

The Diffusion of Authentic Leadership: Examining the Influence of Leadership on the Economic Progress of Africa

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Abstract

African countries are actively seeking to develop their economies, and it is believed that leaders have a critical role to play. This paper presents a comprehensive review of how the knowledge initiatives of authentic leadership practices constitute a significant catalyst for the economic development trajectories of African nations. The study adopted a qualitative research method, more specifically systematic review. Studies on authentic leadership within the last 10 years were collected. It extracted three themes, namely, transparency, self-awareness, and ethical principles. Eleven (11) studies were extensively reviewed for this purpose, and it was discovered that transparency, self-awareness, and ethical principle have an influence on economic progression of Africa. It is recommended that leaders should engage in regular self-reflection and seek feedback from peers and subordinates to enhance their self-awareness. Also, leaders should communicate openly and honestly with stakeholders, providing regular updates on organizational goals, challenges, and progress.

Keywords

Authentic Leadership, Leadership, Economic Progress

1. Introduction

Leadership holds a critical role in any society as it would be difficult to agree on a course of action without individuals saddled with the responsibilities to lead (So-hail, 2024). However, being a leader comes with a lot of challenges, necessitating possessing the inherent drive and ability to carry the burdens, particularly when it relates to economies. According to Fourie et al. (2017), although leadership at

every level comes with its difficulties, leading an economy tends to be the most challenging as it demands working towards even economic development irrespective of the size of the country. United Nations (UN) classified countries across the globe into developed and developing economies, with most African countries being placed into the later group due to the level of development in those economies (Omeihe et al., 2021).

As asserted by (Matabi, 2017), the major difference between developing and developed economies is the presence of authentic leaders in most of the advanced economies of the world, while the third world countries are battling with severe cases of corruption. What can be deduced from this is that being a leader comes with conscious effort of transparency and following ethical principles not for the benefit of oneself but for the betterment of the followers (Hoyt, 2018). A typical example of corruption in Africa that shows the absence of authentic leadership is the case of Mobutu, the ruler of the Democratic Republic of Congo that embezzled billions of dollars from the country's coffers. He prioritized his personal interest over the development of the economy, which further put the country in an unfavourable condition during his reign. The military government of General Sani Abacha diverted about 5 billion dollars of the Nigerian reserves to foreign accounts (Emuwa & Fields, 2017).

The horrible experience of embezzlement many decades ago led to African citizens in their respective countries demanding for authentic leaders with the capabilities to combat trust deficits between the stereotypic view of the population and the reality of today's leadership (Adayehi, 2016). It is widely believed that the presence of authentic leaders in Africa will lay a solid foundation for rapid industrial development and sustainable living, moving the continent closer to realizing most of the sustainable development goals (SDG) (Emuwa & Fields, 2017). This was viewed from the perspective that an authentic leader, like what most of the advanced economies have will only operate strictly based on personal values and principles, which favour the growing needs of the economy and the desire of the people (Fourie et al., 2017).

Authentic leadership in Africa occurs when appointed individuals act based on transparency and display ethical behaviours, particularly holding themselves accountable for every action, including wrong decisions (Sanda, 2017). While studies like (Fourie et al., 2017; Hoyt, 2018; Sohail, 2024; Towsen et al., 2020) were of the opinion that authentic leadership is a borrowed idea from developed economies, Emuwa & Fields (2017) emphasized the critical role played by culture in defining values and principles for individuals. This is to say, every individual tends to build their personal beliefs through their exposure to culture. African nations do not hold their culture with levity hands, with every child adopting beliefs from their respective backgrounds, which define the principles they grow with. However, it is worth mentioning that individual differences come into play, which contributes to how a child may turn out to be when they are adults (Idang, 2015).

Authenticity in leadership can be viewed from the perspective of traditional

leadership styles that were used in the medieval period, when there were checks and balances that ensure that the leaders remain true to their personal values and serve the followers with transparency (Horwitz, 2021). An authentic leader in contemporary time can combine the culturally-inclined leadership style, which is rich in values and ethical principles with their personal beliefs to increase critical awareness about themselves. Being in a state of awareness aids adjusting behaviour when necessary and being able to harmonize perceptions with the societal demands at different points in time.

Africa has a wealth of cultural traditions and beliefs that are diverse and have long shaped the continent's leadership practices. African traditional leadership is frequently communal in nature, prioritizing the group's overall welfare over the interests of any one member. It is expected of leaders to exhibit traits like humility, knowledge, and a deep sense of community duty. Understanding and appreciating the cultural environment in which leadership functions is a prerequisite for fusing traditional African leadership with real leadership concepts. This includes appreciating and comprehending ancient African leadership practices and principles, as well as realizing their applicability in contemporary leadership settings. Thinking back on one's cultural background and how it influences one's leadership style can help one become more self-aware, which is a fundamental component of authentic leadership.

Integrating open communication and accountability into conventional leadership structures is one way to incorporate transparency, another fundamental tenet of authentic leadership. Among followers, this can foster a sense of legitimacy and trust. The most important concept, ethics, can be strengthened by having leaders make decisions that are consistent with community norms and values. Through leadership development programs that combine both traditional and modern leadership concepts, it is possible to blend real leadership principles with traditional African leadership. This can assist African leaders of today and the future in navigating the challenges of leadership in a world that is changing quickly while maintaining a strong connection to their cultural history.

Authentic leaders can promote enhanced trust, collaboration, and innovation within their communities by combining conventional leadership styles and ideals with authentic leadership concepts. This can result in more efficient decision-making procedures that prioritize the long-term welfare of the society over immediate benefits. In the context of economic growth, such leadership can facilitate the implementation of sustainable development policies that utilize Africa's abundant natural and human resources for the advantage of everyone.

Moreover, culturally-informed authentic leadership can have a pivotal impact on poverty alleviation by tackling the underlying factors that contribute to poverty, such as limited educational resources, inadequate healthcare services, and limited economic prospects. Leaders who possess a strong bond with their communities and prioritize the needs of the most disadvantaged are more inclined to enact policies and initiatives that elevate individuals out of poverty. By advocating for comprehensive and fair economic progress and advancement, these leaders may

establish a society that ensures equal opportunities for all individuals to prosper.

Culturally-informed authentic leadership can contribute to the development of responsible and transparent institutions, hence enhancing governance. Leaders who demonstrate unwavering dedication to serve their communities with honesty and modesty are more inclined to cultivate a culture of responsibility inside government organizations. These outcomes can result in diminished corruption, enhanced service provision, and heightened public confidence in the government. Culturally-informed authentic leadership has the capacity to revolutionize Africa by fostering sustainable development, mitigating poverty, and enhancing governance for the welfare of its entire population. Given the potential of authentic leadership with traditional method of leading, the study aims to systematically review how the diffusion of these concepts can induce economic progression in Africa.

2. Research Questions

Given the prevailing issues discussed, the paper seeks to provide answers to the overall question, which is what is the effect of authentic leadership on economic progression in Africa? The specific research questions are;

- 1) What is the influence of transparency on economic progression in Africa?
- 2) What is the effect of self-awareness on economic progression in Africa?
- 3) What is the influence of adherence to ethical principles on economic development in Africa?

3. Literature Review

3.1. Authentic Leadership

According to [Matabi \(2017\)](#), authentic leadership is an act of leading a group or a society based on ethical values, which encompass respect, compassion, integrity, justice, responsibility, honesty, and trustworthiness. In the view of [Walumbwa et al. \(2008\)](#), authentic leadership relates to being accountable and shouldering responsibilities based on selflessness and the willingness to be impactful in the lives of others. This shows that to be an authentic leader, individuals must position themselves to face challenges, not for selfish reasons, but to ensure that every member of the community becomes better off without anyone being worse off. What makes a leader authentic is being adaptable to different circumstances and possessing the ability to think a situation through to determine the cost and benefits for the followers especially those that are less privileged ([Okeke, 2019](#)).

Authentic leaders are people who possess a profound self-awareness of their thoughts, behaviors, and how others perceive them. They possess self-awareness of their own and others' values, moral viewpoint, knowledge, and strengths ([Emuwa & Fields, 2017](#)). Furthermore, they possess a keen understanding of the circumstances in which they function and exhibit self-assurance, positivity, hopefulness, resilience, and a strong sense of moral integrity. Authentic leadership is a new leadership approach that gained recognition at the end of the 20th century due to the spread of ethical misconduct within organizations and some of the developed

economies in the Western world (Uppathampracha & Guoxin, 2021). This is an approach proposed to correct the gaps in leadership within economies and corporate organizations, within a central objective of promoting progression and sustainability.

It is argued by Adayehi (2016) and Horwitz (2021) that authentic leadership largely depends on borrowed ideas from western culture, which may not work as expected within non-western environment, especially African economies with a different leadership approach. Nonetheless, this approach is associated with positive outcome for leaders, followers, and the economy at large, even though perception of success may differ among the groups (Kleynhans et al., 2021). An authentic leader may perceive positive results as accomplishments that add more value to their personality. On the other hand, the followers may see the delivery of the leader as improvement in the standard of living, while to the economy, it may be recorded as economic progression (Agbude et al., 2015).

The aforementioned outcomes illustrate the potential worth of the leadership strategy. Self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency are the four components that are identified in the conceptualization of authentic leadership (Hoyt, 2018). A leader's ability to align their responsibilities with ethical obligations that consider their diverse stakeholders, including followers, community, and society, is described by an internalized moral perspective, while self-awareness entails continuous reflections and evaluations of these strengths and weaknesses (Agbude et al., 2015). According to Walumbwa et al. (2008), the component considers all viewpoints when processing information, which is related to balanced processing. According to Fourie et al. (2017), relational transparency is defined as the act of showing one's true self by freely disclosing one's feelings and facts to others.

3.2. Authentic Leadership Development

Acquiring a training framework that is supported by empirical evidence and specifically designed to facilitate the growth of authentic leadership was exceptionally difficult due to the relatively young age of authentic leadership theory and the favourable outcomes associated with it. Authentic Leadership Development is a significant area of study that aims to enhance the effectiveness of leaders by promoting self-reflection and personal growth. The research undertaken in the 1970s focused on training programmes aimed at promoting self-reflection and personal growth (Muguna, 2022). Assessment, feedback, and coaching are commonly employed in sensitivity training as experiential approaches. This study compared these methods with more traditional corporate-style training techniques such as lecture/discussion and role-playing. The results indicated that the latter approach, particularly when employing "Behaviour modelling," was significantly more effective in facilitating participants' self-awareness and positive development (Matabi, 2017).

The behaviour modelling technique places emphasis on peer input and encour-

ages the open exploration of personal beliefs and emotions within a group context, without a specific goal or objective (Kleynhans et al., 2021). Critics argued that the approach lacked consistency and placed excessive reliance on the facilitator and individual characteristics, despite its effectiveness. In order to address these limitations, Fourie et al. (2017) conducted an experiment to determine the consistent effectiveness of the behavioural modelling training/coaching approach in developing emotional and social skills for effective leadership. In order to ensure its reproducibility across many locations, this study employed the Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI) as both a pre- and post-implemented an ISO-based training structure.

The study presented the concept of Process Designed Training (PdT), which integrated a solution-focused approach with reflective and humanistic behaviour modelling approaches. This strategy aimed to foster change that was both humanistic and participatory, aligning with the core ideals of ALD. The study's results showed that the intervention group made significant improvements in all ECI categories, suggesting that the PdT model was successful in cultivating authentic leadership qualities. The study also emphasised the potential of utilising the PdT model for shorter durations to enhance self-awareness, social environment, or culture, all of which are competencies associated with effective leadership.

3.3. Culturally-Informed Authentic Leadership-Africa Perspective

Culturally Informed Authentic Leadership in Africa is a comprehensive leadership method that utilizes the diverse cultural traditions of the continent to develop an authentic and impactful leadership style that fosters positive transformation (Fourie et al., 2017). African leadership in traditional settings is commonly characterized by its communal orientation, wherein leaders are regarded as stewards of their communities' welfare rather than individualistic rulers. The communal ethos strongly corresponds to the emphasis of authentic leadership on serving others and remaining steadfast to one's values (Williams et al., 2021). This leadership approach encourages a leadership style that is strongly anchored in the community and focuses on the communal good by incorporating these cultural principles into their leadership techniques.

Also, it acknowledges the significance of modifying leadership strategies to suit many cultural environments within Africa. Africa is a continent characterized by a wide range of cultures, languages, and customs (Kyoya, 2019). It is important to note that leadership approaches that are successful in one environment may not provide the same results in another. Culturally informed authentic leadership promotes the development of leaders who possess cultural sensitivity and adaptability, acknowledging the complexities of diverse cultures and adjusting their leadership approach accordingly (Campos-Moreira et al., 2020). An essential feature of this innovation is its strong focus on inclusivity and diversity. Africa encompasses a wide range of ethnicities, religions, and languages, and successful leaders in Africa must possess the ability to adeptly handle this diversity and foster unity

among its people (Grajfoner et al., 2023).

While authentic leadership is often characterized as a concept borrowed from Western developed economies, its application in Africa is not a simple transplantation but requires critical integration with the continent's rich and diverse cultural fabric. Authentic leadership is grounded in a multilateral rich body of knowledge and literature encompassing significant contributions through positive behaviors, ethics, and leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Additionally, Emuwa & Fields (2017) emphasize culture's critical role in defining an individual's values and principles, which are the foundation of authentic leadership. This cultural grounding means that for leadership to be truly authentic in an African context, it must be informed by indigenous philosophies such as Ubuntu, which prioritizes communalism, humility, and a deep sense of duty to the collective welfare over individualistic success (Fourie et al., 2017). Therefore, cultural differences do not diminish the effectiveness of authentic leadership but instead demand its adaptation into a culturally informed model that resonates with local values, thereby transforming a borrowed concept into a culturally grounded framework for effective and sustainable governance.

The primary objective of authentic leadership blended with culture is to advocate for inclusive leadership approaches that prioritize and appreciate variety, hence promoting harmony and solidarity within heterogeneous communities.

3.4. Economic Development and Progression in Africa

Culturally-informed authentic leadership promotes an inclusive and participatory leadership method, which encourages individuals to take responsibility for their own development (Agbude et al., 2015). To foster a sense of ownership and commitment among individuals, leaders adhering to the culturally-informed authentic leadership model involve all pertinent stakeholders in the decision-making procedures. This comprehensive strategy ensures that activities and policies are customized to meet the specific requirements and objectives of the community, perhaps leading to more sustainable development outcomes (Grajfoner et al., 2023).

In addition, culturally-informed authentic leadership emphasizes the need for ethical leadership, which is culturally-informed authentic leadership for building credibility and instilling confidence in leadership. Leadership typified by honesty, transparency, and integrity is more likely to gain the trust and support of both the public and private sectors (Horwitz, 2021). Consequently, this has the capacity to stimulate development opportunities and promote economic expansion. Innovation and creativity are integral components of culturally-informed authentic leadership. Africa, with its vibrant and dynamic people and abundant natural resources, is a continent brimming with potential (Kyoya, 2019). Effective leaders who possess cultural sensitivity recognize the need of harnessing this potential by fostering creativity and innovation. They actively strive to establish an environment conducive to the growth and development of these qualities. The emergence of new industries, technology, and solutions may lead to economic growth and

development (Fourie et al., 2017).

An instance of the influence of culturally-informed authentic leadership on economic development is evident in the leadership approach of Nelson Mandela, the former President of South Africa (Kleynhans et al., 2021). Mandela's leadership was firmly grounded in African principles, notably ubuntu, which highlights qualities such as compassion, empathy, and unity. His genuine and authoritative leadership approach was important in South Africa's shift from apartheid to democracy and had a significant impact on the nation's economic progress and stability (Toendepi, 2021).

Also, culturally-informed authentic leadership in Africa can be observed in the leadership of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the former President of Liberia. Sirleaf's leadership style was strongly influenced by her Liberian and African roots, as she aimed to foster peace, reconciliation, and economic progress in a nation devastated by prolonged civil conflict (Williams, Grande, Nakamura, Pyle, & Shaw, 2021). Sirleaf's genuine leadership was distinguished by her dedication to openness, responsibility, and inclusiveness, which played a crucial role in the reconstruction of Liberia's economy and infrastructure. During Sirleaf's tenure, Liberia achieved notable progress in economic advancement, including enhancements in infrastructure, healthcare, and education (Fourie et al., 2017). Under her leadership, the government launched strategies aimed at attracting foreign investment and fostering the expansion of the private sector. As a result, there was a significant rise in employment possibilities and the economy became more diversified. Sirleaf's administration prioritized the empowerment of women and youth, acknowledging their crucial role in driving economic development (Crawford et al., 2020).

Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism Center of Excellence in Africa is exemplified by the leadership of Paul Kagame, the President of Rwanda. Kagame's leadership style is rooted in Rwandan cultural values, including Umuganda (community service) and Ubupfura (self-reliance) (Rugerinyange, 2016). His leadership has played a crucial role in the process of Rwanda's transition from a nation severely affected by genocide to becoming one of the most rapidly developing economies in Africa. Kagame's genuine leadership has placed emphasis on peace, unity, and economic advancement, resulting in notable enhancements in Rwanda's infrastructure, healthcare, and education systems. Additionally, his administration has enacted measures to facilitate and encourage innovation and entrepreneurship, establishing Rwanda as a prominent center for technology and innovation on the African continent (Brubaker, 2014).

4. Methodology

4.1. Design

This is a 10-year systematic review to examine and discuss the empirical evidences from past investigations on the diffusion of authentic leadership with culture to achieve economic development in Africa. It was conceptualized and conducted from 2012 to 2022 following the guideline of the Preferred Reporting

Items for Systemic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocol (PRISMA-P). This is a protocol that enables researchers to systematically and transparently review the research of past authors based on the techniques adopted and the outcome of the investigation.

The checklist for inclusion and exclusion criteria was meticulously developed in accordance with a comprehensive protocol, structured around four overarching categories. These categories encompassed the background of the study, incorporating contextual literature review, research questions, or aims, setting a solid foundation for the research. The methodology section of the protocol outlined the quality criteria and assessment, including data synthesis methods, ensuring rigorous and systematic data analysis. The results section of the protocol detailed the characteristics of included studies and study flow, providing a clear and concise summary of the findings. Finally, the discussion section of the protocol facilitated a comprehensive exploration and interpretation of the data, fostering a deeper understanding of the research outcomes.

In extracting data from each study, a systematic approach was employed to ensure accuracy and consistency. Key data points extracted included the author's name, publication source, and year of publication, providing essential context for each study. Additionally, information on the country of origin, participants, objectives/aims, methodology (including study design, settings, samples, and instruments), outcomes, and key findings were carefully recorded. This meticulous approach to data extraction ensured that all relevant information was captured and that the findings could be analyzed comprehensively.

4.2. Search Methods

The study was conducted using English language, making it necessary to search for the relevant studies that were conducted within the scope of the current investigation using the same language. Only publications that cover the period of 2012 to 2022 were considered. The search keywords include authentic leadership, self-awareness of leaders, leadership transparency, culturally informed authentic leadership, which were combined with logical operators like OR, AND, and occasionally .pdf or .docx extensions. These terms utilized in the search process were adapted from (Fourie et al., 2017), which enables searching through different research databases, including Google Scholar, JSTOR, PubMed, SAGE Journals, ProQuest, and EBSCO from 2012 to 2022. Random searches through the internet were also done to get relevant research papers related to authentic leadership. Inclusion criteria encompasses observational studies conducted in English, examining authentic leadership from the perspective of transparency, self-awareness, and more importantly, linked with cultural values.

Furthermore, the robustness of the systematic review was ensured through a rigorous, multi-layered screening process applied to all identified studies, including those from internet searches, to safeguard against threats to reliability and validity. To mitigate the potential for low-quality sources, all search results were

subjected to the same strict inclusion and exclusion criteria, which mandated that studies be empirical, conducted within Africa, and explicitly linked to economic progression (Page et al., 2021). This stringent protocol ensured that only methodologically sound research was considered, a standard upheld in recent studies (Mutemi et al., 2022; Muguna, 2022). Consequently, the final synthesis is built upon a foundation of credible evidence, as the comprehensive screening process effectively neutralized the inherent risks of initial random searches by enforcing consistent academic rigor across all sources.

Table 1. Search terms for the study.

Concept 1	Concept 2	Concept 3
Authentic Leadership OR Transparency	Culturally informed Authentic Leadership OR Self-Awareness of Leaders	Culturally informed Authentic Leadership OR Leadership Transparency OR Self-Awareness of Leaders and Authentic Leadership.

4.3. Inclusion Criteria

Studies on authentic leadership with focus on self-awareness, transparency, and cultural values, and conducted within the geographical territory of Africa. Potential studies must be conducted on economic progress or development based on leaders' input and actions.

4.4. Exclusion Criteria

The following categories of published articles were excluded from the review: authentic leadership studies on organizations, authentic leadership studies outside Africa, journal articles not written in English language.

4.5. Data Screening

The study citations were imported into an Endnote reference management software for organization. Subsequently, a screening process was conducted to eliminate duplicate entries and assess the relevance of titles and abstracts. Following this, the full texts of potentially relevant articles were retrieved and meticulously evaluated against the predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria.

4.6. Data Synthesis and Analysis

The findings from included studies were summarized in a narrative statement and presented in the results **Table 1** and discussion of findings.

4.7. Framework Used

Following the selection of eligible studies, the articles that met the selection criteria were also screened using PRISMA-P guidelines see **Figure 1**, framework for systematic review was further used for inclusion criteria based on the following concepts: Setting, Perspective, Intervention, Comparison and Evaluation before

arriving at a final inclusion criterion as shown in **Figure 1**: Systematic review framework Adapted from Akinwale et al.

4.8. Operationalization of Economic Progression

This study operationalizes economic progression by synthesizing its measurable outcomes as evidenced in the reviewed literature on authentic leadership see **Figure 2**. Economic progression is conceptualized not as a single metric but as a

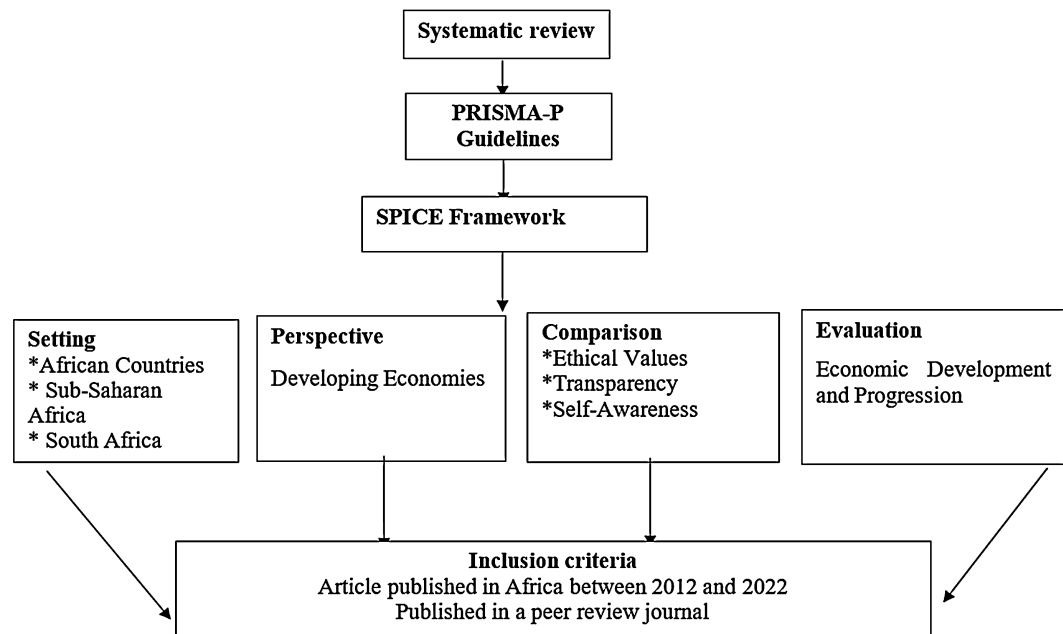


Figure 1. Systematic review framework.

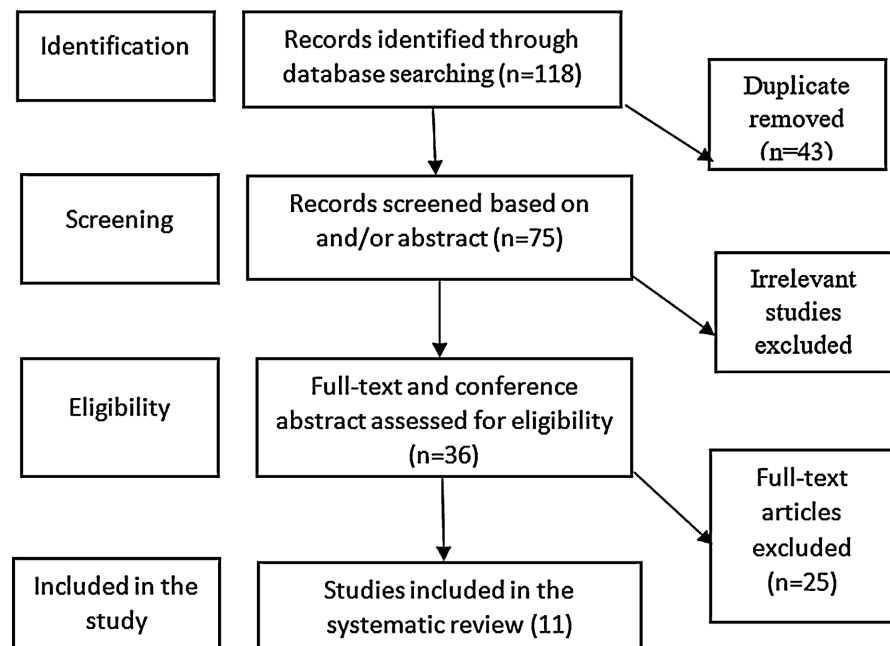


Figure 2. Screening flow chart.

multidimensional construct manifesting through key indicators such as sustained GDP growth, increased foreign direct investment, and tangible improvements in human development indices (Colen et al., 2008). The systematic review's empirical evidence directly links authentic leadership's core components to these outcomes. For instance, leadership transparency builds institutional trust, a critical precursor for attracting the investment necessary for economic expansion (Omeihe et al., 2021). Furthermore, a leader's self-awareness and adherence to ethical principles are shown to foster stable governance and policies focused on long-term societal benefit rather than short-term personal gain, thereby creating an environment conducive to sustainable development and poverty reduction (Mutemi et al., 2022; Emuwa & Fields, 2017). Therefore, by examining studies that correlate authentic leadership with these specific, measurable economic indicators, this review provides a clear framework for assessing its impact on Africa's economic progression.

5. Result

5.1. Summary of Literature Search

A total number of 118 studies were identified on authentic leadership through the database search, and total of 11 studies were included in the review as found in Figure 2. All eleven (11) articles were from Africa. The summary of the studies is presented in Table 2 including the author's name, years, title, objectives, methodology, sample and sampling techniques, instrument, and result findings.

Table 2. Summary of literature search.

Authors	Title	Goals and objectives	Methodology	Sample and sampling technique	Instrument	Results/Findings
Agbude, Obayan, & Abasilim (2015)	Innovative Pathways for effective E-governance in Africa: The importance of Authentic Leadership	To determine the influence of authentic leaders on E-governance in Africa	Qualitative Approach	25 articles	Systematic Review	Creating innovative pathways for its effectiveness in Africa calls for authentic leadership which emphasizes constructive and developmental interactions between leaders and followers
Omeihe, Harrison, & Omeihe (2021)	Authentic leadership skills within a developing economy context	To evaluate the effect of self-awareness, transparency, and honesty on developing economies	Qualitative research method	15 articles on authentic leadership	Thematic Analysis	Honesty and transparency were found to be key skills that contribute to economic progression in developing economy
Matabi (2017)	Authentic leadership: The missing link to effectively manage changes and	To theoretically analyze the impact of authentic leadership on	Qualitative research design	15 articles	Thematic Analysis	Authentic leadership has a positive effect on the change agent's views and abilities to undertake transitional

	transition in Africa: Agricultural cooperatives perspective	change management in agricultural co-operatives, since the introduction of the structural adjustment programme				strategies, confidently, hopefully, optimistically, and resiliently
Okeke (2019)	The impact of colonization and authentic leadership on Africa: Nigeria, A Case Study	To determine the influence of authentic leadership on political stability and economic growth, and productivity	Qualitative Approach	12 respondents (Random Sampling)	Open-ended Interview	Results showed that corruption and poor management are the root causes of crises, fighting, and killings in Nigeria as well as the lack of social, economic, and political stability
Toendepi (2021)	The catalytic role of authentic leadership in raising collective consciousness in the South African social systems	The contribution of leader's self-awareness on alleviation of poverty and reduction of unemployment	Qualitative Approach (Interview)	10 participants (Random Sampling)	Interview	Self-awareness of leaders and their followers has a positive relationship with attaining sustainable future
Nair, (2017)	Self-Awareness in Authentic Leader Development in South Africa	To determine whether self-awareness is important for effective leaders and to explore the enhancers and obstacles	Qualitative Approach	16 respondents selected at random	Interview	A key finding was that these future leaders embraced the traits of authentic leaders, focused on their people in particular, and confirmed that self-awareness is critical to effective leadership
Muguna (2022)	Authentic Leadership and Societal Transformation: A Review of Literature	To investigate the influence of authentic leadership on societal transformation	Qualitative Approach	20 Articles	Systematic Review	The findings showed that authentic leadership has positive effects on societal transformation. The mediation role of the core positive psychological resources variable is crucial
Balogun, Mahembe, & Allen-Ile (2020)	A confirmatory factor analytic study of an authentic leadership measure in Nigeria.	The primary goal of the present study was to test, on a Nigerian sample, the psychometric properties of the Authentic Leadership	Quantitative Research Method	213 randomly selected participants	Questionnaire	Moderate levels of reliability were found for the subscales of the authentic leadership
Dartey-Baah (2014)	Authentic leadership and sustainable development in Africa: Is there really	To review the concept of leadership as practiced in the	Literature Review	Leadership articles	Systematic Review	Findings revealed a great disparity between the leadership situation in the African continent and the

	a link?	West and in Africa and goes on to establish the link between these two approaches and sustainable development in Africa				attainment of sustainable development
Emuwa & Fields (2017)	Authentic leadership as a contemporary leadership model applied in Nigeria	To examine the extent to which each dimension of authentic leadership is related with leadership effectiveness in Nigeria	Quantitative Method (Cross-sectional survey data)	212 respondents /Random Sampling	Regression Analysis	This study showed a positive relationship between authentic leadership behaviors and perceived leader effectiveness
Mutemi, Kimiywe, & Nyakundi (2022)	The Influence of Authentic Leadership on the Governance of County Referral Hospitals in Kenya	To determine the influence of self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency the governance of County referral hospitals in Kenya	Qualitative and quantitative Methods	5 county hospitals/ Purposive sampling	Descriptive and inferential Analysis	There exists a relationship between authentic leadership, leadership efficacy, and governance of County referral hospitals in Kenya

6. Discussion

Three themes emerged from the analysis and synthesis of the data on authentic leadership diffusion and its effect on economic progression in Africa according to **Table 2**. These themes include 1) Effect of transparency on economic development; 2) Influence of self-awareness on economic progression; and 3) the effect of adherence to ethical principles on economic progression in Africa.

This review operationalizes economic progression through measurable outcomes, linking authentic leadership to key indicators. Leadership transparency fosters the institutional trust necessary to attract investment (Omeihe et al., 2021), while ethical adherence and self-awareness direct policy towards sustainable development and poverty reduction (Mutemi et al., 2022; Emuwa & Fields, 2017). Thus, authentic leadership catalyzes economic progression by creating a stable environment conducive to growth and human development.

6.1. Effect of Transparency on Economic Development

Among the studies that assess transparency as a component of authentic leadership, Agbude, Obayan, & Abasilim (2015), Omeihe, Harrison, & Omeihe (2021), Matabi (2017) reported that it has a significant influence on transformation in

Africa. This is based on the perspective held in each of these studies. However, in the study of [Dartey-Baah \(2014\)](#), it was reported that none of the component of authentic leadership have any effect on economic progression. More recent study of [Emuwa & Fields \(2017\)](#) supported the assertion and findings of majority of the studies that found a positive effect of transparency on development in African economies. This could imply that being transparent as an authentic leader increases the tendency that more economies in Africa will progress economic-wise, political-wise, and more importantly become sustainable in the long run.

Furthermore, the influence of leadership transparency on economic development, while generally positive, is not monolithic and varies significantly across different African contexts due to unique cultural, historical, and institutional factors. As [Emuwa and Fields \(2017\)](#) emphasize, the critical role of culture in defining individual values and principles means that the application and perception of transparency are deeply contextual. For instance, in communal settings where traditional leadership structures prioritize collective welfare, transparency may be demonstrated through inclusive consensus-building and public accountability to elders or community groups, a process that differs from Western disclosure models ([Fourie et al., 2017](#)). Conversely, in nations rebuilding from conflict or grappling with systemic corruption, the implementation of transparency faces immense practical challenges, such as weak institutional frameworks and deeply entrenched patronage networks, which can stifle its economic benefits despite strong theoretical support ([Omeihe et al., 2021](#)). Therefore, a nuanced understanding of how transparency is culturally defined and institutionally constrained across the continent's diverse landscapes is essential for accurately assessing its role in fostering economic progression.

6.2. Influence of Self-Awareness on Economic Progression

The study of [Toendepi \(2021\)](#) and [Nair \(2017\)](#) revealed that self-awareness of leaders is a vital component of authentic leadership, as it contributes to development both at grassroot and higher level, which will eventually spread across the economy. This outcome is also supported by the findings of [Mutemi, Kimiywe, & Nyakundi \(2022\)](#), who were of the opinion that economic progression largely depends on the leaders being self-aware and acting in accordance with their observation and the needs of the economy. The statistically significant effect of their result provides empirical evidence to conclude on the importance of self-awareness of a leader saddle with the responsibility of leading a nation, particularly within the African continent.

6.3. Effect of Adherence to Ethical Principles on Economic Progression

The study is [Emuwa & Fields \(2017\)](#), [Balogun, Mahembe, & Allen-Ile \(2020\)](#), and [Muguna \(2022\)](#) showed that adherence to ethical principle, including being honesty and upholding good behaviours are positively associated with economic de-

velopment and progression. In addition to this, the findings of Okeke (2019) corroborated with the other outcomes, by indicating that the ethical principle adhered to by some leaders has had a vital impact on African economies.

6.4. The Role of Cultural Diversity on African Economic Progression

A critical strength of this study's findings is its inherent acknowledgment of Africa's vast cultural diversity, which prevents an oversimplified generalization of a single "African" leadership model. The research framework was explicitly designed to investigate culturally informed authentic leadership, a concept that integrates local traditions and communal values into the core components of authenticity (Fourie et al., 2017). The reviewed studies, drawn from diverse nations like Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, and Liberia, demonstrate that while the core tenets of transparency, self-awareness, and ethical adherence are universally positive, their practical application is successfully mediated by unique cultural contexts, such as Ubuntu in South Africa or Umuganda in Rwanda (Kleynhans et al., 2021; Mutemi et al., 2022). Therefore, this study does not propose a monolithic solution but provides a versatile framework demonstrating that authentic leadership, adapted to and informed by specific cultural environments, is a significant driver of economic progression across the continent's diverse nations.

6.5. Limitations and the Need for an Integrated Leadership Approach

While the systematic review establishes a strong positive correlation between authentic leadership (AL) and economic progression in Africa, it is crucial to acknowledge contexts where its application alone may be insufficient. A purely AL approach, heavily reliant on individual leader morality, can falter in environments with deeply entrenched systemic corruption or complex political economies that require coercive or transactional measures to achieve stability (Northouse, 2022). For instance, Muguna (2022) notes that the efficacy of AL is often mediated by external "positive psychological resources," suggesting that in crises or periods of severe institutional distrust, its transformative potential may be limited without structural support. Furthermore, as Mutemi et al. (2022) demonstrated in their study on Kenyan hospitals, the relationship between AL and effective governance, while positive, was not absolute, indicating that other managerial or structural factors are also at play. Therefore, to ensure robust and resilient economic development, authentic leadership should not be seen as a panacea but rather as a foundational component that may need to be supplemented with other strategic, transactional, or even coercive leadership models depending on the specific socio-political challenges at hand.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1. Conclusion

The 10-year systematic review is a summary and assessment of both empirical evidence and quality observations of past studies to support how diffusion of au-

thentic leadership with cultural values can bring about economic development according to **Figure 1**, **Figure 2** and **Table 2**. Several studies were identified through thorough search for studies on authentic leadership and economic progression in Africa. Out of the 118 studies, only 11 of them met the inclusion criteria for the purpose of the study. The themes that emerged from the review include transparency, self-awareness, and adherence to ethical principles. The outcome of the extensive review showed that different components of authentic leadership have influences on economic progression in Africa. By implication, authentic leadership, characterized by self-awareness, transparency, and adherence to ethical principles, plays a crucial role in driving economic progression in Africa. Leaders who are self-aware understand their strengths and weaknesses, enabling them to make informed decisions that benefit their organizations and communities. Transparency builds trust among stakeholders, leading to increased investment and business opportunities. Adherence to ethical principles ensures that leaders act in the best interest of their constituents, fostering a culture of accountability and integrity. By embodying these qualities, authentic leaders in Africa can inspire confidence, attract investment, and drive sustainable economic growth, ultimately benefiting the continent as a whole.

7.2. Recommendations

Leaders should engage in regular self-reflection and seek feedback from peers and subordinates to enhance their self-awareness. They can also undergo leadership assessments and coaching to gain a deeper understanding of their leadership style and its impact on others.

Leaders should communicate openly and honestly with stakeholders, providing regular updates on economic goals, challenges, and progress. They should also encourage a culture of transparency within their organizations and constituents, where information is readily shared and feedback is welcomed.

While the recommendations for regular self-reflection and feedback are vital for developing authentic leadership, their implementation in many African contexts faces significant practical challenges rooted in resource constraints. Leaders in under-resourced public sectors often operate within systems plagued by infrastructural deficits and overwhelming administrative burdens, leaving little time or institutional support for structured developmental activities (Adayehi, 2016). The financial cost of procuring external coaching or validated leadership assessments can be prohibitive for cash-strapped government departments, making the recommendation for leaders to undergo such process is often impractical. Furthermore, as Mutemi et al. (2022) found in Kenyan public hospitals, systemic issues can erode the psychological safety required for subordinates to provide honest, upward feedback without fear of reprisal. Therefore, to be effective, recommendations must be adapted into low-cost, culturally integrated practices, such as leveraging existing communal gathering structures for peer reflection and training senior leaders to act as internal mentors, thereby building capacity without relying

on scarce external resources.

The cultivation of authentic leadership is paramount for institutional integrity and public trust. Additionally, leaders must exemplify core principles such as integrity, honesty, and fairness. Public, private, and hybrid agencies under the jurisdiction of the governments in African countries must establish clear ethical frameworks to institutionalize these values and ensure their consistent application. Ultimately, in reference to **Figure 3**, implementing robust programs is critical for embedding authentic leadership principles in current office holders and aspiring leaders across the public and private sectors, thereby safeguarding the actualization of African governance, economic prosperity, and future.

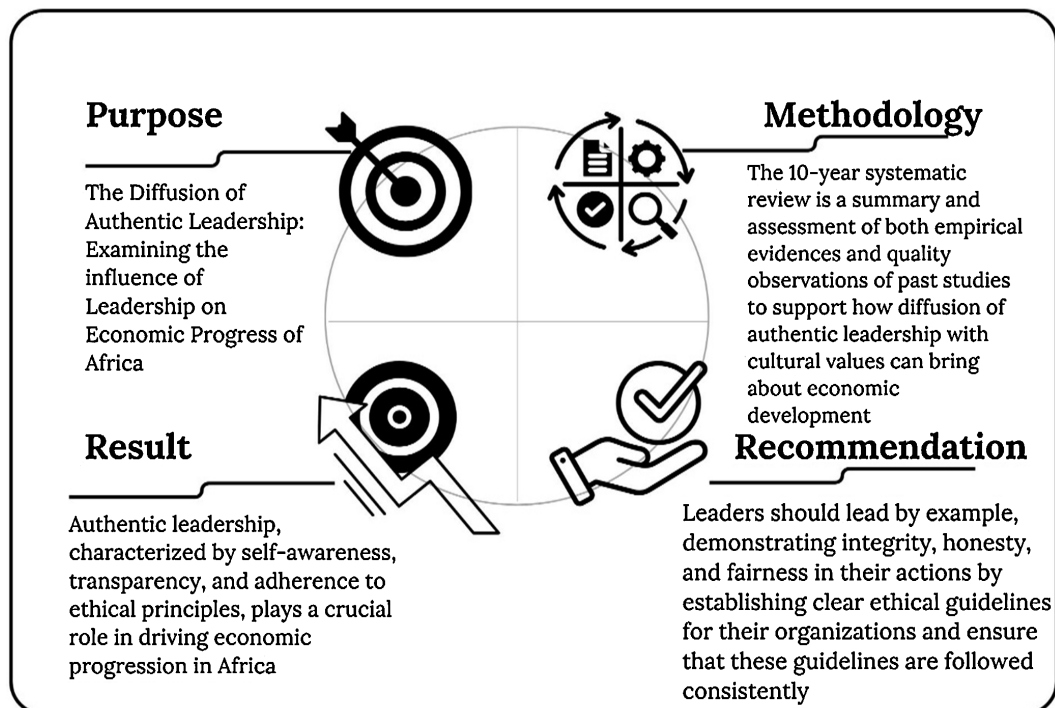


Figure 3. Study conceptual view.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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