Very Weak             | 0.4                   | 2                 | 2                   | 89                     |
| RQ3: AL.level.different.across.groups       | Weak                  | 0.8                   | 2                 | 4                   | 94                     |
| RQ4: barrier.cultural.awareness             | Very Strong           | 219.3                 | 7                 | 23                  | 1362                   |
| RQ4: barrier.economic.situation             | Medium                | 2.1                   | 2                 | 4                   | 257                    |
| RQ4: barrier.education.system               | Medium                | 2.1                   | 2                 | 4                   | 263                    |
| RQ4: barrier.foreign.businesses             | Strong                | 12.0                  | 4                 | 7                   | 429                    |
| RQ4: barrier.lack.of.role.models            | Medium                | 13.5                  | 6                 | 7                   | 321                    |
| RQ4: barrier.large.organisations            | Strong                | 33.0                  | 4                 | 13                  | 635                    |
| RQ4: barrier.need.to.conform                | Very Strong           | 212.1                 | 6                 | 22                  | 1607                   |
| RQ4: barrier.organisational.culture         | Very, Very Strong     | 1306.6                | 7                 | 50                  | 3733                   |

| <b>Codes Names</b>                    | <b>Theme Strength</b> | <b>Strength Score</b> | <b>Interviews</b> | <b>Quotes Coded</b> | <b>Total Wordcount</b> |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| RQ4: barrier.poor.self.awareness      | Strong                | <b>23.7</b>           | 5                 | 9                   | 526                    |
| RQ4: barrier.prejudice                | Strong                | <b>30.9</b>           | 3                 | 13                  | 792                    |
| RQ4: barrier.premature.promotion      | Medium                | <b>10.7</b>           | 4                 | 7                   | 383                    |
| RQ4: barrier.South.Africa.history     | Very Strong           | <b>138.1</b>          | 8                 | 16                  | 1079                   |
| RQ4: barrier.upbringing               | Weak                  | <b>0.1</b>            | 1                 | 1                   | 100                    |
| RQ4: barrier.what.society.has.created | Strong                | <b>70.7</b>           | 7                 | 14                  | 721                    |
| RQ4: barrier.willingness.to.sacrifice | Weak                  | <b>0.4</b>            | 2                 | 2                   | 94                     |
| RQ5: change.reward.system             | Medium                | <b>7.4</b>            | 4                 | 6                   | 308                    |
| RQ5: diversity                        | Strong                | <b>82.7</b>           | 5                 | 17                  | 973                    |
| RQ5: environment.for.authenticity     | Very, Very Strong     | <b>1004.1</b>         | 10                | 41                  | 2449                   |
| RQ5: innovation                       | Medium                | <b>4.7</b>            | 2                 | 7                   | 335                    |
| RQ5: leadership.development           | Very, Very Strong     | <b>295.3</b>          | 7                 | 20                  | 2109                   |
| RQ5: mentorship                       | Strong                | <b>53.0</b>           | 5                 | 13                  | 816                    |
| RQ5: personal.sacrifice               | Strong                | <b>39.2</b>           | 6                 | 10                  | 654                    |
| RQ5: public.communications            | Strong                | <b>62.0</b>           | 5                 | 14                  | 886                    |
| RQ5: self-development                 | Very Strong           | <b>250.0</b>          | 9                 | 20                  | 1389                   |
| RQ5: strong.teamwork                  | Medium                | <b>6.8</b>            | 3                 | 5                   | 450                    |
| RQ5: types.of.authenticity            | Weak                  | <b>0.9</b>            | 1                 | 4                   | 218                    |