

**Authentic Leadership: A Qualitative Case Study of the True Impact of Executive
Commitment within Fortune 500 Technology Companies**

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Abstract

This study examined how employees experience leadership authenticity within Fortune 500 technology companies and how those experiences shape perceptions of trust, engagement, and alignment with organizational values. Although leadership authenticity is widely discussed in leadership research, less is known about how employees interpret authentic leadership within large corporate environments. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how employees describe leadership authenticity and how those experiences influence perceptions of leadership effectiveness within their organizations. The study was guided by the Leadership Conscious Authenticity Index (CAI), which conceptualizes authenticity through self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced decision-making, and an internalized moral and ethical perspective. Data were collected through employee interviews, leadership questionnaires, and analysis of publicly available corporate documents to support triangulation across sources. Six employees participated in semi-structured interviews, and twenty leaders completed questionnaires describing leadership practices within their organizations. Data were coded using a structured coding matrix aligned with the conceptual framework and analyzed through thematic analysis. Participants described leadership authenticity as an integrated leadership orientation rather than separate behaviors. Transparent communication, ethical consistency, and opportunities for employees to contribute ideas or raise concerns were commonly associated with authentic leadership. Findings in this study highlight how authenticity emerged through the interaction between leader behavior and organizational systems and offer practical insights for strengthening trust, communication, and ethical leadership practices within complex organizations.

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Table of Contents

Section 1: Foundation	6
Statement of the Problem.....	7
Purpose of the Study	9
Research Question	11
Conceptual Framework.....	13
Definitions of Key Terms	17
Review of the Literature	20
Ethical Assurances	51
Summary	52
Section 2: Methodology and Design.....	54
Design and Method	54
Population and Sample	56
Materials/Instrumentation.....	58
Data Collection and Analysis.....	61
Assumptions.....	65
Limitations	68
Delimitations.....	69
Summary	70
Section 3: Findings, Implications, and Recommendations.....	72
Findings.....	73
Evaluation of the Outcomes.....	95
Implications and Recommendations for Practice	102
Recommendations for Future Research	105
Conclusions.....	107
References.....	109
Appendix A Proof of Permission to Use the Leadership Conscious Authenticity Index (CAI). 115	
Appendix B Leadership Authenticity Questionnaire	118
Appendix C Frequency Summaries	120
Appendix D Document Analysis Form.....	123
Appendix E Comprehensive Deductive and Inductive Coding Framework.....	126
Appendix F Publicly Available Organizational Documents Reviewed for Document Analysis 127	
Appendix G CAI Dimensions and Associated Inductive Codes	128

List of Tables

Table 1 Participant Characteristics Summary (Aggregated)	75
Table 2 Study Data Sources and Analytic Outputs.....	77
Table 3 Emergent Themes, Supporting Codes, and CAI Alignment.....	78
Table 4 Employee Interview Participants (n = 6)	80
Table 5 Leadership Questionnaire Participants (n = 20)	81

Section 1: Foundation

Leadership's influence on organizational success in Fortune 500 technology companies remains an important but underexamined area of research, particularly as these organizations continue to navigate rapid technological and cultural change. This study examined leadership authenticity, which has been described as a relatively new but increasingly significant aspect of organizational culture and operational success (Arias et al., 2024). The aim was to examine the impact of authentic leadership, characterized by transparency, ethical behavior, and openness, on company culture, innovation, and employee engagement (Gardiner, 2023). While the study acknowledged the role of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives in assessing leadership authenticity, it sought to broaden the scope and understand the broader impact of authentic leadership on organizational life.

Authentic leadership is celebrated for creating an environment that encourages innovation and elevates employee satisfaction (Jun et al., 2023). This recognition prompts a move beyond DEI, aiming to capture the extensive influence of authentic leadership on organizational practices and culture. One often observes a discrepancy between the commitments articulated by leadership and their actual implementation within the organization (Peyton et al., 2023). This discrepancy necessitates a thorough investigation into the authenticity of leadership, assessing its impact on the organization's ethical integrity.

A qualitative methodology was employed to identify the subtle aspects of leadership authenticity. This approach explored how leaders' alignment with organizational values impacted the creation of an inclusive and energetic workplace environment. Further, the study examined the effects of authentic leadership in Fortune 500 technology companies on workplace culture and operational efficiency, addressing a notably complex challenge.

Throughout this investigation, I focused on leadership behaviors, communication methods, and policy implementations as indicators of authentic leadership. This was not a superficial examination but a thorough investigation into the authenticity of leadership, assessing its impact on the organization's ethical integrity. Beyond assessing the truthfulness of leaders' stated commitments, the aim was to uncover how authentic leadership could significantly alter organizational dynamics. This in-depth inquiry was expected to contribute significantly to dialogue on leadership authenticity. It advocated a reassessment of leadership behaviors and decisions to ensure they are aligned with organizational values and objectives, potentially enhancing the ethos and effectiveness of Fortune 500 technology companies.

The purpose of this study was to examine how leadership authenticity interacts with broader workforce and organizational strategy dynamics and to provide actionable insights into practical leadership approaches. By thoroughly exploring the expressions of authentic leadership and its tangible effects on organizational culture and performance, recommendations were made for fostering authentic leadership within corporations. This underlined the importance of transparent and ethical leadership, which resonates deeply with employees and aligns with the organizational mission. Through research, I examined how the authenticity of leadership is essential in cultivating a corporate culture beyond the DEI framework that is innovative, inclusive, and aligned with workforce and societal needs and values, enhancing these industry leaders' long-term success and ethical foundation.

Statement of the Problem

The problem was the lack of understanding of how executive leadership's authenticity impacts the operational culture and strategic effectiveness of Fortune 500 technology companies (Alavi, 2024). This extended to leadership authenticity in initiatives such as DEI, where the

alignment between stated commitments and actual implementation can influence organizational culture and employee engagement (Cao et al., 2021). Despite public commitments to authentic leadership principles, many leaders fail to translate these values into meaningful organizational impact, creating a disconnect between leadership intentions and workplace realities (Butterworth et al., 2024). This disconnect raises concerns about the genuine authenticity of leadership commitments, which, if perceived as inauthentic, can weaken organizational culture, diminish employee engagement, and stifle innovation (Javed et al., 2021). Addressing this issue was crucial to ensuring leadership practices align with organizational values, enhancing operational effectiveness, and fostering an inclusive and innovative work environment.

Working-level employees may not fully benefit from leadership authenticity, as executive leaders primarily align their authenticity with shareholders, boards, and direct reports (Helmuth et al., 2024). Authentic leadership plays a critical role in shaping workplace experiences, influencing factors such as workplace loneliness and perceptions of justice, both of which can impact employee engagement and overall organizational culture (Cenkci & Bircan, 2024). This misalignment not only undermines morale and inclusivity but also weakens the organization's competitive advantage (Zheng et al., 2024). The gap between stated leadership values and their real-world application poses a significant challenge, potentially diminishing organizational effectiveness and disrupting cohesive workplace practices (Helmuth et al., 2024).

This study took a case study design to address gaps in understanding leadership authenticity. It adopted a qualitative methodology to dissect the behaviors, policies, and practices reflecting executive leadership's authenticity. Drawing on insights from Baum (2021), who underscored the need for genuine organizational commitment to cultural transformation, and Causadias et al. (2023), advocating for new methodologies in understanding workplace

dynamics, the study sought to delve into the nuances of leadership practices. Further, the reflections of Evan et al. (2023) on the perceptions of professionals within the sphere underlined the complexities entailed in actualizing leadership authenticity. This investigation aimed to uncover the manifestation of leadership authenticity, examining its impact on organizational culture and the broader implications for corporate ethos within Fortune 500 technology companies, thereby offering a nuanced understanding of how genuine leadership authenticity materializes.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the impact of leadership authenticity on the operational culture and strategic effectiveness of Fortune 500 technology companies. Grounded in the methodologies of Yin (2017), Merriam (2016), and Stake (2005), the case study method was chosen to provide a contextual understanding of leadership authenticity within real-life corporate settings. Through this research, I examined how authentic leadership behaviors, characterized by genuineness, ethical standards, and transparency, influenced organizational culture, enhanced employee engagement, and improved corporate performance. Additionally, the study considered how related leadership attributes might support broader organizational initiatives, such as those focused on initiatives like DEI, by analyzing internal training materials and employee studies. This approach enabled me to comprehensively examine leadership dynamics, identify how authentic leadership values were incorporated into daily practices, and highlight potential gaps between public declarations and genuine actions.

Data were collected through document analysis and structured questionnaires administered to leaders within Fortune 500 technology companies. The document analysis focused on two groups: documents related explicitly to DEI initiatives and a broader collection

of relevant organizational materials, including internal training manuals, DEI literature, employee studies, and other organizational records. This analysis facilitated a comparative understanding of how leadership authenticity is addressed across different organizational contexts through the examination of organizational documents related to leadership practices and internal initiatives.

In addition to document analysis, questionnaires were distributed to executive leaders, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with employees to gather their perspectives on executive leadership within their organizations. The questionnaire included both qualitative insights and quantitative data, featuring closed and open-ended questions to explore leaders' perceptions and enactment of authentic leadership. The questionnaire provided broad insights into leadership practices, while semi-structured interviews with employees offered deeper context through their perspectives on executive leadership and organizational practices. Together, these methods provided a detailed understanding of leadership authenticity's role in shaping operational culture and strategic outcomes, with initiatives such as DEI considered as an ancillary component where relevant.

Employing a qualitative case study design, data collection included document analysis, questionnaires administered to executive leaders, and semi-structured interviews with employees to provide rich descriptions of leadership authenticity within Fortune 500 technology companies. This combination allowed for an in-depth examination of leadership dynamics and their impact on organizational efficacy and culture. The analysis included consideration of how leaders maintained authenticity across diverse organizational contexts. Drawing on empirical research and theoretical insights, I examined how leadership authenticity manifests across diverse professional communities. Additionally, the challenges leaders from socio-demographically

diverse backgrounds faced in maintaining authenticity were addressed, contributing significantly to understanding leadership and organizational culture. Using a rigorous case study methodology, I analyzed questionnaire responses, semi-structured interviews, and organizational documents to better understand how leadership authenticity functions as a pivotal element in cultivating an organizational environment where every employee feels valued, acknowledged, and integral to the corporate mission.

Positioned within the dynamic context of Fortune 500 technology companies, I was driven by the imperative to bridge the observed disconnect between leaders' public commitments and the actual integration of these values into organizational practices and culture. By focusing on the detailed nuances of executive behavior and its ramifications, I illuminated the tangible impact of leadership authenticity, offering insights into the genuine embodiment of leadership that aligns with organizational values and strategic objectives. The case study results enabled the organization to fully leverage authentic leadership's benefits, enhancing its adaptability, innovation, and inclusivity in a rapidly evolving global market. Through this case study, I aimed to identify and outline clear strategies that could enable organizations to translate leaders' public commitments into actionable practices effectively. These practices resonated throughout the corporate structure, improving organizational effectiveness and reinforcing a positive cultural transformation.

Research Question

RQ1

How does leadership authenticity influence the operational culture and strategic effectiveness of Fortune 500 technology companies while considering the roles of DEI initiatives?

This inquiry placed leadership authenticity at the core, aiming to dissect its defining characteristics and substantial effects on organizational dynamics. The study sought to elucidate the genuine implementation of leadership dedication within the corporate sphere, concentrating on its impact on organizational culture and overall effectiveness. This focus was vital for revealing the foundational dynamics of leadership behavior and its essential role in fostering a vibrant and cohesive organizational environment.

The premise of the investigation was that a genuine leadership commitment is crucial for implementing initiatives that substantially enhance organizational culture and performance. Authentic leadership, characterized by transparency, ethical conduct, and value-driven decision-making, resonates profoundly with employees and stakeholders, establishing trust and promoting an inclusive culture (Cao et al., 2021). This research delved into the attributes of authentic leadership, illuminating how such leadership profoundly transforms organizational practices, culture, and success.

This study examined behaviors, communication styles, policy implementations, and decision-making processes that exemplify authentic leadership (Gould et al., 2020). It also assessed employee and stakeholder perceptions regarding the authenticity of their leaders' commitments and the visible effects of these leadership actions on the organizational structure. With a focused examination of leadership authenticity, the research provided profound insights into the heart of effective leadership within contemporary organizational contexts. By identifying the markers of authentic leadership and its implications for organizational culture and success, this study offers guidance to leaders striving to foster true inclusivity and equity, extending beyond the confines of DEI initiatives. Additionally, this research enriched the ongoing

discourse on leadership ethics, effectiveness, and strategic development, playing a pivotal role in shaping organizational policies and strategies.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study drew on established theories and research into leadership authenticity, particularly within Fortune 500 technology companies. By synthesizing insights from scholars such as Alavi (2024), who discussed the development of leaders' moral identity through ethical philosophies, Baum (2021), who focused on the commitment of organizations to genuine DEI policies, and Peyton et al. (2023), who explored how authentic leadership cultivates trust and impacts workplace behaviors, this framework provided a robust examination of how genuine leadership behaviors influence organizational dynamics. The focus was primarily on the realms of DEI, demonstrating how authentic leadership can significantly impact these critical areas. This framework bridged theoretical knowledge with practical applications, illustrating the reciprocal relationship between leadership authenticity and its effects on an organization's cultural and operational frameworks.

Theoretical Integration and Application

The framework integrated established theories on leadership authenticity with emerging insights into DEI, emphasizing the synergy between genuine leadership behaviors and inclusive organizational practices. Authentic leadership, characterized by genuine, ethical, and transparent behaviors that align closely with personal and organizational values, is pivotal in fostering a culture of trust and ethical practices (Gardiner, 2023). These behaviors enhance direct interactions within the organization and bolster the strategic alignment of DEI initiatives, which are increasingly seen as critical to business success (Cao et al., 2021).

Studies have shown that authentic leadership improves employee engagement and organizational commitment (Alavi, 2024). Research indicated that organizations with strong DEI policies experience greater innovation and employee satisfaction (Baum, 2021). Studies demonstrate that trust cultivated by authentic leadership leads to higher employee performance and lower turnover rates (Peyton et al., 2023). Integrating these components illustrates the interconnectedness of leadership authenticity, DEI, and trust within an organization. Authentic leadership supports DEI initiatives by promoting a culture of transparency and ethical behavior, fostering trust and inclusivity (Peyton et al., 2023). This holistic approach underscores the importance of aligning leadership practices with organizational values to achieve sustainable success.

Combining these theoretical perspectives provided a comprehensive understanding of how authentic leadership influences organizational culture and operations. Integrating theory and practice guided the investigation into the nuanced effects of leadership authenticity across different organizational layers, helping to identify both the benefits and challenges of implementing authentic leadership within diverse professional settings. This comprehensive analysis revealed how leadership authenticity could support or impede organizational goals, offering valuable insights for scholars and practitioners. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing effective leadership strategies that are both ethically grounded and practically viable.

Methodological Considerations

The theoretical constructs within this framework were designed to directly inform the methodological approach of the case study, guiding both the selection of interview questions and the analysis of corporate communications and DEI practices. This alignment ensured that the

investigation remained grounded in theoretical propositions while adaptable to empirical realities observed within the chosen Fortune 500 technology company. By integrating these constructs, the research achieved a balanced synthesis of theory and practice, enabling a deep and nuanced understanding of how leadership authenticity manifests in real-world settings. This approach enriched the data collection process by focusing on relevant aspects of leadership. However, it also enhanced the analysis, ensuring that findings were rigorous and reflected the complex dynamics within large technology-oriented organizations.

Addressing Challenges and Limitations

While the benefits of leadership authenticity are well-documented, I also explored its potential challenges. For instance, relational transparency must be carefully managed to avoid cultural misunderstandings or conflicts in diverse environments (Zheng et al., 2023). Additionally, aligning a leader's authentic behaviors with the organization's strategic objectives can occasionally lead to tensions, especially when personal values conflict with corporate goals (Butterworth et al., 2024). According to Alvi (2024), these challenges underscore the need for a nuanced approach to authentic leadership, recognizing that while it fosters trust and openness, it must also be adaptive to an organization's varied cultural and strategic contexts. Understanding and navigating these complexities is critical for leaders to effectively implement authenticity without compromising the organization's overarching missions or alienating workforce segments (Alavi, 2024).

Leadership Development and Authenticity Cultivation

To foster environments that support authentic leadership, the framework suggests implementing targeted leadership development programs to enhance self-awareness, ethical decision-making, and empathetic communication. Such initiatives can help leaders navigate the

complexities of modern organizational environments, ensuring that their authenticity effectively contributes to positive organizational outcomes (Alavi, 2023). These development programs should also include training on cultural competence and conflict resolution to better prepare leaders for their diverse challenges. This comprehensive approach allows leaders to understand their values and motivations and recognize and respect their teams' diverse values and perspectives, thus promoting a genuinely inclusive workplace (DeStefano, 2023).

Connecting Authenticity to Corporate Performance

Further, the framework outlined authentic leadership's critical role in driving workplace inclusivity and broader organizational performance. Studies have shown that authentically led organizations exhibit higher levels of innovation, employee satisfaction, and adaptability to market changes (Gould et al., 2020). By detailing how authentic leadership integrates into strategic organizational functions, this conceptual framework underscores the significant impact of genuine leadership on sustainable corporate success. It also examines how authentic leadership practices align with organizational goals to foster a supportive environment that encourages employees' continuous personal and professional growth. This alignment enhances the ability of organizations to respond effectively to industry trends and customer demands, ultimately improving organizational resilience and competitive advantage (Cao et al., 2021).

Synthesis of Theoretical Insights

By drawing upon the insights of scholars such as Ayaz et al. (2023) and Helmuth et al. (2024), the framework examined the nuanced challenges atypical leaders may face in maintaining authenticity, particularly in diverse settings. This exploration enriched the framework's depth by acknowledging that authenticity must adapt and respond to the workforce's diverse needs. It emphasized the importance of supporting leaders in developing

strategies that respect and reflect their teams' cultural and individual differences, enhancing their leadership effectiveness. Additionally, the framework suggested that fostering an environment that values diverse expressions of leadership can lead to more innovative and inclusive organizational practices, ultimately strengthening the organization's overall adaptability and success.

This conceptual framework guided the investigation into the impacts of leadership authenticity within a Fortune 500 technology company and provided a foundational model for integrating theoretical insights into practical leadership challenges. It set the stage for a comprehensive examination of how authenticity could be operationalized to enhance organizations' ethical climate and strategic efficacy, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of effective leadership in contemporary corporate landscapes.

Definitions of Key Terms

Authentic Actions

Authentic actions are the behaviors and decisions undertaken by individuals, especially leaders, that accurately mirror their personal convictions, values, and ethical principles (Helmuth et al., 2023). This concept underscores the critical nature of actions that stem from an individual's core, demonstrating consistency between internal beliefs and external expressions. In leadership, authentic actions are foundational for fostering trust, credibility, and genuine relationships within organizations, highlighting the significance of aligning deeds with one's true self (Helmuth et al., 2023).

Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership is an approach where leaders prioritize genuine, transparent, and consistent behavior in their actions and decisions (Gould et al., 2020). This leadership style

creates a trust-based environment that supports DEI by ensuring team members feel acknowledged and respected. Such an atmosphere is crucial for effectively integrating DEI values within organizational culture and practices (Gould et al., 2020).

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Corporate social responsibility entails a business's commitment to ethical behavior, sustainable economic development, and improving workforce quality of life alongside their families and the broader community (Gould et al., 2020). In Fortune 500 technology companies, CSR initiatives frequently encompass DEI programs, underlining a pledge to broader societal welfare.

DEI

DEI stands for diversity, equity, and inclusion and represents organizational endeavors to foster a workplace that celebrates diverse backgrounds, ensures fairness, and incorporates everyone into the team's fabric, irrespective of individual differences (Baum, 2021). These efforts are foundational for creating work environments that are both equitable and inclusive.

Executive Commitment

Executive commitment involves organizational leaders' unwavering support and proactive involvement in weaving DEI into the organization's core objectives and values. This level of leadership engagement is vital for transcending tokenistic support to actualize DEI initiatives within the company's strategic operations (Altmikus et al., 2022).

Inclusive Leadership

Inclusive leadership describes the practice of leaders who ensure equitable treatment, value all team members, and foster a sense of belonging (Evan et al., 2023). Such leaders

actively embrace diversity as an organizational strength, significantly enhancing the success of DEI initiatives (Causadias et al., 2023).

Moral Neutrality of Authenticity

The moral neutrality of authenticity refers to the perspective that the authenticity exhibited by individuals, particularly leaders, is inherently neutral about ethical values (Gardiner, 2023). This view asserts that authenticity does not intrinsically entail positive or negative moral implications. Instead, the concept encourages a deeper examination of leadership actions and decisions through the lens of authenticity without preconceived moral categorization. It challenges the notion that authentic leadership automatically results in ethical leadership, suggesting a more complex relationship between authenticity and moral outcomes in organizational settings (Gardiner, 2023).

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture comprises the collective values, beliefs, and practices that dictate how members interact, make decisions, and approach their work. Cultures that embrace DEI consider diversity a linchpin for success and depend on leadership to cultivate an inclusive environment (Causadias et al., 2023).

Relational Transparency

Relational transparency refers to leaders' ability to be open and honest in revealing their true selves to others. This involves sharing one's thoughts, feelings, and vulnerabilities straightforwardly and genuinely, fostering trust and mutual understanding (Zheng et al., 2023).

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement involves individuals and groups affected by or capable of affecting an organization's decisions. In DEI contexts, this means consulting with employees,

customers, and other key stakeholders to align DEI efforts with their expectations, thereby enhancing the initiatives' impact and relevance (DeStefano, 2023).

Strategic Asset

A strategic asset is an essential resource or capability for an organization's strategy, competitive edge, and enduring success. In Fortune 500 technology companies, DEI initiatives are considered strategic assets that drive innovation, employee contentment, and market adaptability (Cao et al., 2021).

Review of the Literature

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how genuine, ethical, and transparent leadership influences organizational culture, enhances employee engagement, and improves corporate performance within Fortune 500 technology companies, particularly those where organizational initiatives such as DEI form part of the broader leadership context. This literature review provides a comprehensive overview of leadership authenticity by examining its theoretical foundations, empirical investigations, and unique factors influencing authentic leadership outcomes. The review aimed to map the existing knowledge landscape and identify unexplored areas, presenting potential avenues for groundbreaking research. The study sought to contribute to the broader understanding of authentic leadership by synthesizing these insights.

The study addressed the prevailing uncertainty surrounding the genuine nature of executive leadership's authenticity in Fortune 500 technology companies and how this impacted organizational culture and operational effectiveness. This issue was critical as it influenced organizational performance and employee well-being. To support this study problem, I examined vital sources within the literature that discussed these dimensions. Analyzing these sources helped clarify the complexities of practicing authentic leadership in large corporations.

To ensure a thorough examination of the relevant literature, I accessed several academic databases. These include NavigatorSearch (powered by EBSCOhost Discovery Service), Google Scholar, JSTOR, PubMed, Business Source Complete, and ProQuest. My search strategies involved using specific keywords and phrases such as *leadership authenticity*, *genuine leadership*, *ethical leadership*, *transparent leadership*, *organizational culture*, *employee engagement*, *DEI initiatives*, and *Fortune 500 companies*. Additionally, I employed combinations of terms like “leadership authenticity AND organizational culture,” “ethical leadership AND employee engagement,” “transparent leadership AND DEI initiatives,” and “authentic leadership AND Fortune 500 companies.”

The search parameters included articles published within the last five years, peer-reviewed journals, English language, and full-text availability. This approach ensured the literature reviewed was current and relevant to the study’s objectives. I compiled a comprehensive and relevant body of literature to form a solid foundation for this study’s theoretical and empirical framework. This rigorous methodology underpinned the research, ensuring that the insights and conclusions were well-supported by existing scholarly work.

Theoretical Foundations of Leadership Authenticity

Leadership authenticity’s conceptual foundation is deeply embedded in various psychological and organizational theories. These frameworks suggest that leaders who demonstrate self-awareness, transparency in their interpersonal connections, and consistency between their values and actions foster a genuine leadership style (Gardiner, 2023). Alavi (2023) added to this by discussing the internalized moral perspective of authentic leaders, identifying how a deep personal commitment to ethical standards shapes their leadership and influences

organizational culture. This alignment not only cultivates an atmosphere of trust and ethical practices but also significantly bolsters follower engagement and performance.

The theoretical discourse, enriched by the insights of scholars like Gardiner (2023) and Javed et al. (2020), underscored the significance of aligning leadership behaviors with authentic intentions. Gardiner (2023) and Javed et al. (2020) state that effective leadership is about transactions and authenticity that resonate with others. Alavi (2023) deepened this understanding by exploring how authentic leaders integrate their values with their professional roles, strengthening leader-follower relationships. This emphasis on authenticity in leader-follower relationships was vital to the study.

Building on this foundation, the essence of leadership authenticity is further illuminated by its capacity to bridge the gap between leader and follower, fostering an environment where open dialogue and mutual respect flourish. This relational aspect is underpinned by the notion that authentic leaders understand their values and beliefs and are adept at recognizing and valuing the perspectives of others, thus creating a shared space for growth and development. Studies such as those by Gardiner (2023) not only emphasized but also celebrated the transformative impact of such leadership on organizational culture, inspiring a sense of belonging and commitment among employees. Similarly, Javed et al. (2020) underscored the role of authenticity in enhancing leaders' emotional intelligence, enabling them to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics with empathy and integrity. Alavi (2023) corroborated this view by detailing how an authentic leader's internalized moral perspective fosters greater transparency and ethical consistency, which is crucial for nurturing authentic relationships within the workplace. Through these lenses, leadership authenticity emerged as a personal attribute and a strategic organizational asset that drives collective success.

Empirical Studies on Leadership Authenticity

Rigorous empirical research has underscored the impact of leadership authenticity across varied organizational settings. For instance, Arias et al. (2024) explored how authentic leadership moderates the relationship between organizational politics and knowledge sharing in times of crisis. Their findings revealed that authentic leadership acts as a formidable buffer, mitigating the negative ramifications of organizational politics on the dynamics of knowledge sharing. This investigation exemplified the pivotal role of authentic leadership in nurturing an environment conducive to open communication and collaboration, even amidst organizational challenges. Complementing this, Ayaz (2023) investigated the intricate interplay between authenticity and atypical leadership models. The study by Ayaz (2023) revealed that leaders who deviate from traditional norms but maintain authenticity profoundly influence follower perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors, thus shedding light on the versatility and adaptability of authentic leadership within diverse organizational ecosystems.

Further expanding the understanding of leadership authenticity's impact, the research conducted by Jun et al. (2023) provided insight into how authentic leadership fosters positive psychological states among followers, leading to enhanced organizational citizenship behaviors. Jun et al. (2023) illustrated the mediating role of psychological capital, including hope, optimism, and resilience, in strengthening the connection between authentic leadership and positive follower outcomes. The research by Jun et al. (2023) underscored the psychological foundations that make authentic leadership a powerful catalyst for organizational growth and individual well-being. Helmuth et al. (2023) also offered a reconceptualization of authenticity in leadership, arguing for the significance of actions over perceptions. This perspective stressed that the authenticity of leadership is most effectively judged by the tangible outcomes of a leader's

actions and the positive changes they inspire within the organizational context, thus reinforcing the multidimensional impact of authentic leadership practices (Helmuth et al., 2023).

Butterworth et al. (2024) contributed to this empirical base by introducing a new measure for assessing the authenticity of leadership practices. The Authentic Leadership Measure outlined by Butterworth et al. (2024) was designed to provide more reliable and valid assessments of leadership authenticity, enabling organizations to understand better the specific attributes that constitute authentic leadership and their direct effects on organizational outcomes. Zahra et al. (2024) further explored how authentic leadership enhances work engagement and contributes to organizational resilience and adaptability, particularly under the pressures of global competition and rapid technological change. The findings from both Butterworth et al. (2024) and Zahra et al. (2024) underscored the significance of genuine leadership in fostering a proactive, innovative, and resilient workforce.

The exploration of empirical studies on leadership authenticity illuminated the substantial impact that authentic leadership has on enhancing organizational dynamics, from fostering open communication and mitigating negative political influences to supporting employee well-being and engagement. Through the rigorous investigations presented by researchers such as Arias et al. (2024), Ayaz (2023), Jun et al. (2023), Helmuth et al. (2023), Butterworth et al. (2024), and Zahra et al. (2024), researchers understand how genuine leadership practices influence organizational structures and employees' psychological landscape. These studies underscored the transformative power of leadership authenticity, showcasing its role in navigating the complexities of managerial challenges and cultivating environments that propel individual and collective progress. This comprehensive examination enriches the understanding of leadership

authenticity, affirming its critical place within the scholarly discourse on organizational behavior and its practical relevance in diverse workplace settings.

Moderating and Mediating Variables

The landscape of authentic leadership was significantly enriched by the research conducted by Jun et al. (2023) and Peyton et al. (2023), which shed light on the mediating and moderating variables that influence the effectiveness of authentic leadership. These studies clarified the mediating role of psychological capital in the relationship between authentic leadership and follower outcomes, such as hope and organizational citizenship behavior. This underscored the pivotal role of followers' psychological resources as crucial mechanisms through which authentic leadership positively impacts them. Peyton et al. (2023) identified how authentic leadership cultivates trust within the organization, another vital mediating factor enhancing employee engagement and desirable workplace behaviors. Together, these studies formed a central foundation for the research, adding complexity to the mechanisms underpinning authentic leadership's organizational effects and illustrating how various psychological constructs mediate the influence of authentic leadership on follower outcomes.

The critical analysis of these moderating and mediating variables revealed how authentic leadership interacts with individual, team, and organizational dynamics. This complexity is further magnified when considering the diversity of workplace settings, from traditional in-office environments to the rapidly growing landscape of remote and hybrid work models. Importantly, Peyton et al. (2023) discussed how authentic leadership fosters trust and engagement across different organizational contexts, showcasing the adaptability and versatility of authentic leadership practices in varying workplace environments. This adaptability, as demonstrated by Peyton et al. (2023), stressed the practical implications of their research and reassured the

audience about the universal applicability of authentic leadership principles. As organizations evolve, so does the context within which authentic leadership is enacted and perceived. This necessitates ongoing empirical exploration to unravel the intricate web of factors that shape authentic leadership's manifestations and outcomes, underscoring the research's continuous relevance (Peyton et al., 2023).

Peyton et al. (2023) added to the discussion further by exploring how authentic leadership fosters an environment of trust and desirable workplace behaviors, which can significantly impact employee engagement and performance. Peyton et al. identified trust as a mediating variable that enhances the transparency and ethical stance expected of leaders, thereby strengthening the connection between leadership authenticity and organizational commitment. Jun et al. (2023) added that psychological capital, including elements like hope and resilience, serves as another crucial mediator that amplifies the effects of authentic leadership on organizational citizenship behavior. The research conducted by Peyton et al. and Jun et al. supports the vital role of authentic leadership in cultivating a positive organizational climate. It accentuates the mediating effect of trust in reinforcing the link between leader authenticity and employee satisfaction. The combination of trust and psychological capital as mediators clarifies how more profound levels of engagement are fostered under the guidance of authentic leaders, further adds to the empirical evidence supporting the multifaceted impact of authenticity in leadership roles (Jun et al., 2023).

Leadership Authenticity in Practice: Gender and Marginalized Identities

The discourse on leadership authenticity extends into the interplay between gender, race, and other marginalized identities, underscoring the multifaceted nature of authentic leadership. Halliwell (2023) emphasized the necessity of actions, rather than mere perceptions of

authenticity, in effectively leading diverse teams. Adding to this, Turman (2024) underscored the importance of context in authentic leadership, arguing that a leader's genuine impact is heavily influenced by their understanding of the diverse environments in which their followers operate. This dialogue suggested that the essence of authentic leadership transcends individual leader traits, focusing instead on the broader implications of these traits across diverse organizational demographics, thereby requiring a nuanced approach to leadership that is sensitive to the specific needs and challenges of different group identities.

Delving deeper into the complexities of authenticity in leadership, it becomes clear that inclusivity and the recognition of diverse identities play a crucial role in the effectiveness of authentic leadership (Gardiner, 2023). The acknowledgment and embrace of varied perspectives not only enriches the decision-making process but also strengthens the bonds within teams, fostering a culture of respect and mutual understanding. As Gardiner stressed (2023), this leadership approach underscored the importance of creating spaces where all members feel valued and heard, thereby enhancing organizational commitment and satisfaction. In this context, authentic leadership bridges diverse individual experiences and organizational goals, paving the way for innovative solutions and a cohesive work environment. Such leadership practices reveal the importance of empathy and the ability to relate to others' experiences, reinforcing the argument that genuine leadership authenticity is inherently inclusive and adaptive (Javed et al., 2020).

Building on this foundation, Turman (2024) presented the critical nature of contextual awareness in leadership authenticity, especially when dealing with gender and marginalized identities. Turman's insights outlined that understanding the specific contexts in which leadership is exercised allows for a more nuanced application of authenticity. Additionally,

Gardiner (2023) argued that authentic leaders must consistently manifest their values across all interactions to effectively address diverse teams' varied experiences and expectations. Halliwell (2023) further supported this by showing how coaching can help leaders develop the necessary skills to navigate these complexities effectively.

Further, Cenkci and Bircan (2024) contributed to this research by examining how authentic leadership reduces workplace loneliness, particularly among marginalized employees. Their study found that authentic leaders, through their genuine engagement and empathetic leadership styles, effectively reduce feelings of isolation and disconnection often experienced by individuals from diverse backgrounds. This impact is crucial in fostering an inclusive atmosphere where employees feel integral to the team and the larger organizational mission. Their research showcased the transformative potential of authentic leadership in creating a workplace environment that supports all employees equally, thereby enhancing both individual well-being and collective organizational performance.

These perspectives enriched the understanding of how authentic leadership practices are implemented and perceived across different organizational demographic groups (Turman, 2024). By integrating the principles of authenticity with a deep understanding of diversity and inclusivity, leaders can cultivate a workplace culture that acknowledges and actively benefits from its members' varied identities and experiences (Cenkci & Bircan, 2024). This approach encourages a comprehensive embrace of diversity that extends beyond surface-level acknowledgments to deeply ingrained organizational practices, enhancing the overall resilience and adaptability of the workplace (Gardiner, 2023). Ultimately, this leads to a more dynamic, innovative, and inclusive organizational environment where everyone feels genuinely supported and valued (Javed et al., 2020).

Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Leadership Authenticity

Exploring leadership authenticity within diverse cultural contexts offers a nuanced understanding of how authentic leadership is perceived and enacted globally. This section delves into the complexities of cross-cultural leadership authenticity by synthesizing insights from recent peer-reviewed research, aiming to uncover how cultural norms and values influence the practice and reception of authentic leadership.

Cultural variations present challenges and opportunities in practicing and perceiving authentic leadership. Kolečáková et al. (2023) delved into the complexities of leading across cultural boundaries with the development of the Leader's Conscious Authenticity Index. This innovative tool measures how a leader's behaviors are perceived as authentic within various cultural frameworks, offering a nuanced understanding of authenticity that transcends a one-size-fits-all model. The index underscores the multifaceted nature of authenticity, capturing dimensions such as ethical grounding, relational transparency, and adaptability to change. By providing empirical evidence on the variability of authentic leadership reception across cultures, Kolečáková et al. (2023) advocated for a dynamic approach to leadership development that prioritizes cultural intelligence and adaptability.

Further enriching the conversation, Zhang et al. (2021) explored the antecedents and outcomes of authentic leadership across different cultural contexts through a meta-analytic review. Their research demonstrated how societal values, such as power distance and uncertainty avoidance, influenced the enactment and effectiveness of authentic leadership strategies. For instance, authentic leadership's open and participative nature may challenge traditional norms in cultures with high power distance, requiring leaders to carefully navigate cultural expectations to maintain authenticity without disrupting established hierarchies. Conversely, in cultures

prioritizing collectivism, authentic leadership's communal and transparent aspects can harmonize well with societal values, fostering a stronger sense of organizational unity and trust (Zhang et al., 2021). Zhang et al. (2021) also pointed to the critical role of cultural competence in authentic leadership, suggesting that leaders who possess a deep understanding of cultural dimensions are better equipped to express their authenticity in genuine and culturally resonant ways. This alignment between a leader's authentic self and cultural expectations is pivotal in cultivating trust and engagement among diverse teams (Zhang et al., 2021).

Integrating the insights from Kolečáková et al. (2023) and Zhang et al. (2021), it became clear that navigating the cultural dimensions of authentic leadership is essential for global leaders. This journey requires a reflective understanding of one's authentic leadership style and an outward-looking perspective that values and integrates diverse cultural insights. As such, training programs focused on enhancing leaders' cultural intelligence, coupled with ongoing reflective practice, emerge as critical strategies for developing authentic leadership capabilities that are both effective and culturally attuned.

The synthesis of these scholarly contributions shed light on the complex interplay between culture and leadership authenticity. It underscored the importance of a culturally informed approach to leadership that values diversity, promotes inclusion, and adapts to the nuanced expectations of global teams. By embracing the challenges and opportunities presented by cultural variations, leaders can forge deeper connections with their followers, enhancing organizational effectiveness and fostering a truly inclusive workplace environment.

Understanding how cultural contexts influence leadership authenticity is paramount for effective leadership across diverse settings in the global business environment. The intricate relationship between cultural dimensions and leadership authenticity, as explored by Zhang et al.

(2021), highlighted the significant role cultural norms and values play in shaping the perception and practice of authentic leadership. The meta-analytic review by Zhang et al. revealed that cultural orientations, such as individualism and collectivism, crucially modulated the effectiveness and reception of authentic leadership behaviors. This finding underscored the need for leaders to adapt their authenticity to resonate with varied cultural expectations, ensuring that their leadership is genuine and culturally congruent.

Complementing this analysis, Kolečková et al. (2023) introduced the Leader's Conscious Authenticity Index, a novel benchmark for assessing the compatibility of leadership behaviors with different cultural environments. This index can serve as a valuable tool for leaders seeking to navigate the complexities of multicultural teams, focusing on the need for adaptability in leadership styles to foster an authentic connection with followers from diverse cultural backgrounds. The Leader's Conscious Authenticity Index not only aids in evaluating the effectiveness of authentic leadership across cultures but also provides insights into how leaders can adjust their strategies to meet the diverse needs and expectations of their global workforce.

Building on these perspectives, Ostermeier et al. (2023) advocated for a broadened scope of research on authentic leadership that encompasses a broader array of cultural viewpoints. Ostermeier et al. argued that leadership studies must evolve to include a richer diversity of artistic interpretations of authenticity, moving beyond Western-centric models. This expansion was viewed as crucial for developing a more inclusive understanding of authentic leadership that can effectively bridge cultural divides and enhance organizational cohesion worldwide. By integrating diverse cultural insights into the conceptualization and practice of authentic leadership, researchers and practitioners can pave the way for more adaptive and universally resonant leadership approaches.

The synthesis of insights from Zhang et al. (2021), Kolečáková et al. (2023), and Ostermeier et al. (2023) provided a multifaceted view of the challenges and opportunities inherent in practicing authentic leadership in a multicultural world. It became clear that while the core tenets of authenticity, transparency, ethical behavior, and consistency, are universally valued, their application must be sensitive to cultural nuances. For global organizations and leaders, developing strategies informed by a deep understanding of cultural differences in the perception of authenticity is beneficial and essential for fostering genuine leadership effectiveness.

Innovation and Creativity Under Authentic Leadership

In the competitive landscape of Fortune 500 technology companies, innovation and creativity are valuable assets essential for survival and growth (Cao et al., 2021). Underpinning these critical elements is leadership, specifically, authentic leadership, which profoundly influences the creation of environments conducive to innovation and creative outputs (Cao et al., 2021). Kolečáková et al. (2023) introduced the Leader's Conscious Authenticity Index, which is a pivotal tool for measuring and enhancing the authenticity of leadership, thereby directly impacting the organization's creative and innovative capacities. Similarly, Ostermeier et al. (2023) delved into the evolutionary aspects of authentic leadership theories, discussing how these concepts have adapted to support environments that nurture innovative thinking and problem-solving.

The Leader's Conscious Authenticity Index, as explored by Kolečáková et al. (2023), has been instrumental in quantifying the levels of authenticity exhibited by leaders. This index assesses leaders on various facets of authenticity, such as self-awareness, relational transparency, ethical behavior, and balanced processing. Organizations can identify areas where leaders may

need development to enhance their genuine leadership qualities by providing a metric to gauge authenticity. The index shows that authentic leaders are likelier to create trust and psychological safety within their teams. This environment allows team members to express novel ideas without fear of ridicule or reprimand, thereby increasing the overall creative output of the group (Koleňáková et al., 2023). Ostermeier et al. (2023) complemented this view by analyzing how contemporary leadership paradigms, including authentic leadership, have evolved to support better environments that nurture innovation and creative problem-solving, thus aligning leadership practices with modern organizational needs and fostering a culture that values creativity and continuous innovation.

Cao et al. (2021) explored how diversity and inclusion, driven by authentic leadership, play critical roles in fostering an organizational culture that supports creativity and innovation. They found that companies with diverse teams led by authentic leaders are more likely to produce innovative solutions. Complementing this, Koleňáková et al. (2023) introduced the Leader's Conscious Authenticity Index, which measures the authenticity traits in leaders that facilitate such diverse and creative environments. This research underscored the importance of leveraging the full spectrum of workforce diversity, facilitated by authentic leadership, to enhance creative processes and outcomes.

Authentic leadership fosters a culture of innovation by encouraging risk-taking and providing support when ventures fail (Koleňáková et al., 2023). The freedom to experiment and fail is crucial for innovation, leading to learning and eventual success. Authentic leaders are seen as supportive and understanding, enhancing their teams' willingness to push boundaries and explore uncharted territories (Ostermeier et al., 2023). This aspect of leadership has been crucial

in technology sectors where rapid advancements and continual iterations of products and processes are the norms.

Ostermeier et al. (2023) stressed that fostering such an adaptive and innovative culture is critical for organizations looking to thrive in dynamic markets. Ostermeier et al. (2023) complemented this view by analyzing the trajectory of authentic leadership theory and its relevance to modern organizational challenges. Their work addressed how contemporary leadership paradigms shifted to place greater emphasis on authentic interactions and value-driven decision-making processes. These changes reflected the growing importance of adaptability and creativity in business environments that are increasingly volatile and complex (Ostermeier et al., 2023).

By adhering to core values and principles, authentic leaders provide a stable foundation upon which creative endeavors can flourish. Ostermeier et al. (2023) discussed the importance of aligning organizational strategic goals with innovative processes, ensuring that creativity is not just a sporadic occurrence but a continuous, integral part of the business strategy. The intersection of authentic leadership and organizational innovation offers a fertile ground for advancing practical applications within corporate settings. For instance, authentic leaders can champion initiatives promoting cross-functional collaborations, where diverse teams bring diverse perspectives together to solve complex problems. These collaborations often lead to breakthrough innovations that significantly enhance the company's market position (Koleňáková et al., 2023).

By using the results of the Leader's Conscious Authenticity Index, organizations can develop targeted interventions to enhance the authenticity of their leaders, which can, in turn, directly influence their innovative capabilities (Koleňáková et al., 2023). Training programs,

workshops, and coaching sessions designed around the core principles of the index can help inculcate authentic behaviors in leaders, which are essential for nurturing a creative organizational culture (Ostermeier et al., 2023). Leadership development training, ethical decision-making workshops, and personalized coaching sessions focus on critical attributes such as self-awareness, ethical behavior, and relational transparency, which are vital for fostering an environment that supports innovation (Butterworth et al., 2024). By strengthening these aspects of leadership, organizations can build a strong foundation that promotes creativity and drives sustained organizational growth.

Authentic Leadership and Organizational Inclusivity

The discourse on authentic leadership increasingly recognizes its vital role in fostering organizational inclusivity, emphasizing that leadership authenticity is both a moral imperative and a strategic necessity in contemporary organizational frameworks. Altmikus et al. (2022) stressed the transformative power of authentic leadership in nurturing a true sense of belonging within organizations. Their research outlined how authentic leaders, through genuine interactions and inclusive practices, create environments where all employees feel valued and respected. This nurturing of a sense of belonging is crucial for fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace where all employees' varied perspectives and skills are acknowledged as valuable assets to organizational success. Complementing this, Causadias et al. (2023) introduced innovative theoretical frameworks that advocate for a deeper integration of DEI values into organizational strategies. This integration requires an inclusive environment where diversity is acknowledged and actively leveraged for enhanced organizational outcomes (Causadias et al., 2023).

Similarly, Dutton (2018) investigated how authentic leadership facilitates the development of communities of practice and resource groups among employees, enhancing

awareness and inclusion within corporate culture. Dutton found that authentic leaders significantly contributed to creating an organizational culture that supports diversity and inclusion initiatives by championing transparency and ethical practices, thereby promoting an inclusive atmosphere that encourages sharing and collaboration. Complementing this, Evan et al. (2023) explored how DEI professionals viewed their roles within organizations, which further elucidated the impact of authentic leadership on the effectiveness of diversity initiatives and the cultivation of an inclusive organizational environment where every voice is heard and valued.

Expanding on these themes, Causadias et al. (2023) introduced innovative theories and methods for advancing DEI sciences. Their work called for a nuanced understanding of how authentic leadership can influence and be influenced by DEI initiatives. By integrating these DEI-focused approaches, leaders can better address the unique challenges and opportunities of increasingly diverse workforces, ensuring that DEI practices are implemented effectively and meaningfully. Further, Altmikus et al. (2022) identified the effectiveness of a team-based approach to nurture a true sense of belonging through DEI, illustrating how authentic leadership enhances the integration of these values into the fabric of organizational culture, further facilitating meaningful and effective DEI practices.

Evan et al. (2023) critically examined how authentic leadership impacted the perceptions and contributions of DEI professionals within corporate settings. Their study revealed that authentic leaders who actively engaged with DEI initiatives and demonstrated a genuine commitment to these efforts were more likely to foster an organizational culture that values and promotes equity and inclusion. This commitment was crucial in leveraging the skills and insights of DEI professionals, who played a pivotal role in advancing workplace diversity and inclusion strategies. Similarly, Dutton (2018) found that authentic leadership was instrumental in

developing communities of practice that supported inclusion efforts, thereby enhancing the operational environment for DEI professionals to contribute to organizational goals effectively.

These studies underscored authentic leadership's profound and multifaceted role in enhancing organizational inclusivity. Leaders who embody and actively promote transparency, ethical behavior, and deep respect for diversity create foundational changes that support and advance inclusivity within their organizations. These leadership approaches enhance employee engagement and satisfaction and drive innovation and adaptability by embracing the full spectrum of employee identities and experiences. The insights provided by Altmikus et al. (2022), Dutton (2018), Causadias et al. (2023), and Evan et al. (2023) reinforced the crucial role of genuine leadership as a catalyst for transformative change, stressing that leaders committed to authenticity are better positioned to harness the benefits of a diverse workforce. These leadership practices foster resilient and successful organizations, demonstrating that leadership authenticity is essential for sustaining organizational success and promoting a truly inclusive work environment.

The Role of Authentic Leadership in Organizational Change and Resilience

In the dynamic and often volatile environments of Fortune 500 technology companies, authentic leadership becomes particularly salient during significant organizational change and crises. Characterized by genuine, ethical, and transparent behavior, authentic leadership plays a critical role in moderating the impacts of organizational politics and fostering effective knowledge sharing, essential for maintaining resilience in turbulent times (Arias et al., 2024). Additionally, the capabilities of authentic leadership can be enhanced through targeted coaching practices, which improve navigation through the complexities of organizational transformations and build a resilient corporate culture (Halliwell et al., 2023). Such insights from Arias et al.

(2024) and Halliwell et al. (2023) underscored the practical application of the research, demonstrating how authentic leadership can be a powerful tool in maintaining organizational resilience during challenging times.

Arias et al. (2024) explored the moderating effect of authentic leadership on the relationship between organizational politics and knowledge sharing during crises. They found that leaders who consistently exhibited authenticity mitigated the negative impacts of politics by fostering a transparent and fair environment. Such environments were crucial during crises as they encouraged open communication and trust, allowing for more effective dissemination and utilization of knowledge across the organization. This has been particularly important in technology companies where rapid innovation and adaptability are required to maintain a competitive advantage. Through their genuine interactions and ethical standards, authentic leaders ensured that political maneuvers did not stifle creativity or hinder the flow of essential information during critical periods (Arias et al., 2024).

The impact of authentic leadership extends far beyond crisis management. It involves transforming challenges into opportunities for growth and learning, a testament to its transformative potential. Authentic leaders achieve this by leveraging their core values and principles to guide decision-making, ensuring that even in times of uncertainty, the organization remains resolute in its strategic direction and committed to its long-term vision. This alignment between individual leader behaviors and organizational goals helps weather crises and enhances overall organizational resilience, making it better equipped to face future challenges. This inspiring aspect of authentic leadership is a crucial takeaway from Arias et al.'s (2024) research, emphasizing its potential to drive positive organizational change and growth.

Halliwell et al. (2023) demonstrated how coaching can develop and support these authentic leadership qualities, emphasizing that coached leaders are better equipped to apply these principles consistently across challenging scenarios, thus reinforcing a culture of openness and ethical governance even during tumultuous times. Shulga (2021) contributed to this research, focusing on the role of leadership brand authenticity in change management communication. The authenticity of the leadership brand plays a pivotal role in maintaining employee engagement and trust during organizational change, reinforcing the importance of genuine leadership practices as fundamental to navigating transitions effectively. Shulga's study recommended that leaders who act authentically and communicate their core values clearly, especially if they complete the Leader's Conscious Authenticity Index, can help organizations maintain a coherent and unified approach to change management.

Authentic leadership extends beyond crisis management and is crucial in transforming challenges into opportunities for growth and learning. Halliwell et al. (2023) highlighted the role of coaching in developing authentic leadership qualities, which enable leaders to navigate complex situations with integrity and transparency. This approach fosters a culture of openness and ethical governance, essential during organizational transformations. Leaders who undergo coaching can apply these principles consistently, reinforcing a culture of trust and ethical behavior. This consistency is vital for managing organizational changes effectively.

Additionally, Arias et al. (2024) demonstrated that authentic leadership can mitigate the negative impacts of organizational politics, particularly during crises, by fostering a transparent and fair environment. Such environments are crucial during crises as they encourage open communication and trust. This creates a foundation for effective knowledge sharing and organizational resilience. By ensuring political maneuvers do not stifle creativity, authentic

leaders support the flow of essential information during critical periods. This capability is significant in technology companies where rapid innovation is required.

Shulga (2021) emphasized the significance of leadership brand authenticity in maintaining employee engagement and trust during periods of change. The authenticity of the leadership brand plays a pivotal role in navigating transitions effectively. Leaders who communicate their core values clearly help maintain a coherent and unified approach to change management. This clarity reinforces the importance of genuine leadership practices. By acting authentically, leaders can ensure that employees embrace organizational changes positively.

Collectively, these insights illustrate that authentic leadership, developed through targeted coaching and adherence to core values, serves as a stabilizing force. It ensures that organizations remain resilient and adaptive, maintaining their core values and fostering a culture of innovation and growth even in the face of challenges. This combination of authenticity and resilience is essential for long-term success. By integrating these principles, organizations can better navigate the complexities of the modern business environment.

Leadership Authenticity and Systemic Change

The demand for systemic change is omnipresent, driven by shifting societal values, technological advancements, and the urgent need for sustainability and ethical governance (Shulga, 2021). Authentic leadership plays a pivotal role in this context, serving as a facilitator of change and a critical driver of systemic transformations within organizations (Silva, 2021). At the core of systemic change is the leader's ability to enact and sustain transformations aligning with ethical standards and strategic organizational goals. Gould et al. (2020) demonstrated how leaders, recognized for their inclusivity and responsibility towards diversity, were better positioned to initiate and implement systemic changes. These leaders leveraged their authenticity

to foster a culture of trust and cooperation, essential for navigating the complexities of significant organizational changes.

Hendrickson et al. (2023) provided empirical evidence on how leaders can impact organizational culture and climate through authentic engagement with diversity and inclusion initiatives. Hendrickson et al. identified that authentic leadership is instrumental in creating an environment where equity and inclusion are embraced and seen as drivers of innovation and organizational resilience. By embodying these values, leaders inspire their teams and stakeholders to commit to long-term change, thereby embedding these principles deeply within the organizational fabric. Similarly, Silva (2023) found that such authentic leadership approaches enhance work engagement by creating meaningful connections between work and personal life, further solidifying the role of authenticity in fostering an inclusive and supportive workplace environment.

In addition to fostering inclusivity, Shulga (2021) stated that authentic leaders are crucial in driving technological and strategic shifts that require rethinking traditional business models and practices. Shulga (2021) further discussed the role of leadership authenticity in change management communication, emphasizing that the transparency and consistency of leaders' messages significantly affected employee engagement and trust during times of change. Clarity and openness in communication were crucial for understanding, accepting, and integrating systemic changes into daily operations. Similarly, Gould et al. (2020) demonstrated how leadership commitment to integrating disability diversity and corporate social responsibilities can foster a culture that is not only inclusive but also adaptive to new challenges, thereby supporting a comprehensive approach to systemic change within organizations.

Zheng et al. (2023) explored how relational transparency, a key component of authentic leadership, can sometimes fail, particularly when not adequately aligned with organizational changes. The study by Zheng et al. (2023) brought a critical perspective to the literature by showing that transparency can lead to vulnerabilities without a careful balance if not coupled with strong governance and accountability measures. This insight is particularly relevant when considering the broader implications of systemic change, where transparent, consistent, and accountable leadership communication becomes even more vital.

Silva (2023) explored how authentic leadership can boost engagement by creating meaningful connections between employees' work and the broader organizational goals. This connection is vital when organizations undergo systemic changes, as it ensures that employees feel valued and see their roles as integral to their companies' new directions. Silva's work underscored a leader's need to maintain authenticity by being present and empathetic, thus facilitating smoother transitions and greater alignment with new organizational mandates. Similarly, Zheng et al. (2023) illustrated the complex dynamics of transparency in leadership, emphasizing the need for a nuanced approach to authenticity that considers the potential downside of over-transparency.

The influence of authentic leadership on systemic change is significant and deeply intertwined with the core dynamics of organizational transformation. Leaders who embrace authenticity not only strengthen the potential of their workforce but also adeptly navigate the complexities inherent in periods of significant change, guiding their organizations toward sustainable success. This leadership style, rooted in genuineness and ethical integrity, is crucial in cultivating an environment that is receptive to and proactive in systemic evolution (Koleňáková et al., 2023). Authentic leaders ensure that equity, innovation, and adaptability

principles are embedded within the organizational culture and are essential for maintaining relevance and competitiveness in rapidly changing markets. These dynamics accentuate the essence of leadership authenticity as pivotal in driving forward-looking changes aligned with internal values and external expectations.

DEI Strategies in Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership in DEI within organizations has never been more critical in the ever-evolving global business landscape. Authentic leaders champion DEI values as businesses navigate the complexities of a multicultural workforce and a socially conscious marketplace. Synthesizing insights from Altmikus et al. (2022) and Baum (2021), this research explored the multifaceted strategies and approaches leaders can employ to reinforce DEI effectively. Beyond mere advocacy, these strategies encompass embedding DEI principles at the heart of organizational culture, actively modeling these values, and committing to continuous learning and growth in DEI competencies. This research illuminated how authentic leadership can cultivate an environment where DEI is supported and deeply ingrained by delving into these practices.

Authentic leaders are recognized for their commitment to transparency, ethical behavior, and fostering genuine connections, creating a fertile ground for DEI initiatives to thrive. According to Baum (2021), a foundational strategy involves embedding DEI principles into the organization's DNA, ensuring that DEI is not an afterthought but a key consideration in all decision-making processes. This commitment signals to all stakeholders the organization's dedication to creating a culture of inclusion and respect (Baum, 2021).

Building upon this foundation, Hogan et al. (2023) pointed out the importance of top-level leadership in championing DEI efforts. Hogan et al. recommended that authentic leaders

actively model DEI values, providing clear and consistent support for DEI initiatives. This modeling includes verbal endorsements, resource allocation, and policy implementation that reflect these values. By doing so, leaders can create an organizational culture embodying DEI at every level (Hogan et al., 2023).

Jeffries (2023) addressed the role of education in reinforcing DEI strategies within leadership. Jeffries recommended that authentic leaders must seek continuous learning opportunities to understand the complex dynamics of DEI. This involves engaging with DEI training programs incorporating adult learning principles, ensuring the learning experience is relevant, practical, and transformative. Through such educational endeavors, leaders can enhance their cultural competency, better appreciate the nuances of DEI, and apply these insights to drive meaningful change within their organizations (Jeffries, 2023).

These strategic approaches, embedding DEI into the organizational fabric, modeling DEI values at the top, and pursuing continuous DEI education, collectively represent a comprehensive strategy for authentic leaders aiming to cultivate an inclusive and equitable workplace. By adhering to these principles, leaders affirm their commitment to DEI and leverage their authenticity to inspire trust, respect, and unity among their teams.

The imperative for authentic leaders to actively shape a DEI-focused organizational culture resonated strongly across the works of Baum (2021), Hogan et al. (2023), and Jeffries (2023). These researchers studied the multifaceted role of leadership in nurturing an environment where DEI values were not merely aspirational but tangible realities. Baum (2021) recommended embedding DEI principles into the very foundation and fabric of organizational culture. Baum et al. contended that for DEI initiatives to be genuinely effective, DEI must be integrated into every facet of the organization's operations, from hiring practices to leadership development programs.

This integration signals a deep organizational commitment to DEI, moving beyond superficial adherence to principles and towards a culture that inherently values diversity and inclusivity.

Building on these recommendations, Hogan et al. (2023) outlined the critical roles that top-level leaders play in implementing DEI strategies. They emphasized that authentic leaders should act as catalysts for DEI by modeling inclusive behaviors, promoting equity through strategic policies, and fostering a culture of belonging. Furthermore, Hogan et al. stressed the necessity of accountability, ensuring leaders not only set DEI goals but also pursue them with intentionality and rigor. Jeffries (2023) expanded on this by exploring how adult learning principles in corporate DEI training can enhance understanding and engagement, advocating for interactive and context-aware training programs that prompt reflection and action.

Jeffries (2023) introduced an educational dimension to fostering a DEI-focused culture by leveraging adult learning principles in corporate DEI training. This approach enhances understanding and engagement by respecting the experiences and competencies of adult learners. Jeffries emphasized the importance of training programs that are interactive and context-aware. These programs are designed to prompt reflection and action. Consequently, such training equips employees at all levels with the necessary knowledge and skills to contribute to a more inclusive workplace (Jeffries, 2023).

Together, these perspectives underlined the necessity for authentic leaders to be proactive in their DEI efforts, utilizing a combination of policy implementation, educational initiatives, and personal leadership to cultivate an organizational culture that genuinely values and practices DEI. By embracing their role as DEI advocates and enablers, authentic leaders can inspire trust, encourage open dialogue, and create an organizational environment where DEI principles are lived out daily, thus harnessing diversity as a source of organizational strength and innovation.

Authentic Leadership and Employee Well-being

The interrelation between leadership and employee well-being has been a focal point of organizational psychology, emphasizing the profound impact of leadership styles on job satisfaction, mental health, and the overall workplace experience. Authentic leadership, characterized by its genuineness, openness, and ethics, enhances employee well-being. Cenkci and Bircan (2024) investigated the effects of authentic leadership on mitigating workplace loneliness, revealing that leaders who consistently exhibited authenticity, transparency, and empathy significantly reduce feelings of isolation among their staff. Complementing this, Zahra et al. (2024) explored how genuine leadership practices boost employee morale and productivity by engaging sincerely with teams and showing a commitment to their well-being.

These studies stressed the critical role of authentic leadership in fostering an inclusive atmosphere that encourages personal connections and supports networks within the workplace, helping to cultivate a sense of belonging and community. Gould et al. (2020) stressed how inclusivity and a focus on diversity, integral aspects of authentic leadership, contribute to nurturing a culture where all employees feel supported and valued. Similarly, Hendrickson et al. (2023) provided empirical evidence on how such leadership influences the organizational climate and culture, creating conditions that enhance psychological safety and well-being. These leaders' commitment to ethical practices and transparency significantly affected how employees perceive their work environment, reducing stress and increasing job satisfaction (Hendrickson et al., 2023).

The research by Alavi (2023) emphasized the role of an internalized moral perspective in authentic leadership, reinforcing the consistency and ethical grounding of leaders' actions. This alignment between personal values and professional conduct enhances trust and respect among

team members, fostering a supportive work environment conducive to mental health and well-being. Butterworth et al. (2024) supported this discussion by arguing the importance of reliable measures of leadership authenticity to gauge its impact on employee well-being effectively. They advocated for the development and use of validated tools that could assess the authenticity levels of leaders, thereby helping organizations better understand and enhance the positive influence of authentic leadership on employee outcomes.

Organizations are encouraged to implement leadership development programs focused on cultivating authentic leadership skills to enhance employee well-being practically. Training sessions emphasizing self-awareness, ethical decision-making, and empathetic communication can equip leaders with the tools to effectively support and engage their teams (Butterworth et al., 2024). Furthermore, regular feedback mechanisms and employee wellness assessments can assist leaders in monitoring the effectiveness of their strategies and making necessary adjustments, ensuring that the principles of authenticity are deeply ingrained within the organizational culture and contribute to a more dynamic, innovative, and inclusive organizational environment where every individual feels genuinely supported and valued (Cenkci & Birkan, 2023).

Challenges and Limitations of Authentic Leadership

While authentic leadership is widely advocated as beneficial for organizations, it also presents distinct challenges and limitations, particularly in diverse and dynamic settings. Understanding these challenges is crucial for developing more nuanced and effective leadership strategies. One of the primary critiques of authentic leadership is the potential for relational transparency to backfire, especially in culturally diverse environments. Zheng et al. (2023) addressed this concern by examining instances where excessive openness can lead to misunderstandings or conflicts, notably when cultural norms differ significantly regarding

openness and direct communication. Alavi (2023) complemented this view by discussing leaders' internal moral challenges, reinforcing that transparency must be balanced with cultural sensitivity to prevent miscommunication and preserve harmonious relationships.

Additionally, the application of authentic leadership is not without its complexities. Leaders striving to maintain authenticity may be at odds with organizational norms or objectives, mainly when there is a misalignment between personal values and corporate strategies. This misalignment can lead to ethical dilemmas or conflicts of interest, challenging leaders to navigate their roles without compromising their principles. Butterworth et al. (2024) provided a framework for measuring the dimensions of authenticity that can help leaders understand and manage this misalignment effectively, ensuring that their leadership remains robust even when personal and organizational values do not align perfectly.

Butterworth et al. (2024) also contributed to this discourse by introducing new measures of authentic leadership, which help dissect and understand authenticity's layers and dimensions. These measures are crucial for identifying authentic behaviors and their appropriateness within specific organizational contexts. By developing a more detailed understanding of what constitutes authentic leadership across different settings, organizations can better tailor their leadership development programs to address these nuances. DeStefano (2023) highlighted how understanding diverse organizational contexts enhances the implementation of authentic leadership, particularly in innovation-driven environments where embracing various perspectives is crucial.

The challenges of implementing authentic leadership also extend to its impact on decision-making processes. Leaders who prioritize authenticity must carefully consider how their decisions reflect their true selves while meeting the organization's strategic needs (Alavi, 2023).

This can be particularly challenging in high-stakes environments where decisions have significant implications for the company and its stakeholders. Further, authentic leadership can sometimes lead to resistance from within the organization, especially if changes introduced by authentic leaders challenge the status quo or threaten existing power structures. Zheng et al. (2023) and DeStefano (2023) discussed how leaders could manage this resistance by fostering an inclusive environment that values diverse opinions and approaches, thus facilitating smoother transitions and greater alignment with new organizational mandates.

While authentic leadership has the potential to transform organizational cultures positively, it also requires careful consideration of the challenges and limitations it presents (Alavi, 2023). By understanding and addressing these challenges, leaders can ensure that their authentic leadership style is practical and aligns with their organizations' values and strategic needs (DeStefano, 2023). This comprehensive approach enables organizations to fully leverage the benefits of authentic leadership while mitigating its potential drawbacks, fostering a more dynamic, innovative, and inclusive organizational environment where everyone feels genuinely supported and valued.

Gaps in the Literature and Future Research Directions

Despite the wealth of research on leadership authenticity, significant gaps exist, particularly regarding the emergence of virtual and hybrid work environments. These introduce novel challenges and opportunities for authentic leadership, marking an area suitable for future scholarly inquiry. The digital transformation of the workplace, accelerated by global events and technological advancements, has reshaped the terrain of leadership practice and research. This shift prompts a reevaluation of traditional leadership paradigms, including the principles of authenticity, in light of the unique demands and opportunities presented by virtual teams and

remote work settings. Questions about how authentic leadership can be effectively communicated, perceived, and enacted in a digital context remain primarily unanswered, offering a fertile ground for research aimed at deciphering the nuances of authentic leadership in the digital age.

Further, the intersection of authentic leadership with issues of DEI within the workplace demands further attention. As organizations strive to become more inclusive and representative of the societies in which they operate, the role of authentic leadership in fostering environments that are not only diverse in demographics but also inclusive in practice and equitable in opportunity becomes increasingly critical. Research exploring how authentic leadership practices can be leveraged to advance these goals contributes valuable insights into the broader discourse on leadership effectiveness and organizational justice.

In addition, the impact of cultural contexts on the perception and effectiveness of authentic leadership is another area warranting deeper investigation. Cross-cultural studies could explain how cultural norms and values influence the expectations and interpretations of leadership authenticity, potentially uncovering culturally specific dimensions of authenticity. Such insights could guide the development of leadership models that are not only authentic but also culturally sensitive and adaptable, thereby enhancing global leadership effectiveness.

The role of social media and digital communication in shaping perceptions of leadership authenticity emerges as a novel frontier in leadership research (Halliwell, 2023). As leaders increasingly engage with followers and stakeholders through digital platforms, the authenticity conveyed through these mediums and its impact on follower trust, engagement, and performance merit exploration. This line of inquiry could offer implications for leaders on authentically

presenting themselves in the digital realm, balancing transparency with professionalism and personality with organizational values.

Ethical Assurances

Ethical considerations are critical when investigating leadership authenticity among Fortune 500 technology corporations. The intrinsic connection of this research to personal experiences, perceptions, and the overarching ethos of corporations required strict adherence to ethical norms to safeguard the dignity, rights, and welfare of all participants.

The ethical foundation of this study was predicated on the principles of confidentiality, informed consent, and the minimization of potential harm (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Given the delicate nature surrounding discussions of leadership practices and DEI initiatives, especially within prominent organizations, ensuring the anonymity of individual participants and the organizations they represent was essential. Accordingly, all collected data via interviews, questionnaires, and organizational documents were anonymized, thus guaranteeing that respondents remained unidentifiable directly or indirectly.

Informed consent was pivotal within the ethical framework of this research. Before their engagement, participants were thoroughly informed about the study's objectives, their involvement, and the protective measures for their privacy and data. This approach ensured that participants understood their rights well, including the prerogative to disengage from the study without facing negative repercussions.

Further, the potential for harm in this study was diligently monitored and mitigated. Although the study avoided physical interventions, probing into personal experiences and perceptions concerning leadership authenticity and corporate practices like DEI initiatives could

have triggered emotional responses or discomfort. Acknowledging this possibility, the research design included a detailed explanation of the questionnaire's content and purpose, ensuring participants were fully informed. Participants were offered information on where to seek professional support if any distress or unresolved issues related to workplace inclusivity or discrimination arose.

An additional layer of ethical oversight was facilitated through the scrutiny of an Institutional Review Board (IRB), which evaluated the study's methodological approach, ethical considerations, and protection of participants. This external oversight assured adherence to the apex of ethical standards and justified that potential risks to participants were minimized and outweighed by the anticipated benefits of the research findings.

Finally, the ethical obligations of this study extended to the dissemination of findings. Utmost care was exercised to present the results in a manner that honored the confidentiality and anonymity of participants, precluding any inadvertent disclosures that could reveal identities or proprietary information of the entities involved. The presentation of findings was oriented towards aggregate data and broad insights, thus contributing to the broader body of knowledge on leadership authenticity and DEI initiatives without compromising the privacy or competitive edge of the participating persons or companies. This strategic approach to disseminating research findings aligned with the commitment to upholding the ethical standards set forth by the American Psychological Association (2020), ensuring that the integrity of the participants and their organizations was maintained throughout the research process and in sharing its outcomes.

Summary

The exploration of leadership authenticity within Fortune 500 technology companies, a unique and underexplored area, highlighted its profound impact on organizational culture,

employee engagement, and overall corporate performance. This comprehensive review unpacked authentic leadership's theoretical foundations, empirical validations, and practical implications, particularly emphasizing its integration into DEI initiatives.

Authentic leadership, characterized by transparency, ethical behavior, and alignment with corporate values, helped address discrepancies between stated organizational ethics and actual practice. It was also a powerful tool in navigating modern business challenges. The relationship between leadership authenticity and its influence on organizational culture and employee experiences across levels was examined through qualitative analysis, including in-depth interviews and document review.

The discussion also examined how authentic leadership shapes inclusive organizational environments and influences employees' perceptions of value and alignment with the company's mission. The literature further indicated that authentic leadership contributes to organizational resilience and adaptability in complex business environments. Collectively, these findings position leadership authenticity as both a behavioral construct and an organizational influence. Despite growing scholarly attention, gaps remain in understanding how these dynamics operate within Fortune 500 technology companies. This summary introduces the case study that follows, which examined how leadership authenticity influenced organizational policies and employee perceptions within that context.

Section 2: Methodology and Design

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the impact of executive leadership's authenticity on organizational culture, employee engagement, and corporate performance within Fortune 500 technology companies. The problem this study addressed is the lack of understanding of how authentic leadership affects these key areas, particularly within the framework of DEI initiatives. This section outlines the research methodology and design. It also discusses the appropriateness of these choices in relation to the study's problem, purpose, and research questions. The section concludes with a discussion of the study's population and sample, instrumentation, data collection and analysis procedures, and the study's assumptions, limitations, and delimitations.

Design and Method

This study employed a qualitative methodology with a case study design. The qualitative approach allowed for in-depth exploration of leadership authenticity within real-life organizational contexts (Yin, 2017). The case study design facilitated a detailed examination of this phenomenon within the bounded context of Fortune 500 technology companies. This design aligned with the study's problem and purpose by providing a structured method to investigate how leadership authenticity manifested and influenced organizational practices.

Alternative designs, such as ethnography and phenomenology, were considered but deemed less appropriate. Ethnography emphasizes cultural practices over time, which does not align with the specific focus on organizational leadership authenticity in a contemporary corporate setting (Merriam, 2016). While valuable for exploring lived experiences, phenomenology did not sufficiently address the broader organizational practices and strategic implications central to this study (Merriam, 2016). The use of a case study design aligned with

the foundational work of Yin (2017), Merriam (2016), and Stake (2005), who described case studies as robust frameworks for examining complex, context-dependent phenomena within clearly defined boundaries, or “bounded systems.” According to Yin (2017), a case study focuses on investigating a “contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context,” particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. This design was well-suited for exploring the interplay between leadership authenticity and organizational outcomes, as it allowed for an in-depth analysis of senior leaders within Fortune 500 technology companies, framed by specific organizational contexts and DEI initiatives.

Data analysis followed a thematic analysis framework, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), to identify and interpret patterns within the data. The first step involved data familiarization, where interview transcripts were read and re-read to gain an in-depth understanding (Braun & Clarke, 2006). NVivo software systematically generated initial codes by highlighting relevant data segments related to leadership authenticity, organizational culture, and employee engagement, after which additional coding and analysis were conducted manually using Excel-based matrices. These codes were then reviewed and grouped into potential themes, which were checked against the coded extracts to ensure consistency and relevance (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The next step involved defining and naming themes, ensuring they accurately reflected the data and the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A detailed report was produced, outlining each theme and its implications for understanding leadership authenticity within the context of Fortune 500 technology companies. Triangulation was employed to enhance the study’s credibility by cross-verifying findings from interviews, CAI assessments, and internal documents. Peer debriefing was utilized to validate the interpretations, ensuring that the interpretations accurately represented the participants’ perspectives. This rigorous analysis

provided a comprehensive understanding of how authentic leadership influences organizational outcomes.

Population and Sample

The population for this study consisted of senior leaders in Fortune 500 technology companies who are directly involved in strategic decision-making and implementing initiatives like DEI. These leaders are pivotal in shaping organizational culture, employee engagement, and corporate performance. Their insights are critical to understanding the impact of authentic leadership on these outcomes, making them the ideal population for this case study. By focusing on leaders at this level, the study ensured it captured the perspectives of those with significant influence over organizational practices. The estimated population size was approximately 500 senior executives representing various Fortune 500 technology sector companies.

A purposive sampling method was employed to select participants who met the inclusion criteria, which require at least five years of experience in their current leadership roles and active involvement in DEI initiatives within their organizations. This intentional sampling method allowed the study to target individuals with relevant expertise and leadership experience necessary to address the research questions (Merriam, 2016). Senior leaders who had not been engaged in DEI initiatives or who had held their roles for less than five years were excluded from the sample to maintain a focus on those with comprehensive experience in organizational leadership and authenticity. By setting these criteria, the study ensured that the data collected was relevant and rich in detail, allowing for a more focused exploration of the research problem.

The sample size for this qualitative case study was 20 senior leaders. This sample size was consistent with recommendations for qualitative research, where data saturation, defined as the point at which no new themes or insights emerge, is a crucial indicator of sample adequacy

(Yin, 2017). According to Yin (2017), a sample of this size is appropriate for achieving data saturation in a case study, particularly when the goal is to explore complex phenomena such as leadership authenticity. The emphasis is on depth of insight rather than breadth, ensuring that each participant provides detailed, nuanced data that can contribute meaningfully to the study's findings. By focusing on a smaller, targeted group, this study was able to delve deeply into the experiences and practices of senior leaders, providing a thorough analysis of leadership authenticity within the context of Fortune 500 technology companies.

Recruitment was conducted through a combination of direct outreach, professional networks, and industry associations. This multi-faceted approach helped identify senior leaders who met the study's inclusion criteria and were willing to participate. Professional networks and referrals were instrumental in gaining access to high-level executives, as these individuals were often difficult to engage through traditional recruitment methods. To encourage participation, the study emphasized the importance of the research in advancing the understanding of leadership authenticity and its potential impact on organizational performance. Confidentiality measures and informed consent procedures were clearly outlined during recruitment to build trust and ensure participants felt comfortable sharing their experiences openly.

Participants received recruitment materials detailing the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and confidentiality measures. Informed consent was obtained electronically, with participants confirming their voluntary participation. They were assured that they could withdraw from the study without any consequences. These ethical protocols were designed to protect the participants' privacy and ensure their comfort in contributing to the research. By adhering to these standards, the study maintained its credibility and ethical integrity while also ensuring that participants were fully informed about the nature of their involvement. This

structured and ethical approach to recruitment and sampling provided a robust foundation for collecting meaningful data from senior leaders.

Materials/Instrumentation

This study employed a comprehensive range of instruments to collect qualitative and quantitative data on leadership authenticity within Fortune 500 technology companies. These instruments were carefully selected to provide a multi-dimensional understanding of how leadership authenticity influences organizational outcomes. The Leader's Conscious Authenticity Index (CAI), developed by Kolečáková et al. (2023), served as the primary quantitative instrument, measuring leadership authenticity across dimensions such as transparency, ethical leadership, balanced decision-making, and self-awareness. Kolečáková et al.'s (2023) initial studies provided support for the CAI's reliability in assessing authentic leadership behaviors within large, complex corporate environments. The CAI's integration into this study ensured that leadership authenticity was measured systematically, allowing for a structured analysis of these critical dimensions. Permission to use the CAI (see Appendix A) was obtained prior to data collection, and its implementation adhered to ethical research protocols, ensuring that participants' confidentiality and privacy were fully maintained throughout the research process.

In addition to the CAI, a structured questionnaire (see Appendix B) gathered qualitative insights into participants' leadership experiences, organizational culture, and employee engagement. This questionnaire included a mix of closed-ended questions, Likert-scale items, and open-ended questions to capture a comprehensive range of responses. Closed-ended questions allowed participants to rate their experiences in leadership roles, while the open-ended questions provided deeper qualitative insights into the specific leadership practices they employ. Descriptive frequency summaries of questionnaire responses are provided in Appendix C.

A field test was conducted with participants who met the inclusion criteria but were not included in the final sample. Leadership scholars first reviewed the questionnaire and interview protocol to ensure content validity and appropriateness for the study's context. The feedback gathered from this review was incorporated into revisions to improve the clarity and relevance of the instruments. The refined questionnaire and interview protocol then underwent a field test to evaluate their effectiveness in capturing the intended data. This step allowed for adjustments based on field test feedback, enhancing the accuracy and applicability of both instruments before full-scale distribution.

In conjunction with the questionnaire, this study conducted a detailed document analysis (see Appendix D) to supplement the study with insights from internal corporate materials, explicitly aligning with the study's theoretical framework of leadership authenticity. Documents such as strategic plans, DEI policies, leadership development programs, and employee engagement surveys were reviewed to understand how leadership authenticity, as conceptualized by the Leader's Conscious Authenticity Index (CAI) and the study's framework, is embedded in organizational practices. These internal documents, provided by Human Resource and Training and Development Departments, offered insights into how organizations institutionalize the critical dimensions of transparency, ethics, and balanced decision-making, aligning with the study's framework. By grounding the document analysis in the theoretical principles guiding the CAI, this study examined whether leadership authenticity is consistently operationalized in practice or remains aspirational. The analysis also helped identify gaps between the organization's theoretical commitment to leadership authenticity and the observed leadership behaviors, providing a deeper understanding of how the theoretical constructs manifest in real-world corporate environments.

Further, publicly available DEI documents, including corporate social responsibility reports and public-facing diversity statements, were examined as part of the document analysis and explicitly analyzed through the lens of the study's theoretical framework. These external documents provided insight into how companies position their leadership values, particularly transparency and ethical leadership, which are core dimensions of the Leader's Conscious Authenticity Index (CAI) and central to the study's framework. By comparing the organization's internal training materials with its public DEI commitments, the study evaluated the alignment between espoused values and actual practices, as the CAI framework dictates. This comparison enabled a deeper analysis of how well leadership authenticity is projected to external stakeholders and how these projections align with the organization's internal culture and leadership development strategies. The triangulation of internal and external data, grounded in the study's theoretical framework, enhanced the study's depth by linking leadership authenticity directly to organizational outcomes.

Additionally, employee surveys, often used internally to assess staff perceptions of leadership and organizational culture, were included in the analysis to provide a more holistic view of leadership authenticity's impact on employee engagement. These surveys offered insights into employees' perceptions of their leaders' authenticity, engagement with DEI initiatives, and overall experience with the company's leadership practices. The data gathered from employee surveys served as an essential complement to the data from senior leaders, ensuring that the study captured a range of perspectives on leadership authenticity. Employee feedback, especially on engagement and leadership effectiveness issues, provided valuable context for these outcomes and allowed for comparisons between leader self-assessments and employee perceptions of their leaders.

All instruments used in this study, both quantitative and qualitative, were aligned with the study's theoretical framework to ensure that they address the research questions comprehensively. Ethical standards were maintained throughout the data collection process, with IRB approval obtained prior to the start of the study. Informed consent was collected electronically, and all participants were provided with a clear explanation of the study's purpose, procedures, and confidentiality measures. Data collected from the CAI and questionnaire were anonymized to protect participant privacy, and access to the raw data was restricted to me in the role as the primary investigator to ensure data security. This ethical framework ensured that participants' rights and privacy were fully protected while allowing for rigorous and transparent data collection processes.

By employing a triangulated approach that integrates quantitative and qualitative instruments, including the CAI, structured questionnaires, and document analysis, this study provided a nuanced understanding of leadership authenticity within Fortune 500 companies. The combination of these methods allowed for the identification of key patterns, correlations, and themes related to leadership authenticity and its impact on organizational performance. This multi-dimensional approach ensured that the study captured the measurable aspects of leadership authenticity and the more nuanced, qualitative insights into how authentic leadership manifests in practice. Through this comprehensive data collection process, the study offered significant contributions to understanding leadership authenticity, particularly in the context of large, complex organizations.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection process followed a systematic, step-by-step approach to ensure ethical integrity, methodological rigor, and compliance with Institutional Review Board (IRB)

standards. IRB approval was obtained before data collection to ensure the research conformed to all ethical requirements, such as participant confidentiality, informed consent, and data security. After obtaining IRB approval, public site permissions were verified for selected Fortune 500 technology companies to ensure public access to relevant internal documents and recruitment of senior leaders for participation was permitted. The recruitment process focused on identifying leaders involved in strategic decision-making roles, particularly those engaged with DEI initiatives, as their insights were crucial for assessing leadership authenticity within these contexts.

Recruitment occurred through direct outreach, professional networks, and industry associations to ensure that a diverse and representative sample was obtained. Participants received an informational packet detailing the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, benefits, and steps to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Recruitment efforts specifically targeted leaders who fit the inclusion criteria, ensuring that the study's findings were grounded in diverse leadership perspectives. To ensure voluntary participation, electronic informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study without consequence.

The primary instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire, which integrated both quantitative and qualitative elements. The quantitative component utilized the CAI, developed by Kolečáková et al. (2023). CAI responses provided key quantitative data that complemented the qualitative insights gained from open-ended questions in the questionnaire. The structured questionnaire was distributed electronically via secure platforms to ensure ease of access and flexibility for participants, which allowed them to complete the survey at their convenience.

The data collection process utilized open-ended questions to gather qualitative insights into leadership authenticity, organizational culture, and employee engagement. To ensure clarity and relevance, an expert review was conducted prior to distribution, incorporating feedback from leadership scholars and practitioners. Following the review, a pilot test was conducted with eligible participants outside the final sample, allowing for further refinement based on their feedback. This iterative process helped ensure that the questions effectively captured in-depth responses and aligned with the study's objectives.

Additionally, publicly available DEI documents, such as corporate social responsibility reports and public statements, were analyzed to examine how Fortune 500 companies present their leadership and DEI values to external stakeholders. This contrast between internal documents and public-facing materials allowed for a nuanced exploration of how leadership authenticity is promoted within and outside the organization. This analysis was guided by Kuckartz's (2014) systematic approach to qualitative text analysis, ensuring that critical themes related to leadership authenticity, DEI initiatives, and corporate performance were identified and explored.

Qualitative content analysis was used systematically to analyze internal and external documents. As Mayring (2014) described, this approach ensured that patterns and themes related to leadership authenticity, transparency, and DEI strategies were rigorously identified. The triangulation of findings from the questionnaire, internal documents, and public DEI reports enhanced the validity and reliability of the study's conclusions by cross-verifying results across multiple data sources. This comprehensive approach to document analysis added depth and context to the data collected from the questionnaire, allowing for a more thorough exploration of the role of leadership authenticity within Fortune 500 companies.

The data analysis process employed thematic analysis, following the six-step process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This included becoming familiar with the qualitative data, generating initial codes, identifying themes, reviewing and refining these themes, defining and naming the themes, and producing a final report. NVivo software was used to assist in systematic coding and organization of the qualitative data, allowing for an efficient and structured analysis of the participants' responses. NVivo-assisted software coding also aided in the identification of recurring themes related to leadership authenticity, organizational culture, and the effectiveness of DEI initiatives. After initial coding, peer debriefing was conducted as part of the thematic analysis process, where participants were invited to review and validate the preliminary findings. This process allowed them to confirm or clarify the identified themes, ensuring that the interpretations accurately reflected their perspectives. Member checking enhanced the study's credibility by providing participants an opportunity to verify the accuracy of the findings and by reinforcing the transparency of the analysis process.

The thematic analysis began with the transcription of participants' questionnaire responses, following the approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Each transcript was carefully reviewed, and meaningful text segments were coded using an inductive process, allowing themes to emerge naturally from the data. Codes represented critical aspects of leadership behaviors, DEI involvement, and organizational outcomes, with NVivo used to assist in grouping these codes into broader themes. This process uncovered themes that reflected participants' perspectives on leadership authenticity, providing insights into how it is perceived and operationalized within Fortune 500 technology companies.

In addition to thematic analysis, qualitative content analysis was applied to the internal and external documents collected. As outlined by Forman and Damschroder (2008), this method

ensured that textual data were systematically examined for patterns and trends related to leadership authenticity. Qualitative content analysis allowed a deeper understanding of how leadership values are codified within formal policies and public documents. It also facilitated the identification of potential gaps between publicly espoused values and internally practiced behaviors, providing a more holistic view of leadership authenticity within the organizational context.

Finally, basic inferential statistics were included in the study to analyze the demographic data collected through the questionnaire, providing additional context to the qualitative findings. Basic inferential statistics, which involve techniques such as calculating means, standard deviations, and identifying patterns in data, allow researchers to make generalizations about a sample (Merriam, 2016). Applying these techniques helped in examining participants' demographic characteristics, such as years of experience, leadership roles, and involvement in DEI initiatives. These statistical analyses helped identify trends within the sample, offering a quantitative perspective that complements the qualitative insights. By combining thematic analysis, qualitative content analysis, and basic descriptive statistics, the study comprehensively explored leadership authenticity and its impact on organizational culture and performance within Fortune 500 technology companies.

Assumptions

Several key assumptions underpinned this study's research design and approach. Inherent to qualitative research is the assumption that reality is subjective and constructed by individuals within their specific contexts, meaning that participants' experiences and perceptions are central to understanding the research phenomenon (Merriam, 2016). Additionally, qualitative research assumes that rich, in-depth data can be obtained through interactions with participants, allowing

for a deeper exploration of complex social phenomena. In qualitative research, it is assumed that a researcher's interpretations are a valid component of the analysis, as they contribute to constructing meaning from the data collected (Stake, 2005). These assumptions guided the methodological choices in this study, supporting an in-depth exploration of leadership authenticity within Fortune 500 technology companies.

First, it was assumed that the senior leaders participating in this study provided honest, reflective, and comprehensive responses to the structured questionnaire. Given the confidential nature of the study and the assurance of anonymity, it was expected that participants felt comfortable sharing their authentic experiences without fear of judgment or repercussions. This assumption was critical to the trustworthiness of the findings, as the study relied heavily on self-reported data to explore leadership authenticity. To enhance trustworthiness, strategies such as dependability, confirmability, and credibility were employed. Dependability was addressed through a clear and consistent research protocol, while confirmability was ensured by maintaining an audit trail that documents decisions made during the study. Credibility was strengthened through triangulation of data sources, including questionnaire responses and document analysis, allowing for cross-verification of findings. Additionally, it was assumed that participants engaged with the questionnaire seriously and thoughtfully, offering insights into their leadership practices that are accurate and relevant to the research questions.

Another assumption involved the internal documents that were analyzed in the data collection process. These documents, including DEI policies, strategic plans, and leadership training materials, are assumed to be accurate representations of the organizations' formal leadership practices and initiatives. These documents provided valuable context to supplement the insights gathered from the questionnaire responses. While recognizing that internal

documents may sometimes present an idealized version of organizational practices, it was assumed that the study's triangulated approach, incorporating both questionnaire data and document analysis, helped identify any discrepancies between documented policies and actual leadership behaviors. This assumption supported the study's goal of providing a well-rounded view of leadership authenticity.

It was also assumed that the Leader's Conscious Authenticity Index (CAI), developed by Kolečková et al. (2023), is an appropriate and reliable instrument for measuring leadership authenticity in Fortune 500 technology companies. The CAI has been validated in previous research and was considered a robust tool for assessing leadership authenticity across various dimensions, including transparency, ethics, and balanced decision-making. This assumption was essential to the study's methodology, as the CAI serves as the primary quantitative instrument for measuring leadership authenticity. It was assumed that the CAI accurately captured the nuances of authentic leadership in the context of large, complex organizations, ensuring that the data collected aligned with the research objectives.

Finally, it was assumed that the purposive sampling method yielded a sample of leaders who were both knowledgeable and reflective of the study's focus on leadership authenticity and DEI initiatives. By targeting leaders involved in strategic decision-making and DEI activities for at least five years, the study gathered rich, in-depth data to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of leadership authenticity. It was also assumed that the selected sample represented the broader population of senior leaders within Fortune 500 technology companies, allowing the study to offer meaningful insight into the relationship between leadership authenticity and organizational outcomes. These assumptions were critical to the study's ability

to address the research questions effectively and provide valuable contributions to the field of organizational leadership.

Limitations

Several inherent limitations, which were factors that might have restricted the scope or affected the interpretation of the study's findings, were recognized in this research design (Stake, 2005). One primary limitation involved the reliance on self-reported data obtained through the structured questionnaire. Self-reported data are subject to various biases, including social desirability bias, where participants may present themselves in a more favorable light, particularly when discussing topics such as leadership authenticity. To address this limitation, an analysis of internal documents was included as a form of data triangulation. However, it was recognized that this method may not eliminate the biases associated with self-reporting.

The specificity of the study's focus on senior leaders within Fortune 500 technology companies presented another limitation. While this focus allowed for an in-depth exploration of leadership authenticity in a high-stakes, complex corporate environment, it also restricted the generalizability of the findings. The experiences and practices of senior leaders in Fortune 500 technology companies might not be representative of leaders in other industries, smaller organizations, or different cultural contexts. To enhance transferability, detailed descriptions of the research context, participant characteristics, and data collection methods were provided, allowing readers to assess the applicability of the findings to other settings (Stake, 2005). This approach, known as "thick description," aimed to offer sufficient context so that others may determine how the insights gained could be relevant in different situations. While the insights might have limited applicability outside the specific context examined, this detailed reporting

supported the study's contribution to a broader understanding of leadership authenticity in organizational settings.

The use of purposive sampling also presented a limitation. Although purposive sampling is appropriate for qualitative research to gain in-depth insights from individuals with specific expertise or experiences, it might result in a sample not fully representative of the broader population of senior leaders. This approach involved the intentional selection of participants who were engaged in DEI initiatives and had significant strategic decision-making experience, potentially excluding those with differing perspectives on leadership authenticity. Additionally, while the CAI is a well-validated instrument, it might only have captured part of the spectrum of leadership authenticity, especially in diverse organizational contexts. These limitations required careful interpretation of the findings. To enhance the trustworthiness of the study, strategies such as triangulation, member checking, and thick description were used. These approaches not only supported a robust analysis but also offered avenues for future research to build on this work.

Delimitations

Delimitations are the boundaries set by the researcher to define the study's scope and focus, intentionally limiting certain aspects to maintain a manageable and coherent framework (Creswell, 2013). This study was delimited to senior leaders within Fortune 500 technology companies actively involved in strategic decision-making and DEI initiatives. By targeting this specific group, the research was designed to explore how leadership authenticity manifested and impacted organizational culture and employee engagement in a context where strategic leadership a pivotal role. The focus on Fortune 500 technology companies is grounded in their complexity, size, and significant influence on industry practices. This delimitation ensured a

manageable scope and allowed for an in-depth investigation of authentic leadership within a defined and relevant corporate environment.

Another delimitation involved the exclusion of lower-level managers and leaders from non-technology sectors. Although lower-level managers might have valuable insights into organizational culture and leadership, focusing on senior leaders was intentional, as they are the primary drivers of strategic initiatives and cultural change within large organizations. Similarly, leaders from non-technology sectors were excluded to maintain a consistent context across the sample, given that leadership dynamics can vary significantly between industries. This focused scope aimed to generate findings directly relevant to the leadership challenges and dynamics within large, complex technology companies.

Methodological choices also delimited this study, specifically using the CAI and a structured questionnaire. By selecting the CAI as the primary instrument for measuring leadership authenticity, the study adopted a specific conceptual framework that prioritized certain dimensions of authenticity, such as transparency and ethical behavior. While this approach provided a structured means of assessing leadership authenticity, it may not have captured all possible facets of authentic leadership. Additionally, the structured questionnaire focused on specific aspects of leadership and organizational culture, guided by the research questions. These delimitations provided a focused and coherent exploration of leadership authenticity within the specified context while acknowledging the inherent boundaries they placed on the study's scope and applicability.

Summary

This section outlined the study's methodology, including its fundamental assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. It assumed that senior leaders provided candid and accurate

responses to the questionnaire and that the internal documents analyzed offered a truthful reflection of organizational practices. The Leader's Conscious Authenticity Index (CAI) was assumed to be a valid measure of leadership authenticity within Fortune 500 technology companies. Identified limitations included potential self-reporting bias, the specific focus on large technology firms, and the use of purposive sampling, all of which might have influenced the generalizability of the findings.

Despite these limitations, the study's delimitations were carefully defined to facilitate a focused exploration of leadership authenticity. By concentrating on senior leaders in Fortune 500 technology companies and utilizing the CAI and a structured questionnaire, the research aimed to uncover insights into the relationship between authentic leadership, organizational culture, and employee engagement. Employing a qualitative case study design supported an in-depth investigation of this phenomenon within a complex corporate environment.

This methodological framework provided a robust foundation for exploring the research questions and contributed to a deeper understanding of leadership authenticity in large technology companies. Articulating assumptions, limitations, and delimitations offered a comprehensive context for the study's findings. The next section of this manuscript, Section 3, presents the study's findings, implications, and recommendations, building upon the methodology established in this section.

Section 3: Findings, Implications, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how leadership authenticity is experienced and enacted within Fortune 500 technology organizations and how executive expressions of authenticity align with employee perceptions and organizational culture. The study addressed a practice-based problem related to discrepancies between leaders' stated commitments to authenticity and employees' lived experiences of leadership behavior. To address this problem, data were collected through employee interviews, leadership questionnaires, and publicly available organizational documents and analyzed using a thematic approach informed by the Leadership Conscious Authenticity Index (CAI).

This section presents results derived from the analysis of the collected data, followed by an evaluation of outcomes, implications, and recommendations for practice, recommendations for future research, and concluding remarks. Findings are reported in an objective and descriptive manner and are organized by emergent themes that reflect patterns identified across the data sources. Interpretation of these outcomes and discussion of their meaning within the broader conceptual framework are reserved for the Evaluation of the Outcomes subsection.

Several contextual factors should be considered when interpreting the evidence presented in this section. The study relied on participant self-reported perceptions of leadership authenticity, which may be influenced by individual roles, organizational tenure, and proximity to leadership decision-making. Employee participants represented varied functional areas and organizational levels, which may contribute to differences in how leadership behaviors were observed and experienced. Publicly available organizational documents reflected formal and curated representations of leadership values and intent but might not fully capture how those values were enacted in day-to-day practice. The focus on Fortune 500 technology organizations

could limit the transferability of findings to organizations of different sizes, industries, or structural contexts.

Findings

Participants in this study included employees and leaders affiliated with Fortune 500 technology organizations. Employee interview participants represented non-executive organizational roles and were selected based on eligibility criteria designed to capture employee-level perspectives on leadership authenticity. Leadership questionnaire participants consisted of individuals holding leadership titles within their respective organizations. To protect confidentiality, demographic information was reported at an aggregate level and excluded any potentially identifying characteristics. Participant codes were used consistently across data sources, and no demographic characteristics were linked to specific participant identifiers. Descriptive summaries of participant characteristics are provided to contextualize the patterns identified in this study with detailed frequency information available in the appendices.

Aggregate participant characteristics are presented to establish the structural composition of the sample while maintaining participant confidentiality. The study included employees who provided perspectives on leadership authenticity and leaders who reflected on their own leadership practices, representing varied organizational roles, tenure ranges, and company sizes within Fortune 500 technology organizations. Providing this overview clarifies the context in which individual participant identifiers are referenced throughout the Findings section and supports clear interpretation of how leadership authenticity was experienced and articulated across organizational levels. Table 1 presents the aggregate participant profile.

Table 1*Participant Characteristics Summary (Aggregated)*

Characteristic	Employees (n=6)	Leaders (n=20)
Age (range categories)	18–24 (n=1) 35–44 (n=2) 45–54 (n=3)	25–34 (n=3) 35–44 (n=5) 45–54 (n=7) 55+ (n=5)
Gender	Female (n=4); Male (n=2)	Female (n=6); Male (n=14)
Years in role	16–20 years (n=5) Less than 5 years (n=1)	11–15 years (n=10) 5–10 years (n=6) 20+ years (n=4)
Company size	10,000+ (n=6)	500–999 (n=2) 1,000–4,999 (n=6) 5,000–9,999 (n=5) 10,000+ (n=7)

The trustworthiness of the findings was established through attention to credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was supported through triangulation of multiple data sources, including employee interviews, leadership questionnaires, and publicly available organizational documents, which allowed comparison of perspectives across organizational levels. Transferability was addressed by providing detailed descriptions of the organizational context, participant characteristics, and analytic processes to enable readers to assess applicability to other settings. Dependability was strengthened through the use of a consistent analytic approach, systematic coding procedures, and documentation of analytic decisions. Confirmability was enhanced through reflexive journaling, maintenance of an audit trail, and deliberate efforts to ensure findings were grounded in the data rather than researcher bias.

This subsection presents patterns identified through inductive thematic analysis of employee interview transcripts, leadership questionnaire responses, and publicly available organizational documents. Data from these sources were examined independently and then

compared to identify areas of convergence and divergence. Thematic analysis followed a systematic coding process, resulting in emergent themes that captured how leadership authenticity was described, perceived, and communicated across organizational levels. Findings are organized by emergent themes and descriptively aligned with the dimensions of the Leadership Conscious Authenticity Index to provide a coherent framework for understanding how leadership authenticity was experienced within the organizational context examined. The following subsections present the emergent themes identified through analysis, with each theme grounded in evidence from employee interviews, leadership questionnaires, and publicly available organizational documents.

Analytic Approach and Thematic Development

Data analysis was conducted using an inductive thematic approach to examine how leadership authenticity was experienced and perceived across organizational levels. Employee interview transcripts, leadership questionnaire responses, and publicly available organizational documents were analyzed as distinct data sources prior to cross-source comparison, guided by a comprehensive deductive and inductive coding framework (see Appendix E). This approach allowed patterns to emerge within each data set before triangulation was used to examine convergence and divergence across sources in relation to the study's guiding research question.

Employee interview data were analyzed through multiple cycles of coding. Initial coding focused on identifying salient statements related to leadership behavior, ethical decision-making, communication practices, and employee experiences of leadership authenticity. These codes were then reviewed and refined through iterative comparison to identify conceptual similarities and distinctions. Related codes were grouped into broader categories that reflected shared meaning across participant accounts. Categories were subsequently examined for consistency

and explanatory strength, resulting in the development of higher-order themes that captured patterned experiences of leadership authenticity across employee participants.

Leadership questionnaire responses were analyzed using a parallel process. Open-ended responses were reviewed to identify recurring leadership self-perceptions, values-based commitments, and descriptions of leadership practice. Codes generated from questionnaire data were compared within the data set to identify internal consistency and areas of emphasis. These patterns were then examined alongside employee interview categories to assess alignment, reinforcement, or tension between leader self-perceptions and employee experiences.

Publicly available organizational documents were analyzed to identify recurring language, values, and leadership expectations related to authenticity, ethics, transparency, and employee engagement (see Appendix F). Document analysis focused on identifying stated organizational commitments and normative leadership narratives rather than evaluating implementation. Patterns identified within organizational documents were compared with interview and questionnaire findings to examine how formal leadership messaging aligned with or diverged from lived leadership experiences. Consistent with the study's ethical framework, organizational documents are presented at a cross-organizational level to preserve anonymity and maintain analytic focus on thematic patterns rather than individual corporate entities.

Triangulation occurred through systematic comparison of patterns across the three data sources. Themes were retained when evidence was present across multiple sources or when divergence itself provided insight into discrepancies between articulated values and enacted leadership practices. The final set of five emergent themes represents findings that were consistently supported through cross-source analysis and demonstrated explanatory relevance to the study's research question.

The Leadership Conscious Authenticity Index (CAI) informed the analytic process by providing a conceptual framework for organizing and interpreting findings (see Appendix G). Although CAI dimensions were not used as deductive coding categories, emergent themes were examined in relation to CAI constructs to support conceptual coherence and analytic rigor. This approach ensured that findings remained grounded in participant data while remaining aligned with established theory.

Table 2

Study Data Sources and Analytic Outputs

Data source	Scope	Origin/format	Analysis summary
Employee interviews	6 participants 223 coded excerpts	Semi-structured interviews (Zoom)	Inductive thematic coding Cross-case synthesis CAI alignment applied post-coding
Leadership questionnaires	20 respondents 160 coded excerpts (open- ended)	Qualtrics questionnaire (Likert + open-ended)	Descriptive summaries for closed-ended items Inductive coding for open- ended responses CAI alignment applied post-coding
Publicly available documents	16 organizations 16 inclusion/impact resources 13 codes of conduct 4 leadership doctrine items	Open-source corporate documents and webpages	Pattern identification and thematic comparison to interviews and questionnaires

Table 2 summarizes the scope of each data source and the analytic procedures applied prior to thematic integration. Patterns were identified systematically within each data set before cross-source comparison was conducted to examine convergence and divergence. The integration of interview, questionnaire, and document data supported analytic rigor by grounding themes in multiple forms of evidence. The following subsection introduces the five emergent themes derived from this triangulated analysis of leadership authenticity.

Overview of Findings

Five emergent themes are presented in alignment with the study's guiding research question and were derived through analysis and triangulation of employee interviews, leadership questionnaires, and publicly available organizational documents. The themes are presented in an order that moves from values alignment and ethical consistency to employee voice, decision-making transparency, and the organizational reinforcement of authenticity. Table 3 provides an overview of the emergent themes, illustrative supporting codes, and their primary alignment with CAI dimensions.

Table 3

Emergent Themes, Supporting Codes, and CAI Alignment

Emergent theme	Supporting inductive codes (examples)	Primary CAI alignment
Stated Values Versus Lived Leadership Practice	Authenticity in Practice Authenticity as Alignment Authenticity as Clarity	Self-Awareness Internalized Moral / Ethical Perspective
Moral Consistency and Ethical Follow-Through	Authenticity as Moral Consistency Authenticity as Courage Authenticity under Pressure	Internalized Moral / Ethical Perspective
Employee Voice and Psychological Safety	Authenticity as Inclusive Process Authenticity as Inclusion Authenticity as Belonging	Relational Transparency Balanced Processing / Decision-Making
Transparency in Decision-Making	Authenticity as Clarity; Authenticity as Accountability; Authenticity as Vulnerability / Risk	Balanced Processing / Decision-Making; Relational Transparency
Authenticity as Organizational Culture Rather Than an Individual Trait	Authenticity as Reflection; Authenticity as Understanding; Authenticity as Belonging	Integrated across CAI dimensions

Although participant identities are protected, the discussion in this section reflects the perspectives of individuals working within Fortune 500 technology organizations, including both leaders and employees commenting on leadership authenticity. Presenting individual-level

characteristics preserves confidentiality while acknowledging the human experiences underlying the data. Because excerpts are attributed to participant identifiers (e.g., E01–E06 and R01–R20), including role level and organizational tenure enhances analytic transparency. These details also support interpretation of how leadership authenticity is experienced and described across hierarchical levels. Tables 4 and 5 summarize the characteristics of employee interview participants and leadership questionnaire respondents, respectively.

Table 4

Employee Interview Participants (n = 6)

ID	Gender	Current Role	Years in Current Role	Current Company Size
E01	Female	Senior Director	16-20 years	10,000+
E02	Male	Business Intelligence Developer	16-20 years	10,000+
E03	Female	Senior Director	16-20 years	10,000+
E04	Female	Campaign Program Manager	16-20 years	10,000+
E05	Male	Global Account Director	16-20 years	10,000+
E06	Female	Software Engineer	Less than 5 years	10,000+

Table 5*Leadership Questionnaire Participants (n = 20)*

ID	Gender	Current Role	Years in Current Role	Current Company Size
R01	Male	Senior IT Manager	20+ years	5,000-9,999
R02	Male	Lead Auditor	11-15 years	500-999
R03	Male	Chief Information Security Officer	11-15 years	1,000-4,999
R04	Female	Fulfillment Center Lead	5-10 years	1,000-4,999
R05	Male	Staff Manager	5-10 years	500-999
R06	Male	Director	11-15 years	1,000-4,999
R07	Female	Director, Information Technology	11-15 years	10,000+
R08	Male	Chief Executive Officer	11-15 years	1,000-4,999
R09	Male	Supervisor	11-15 years	10,000+
R10	Male	IT Manager	20+ years	1,000-4,999
R11	Male	Project Manager Lead	5-10 years	10,000+
R12	Male	IT Officer	11-15 years	10,000+
R13	Male	Information Technology Lead	11-15 years	5,000-9,999
R14	Male	President	20+ years	5,000-9,999
R15	Male	Senior Manager	11-15 years	5,000-9,999
R16	Female	Staff Manager	5-10 years	10,000+
R17	Male	Chief Information Officer	11-15 years	5,000-9,999
R18	Female	Senior Manager	20+ years	10,000+
R19	Female	Vice President of Marketing	5-10 years	10,000+
R20	Female	IT Senior Manager	5-10 years	1,000-4,999

Emergent Theme 1: Trust in Leadership Eroded When Actions Did Not Reflect Stated Values

Interview and questionnaire narratives reflected repeated comparisons between stated leadership values and leadership behavior during decisions and periods of organizational change.

Across accounts, authenticity was described in relation to follow-through on stated commitments rather than values language alone. Employees evaluated authenticity by comparing leadership messaging with observable behavior during moments of organizational change or decision-making. One employee contrasted messaging between two Fortune 500 technology organizations, explaining that “Anytime they did make an announcement about something that was trending, it was like, ‘oh, that’s just a PR move.’ Whereas with my current company, it’s like, no, that’s who they are. Every employee knows that, because it is woven into the culture” (Employee interview, E03). Together, these accounts illustrate how employees evaluated leadership authenticity by comparing organizational messaging with the behaviors leaders demonstrated in practice.

Employee interview data indicated that participants were attentive to discrepancies between leadership messaging and leadership action, as one employee summarized, “a big, big piece of leadership authenticity is really making sure that you’re explaining the whys behind the whats” (Employee interview, E01). Another employee described how perceptions of leadership authenticity shifted when leadership decisions appeared inconsistent with expectations of fairness and transparency, explaining that “that feedback really affected how I felt about the company going forward. I felt disenfranchised and no longer trusted them” (Employee interview, E02). Several employees described contexts where transparency, integrity, and employee-centered leadership were emphasized in formal communications but applied inconsistently during decision-making and organizational change. In these accounts, authenticity was assessed not by articulation of values alone, but by whether leaders demonstrated those values when faced with competing priorities or organizational constraints. Participants described authenticity as contingent upon leaders’ willingness to act in alignment with stated principles. Leadership

questionnaire responses reflected a similar emphasis on behavioral alignment between stated values and leadership practice, as one leader noted that “an authentic leader doesn’t hide behind corporate jargon” (Leader questionnaire response, R01).

Employee interview data also included examples in which leadership actions were perceived as consistent with stated values. These participants described leaders who communicated openly, acknowledged uncertainty, and demonstrated follow-through on commitments. In these instances, leadership authenticity was associated with behavioral consistency rather than perfection, with employees emphasizing the importance of alignment between intent and action over time. Variability across employee accounts suggested that experiences of alignment differed by organizational context and leadership proximity.

Leadership questionnaire responses reflected a strong emphasis on values-based leadership and self-perceived alignment between personal values, organizational values, and leadership behavior. Leaders frequently described their leadership approach as guided by ethical principles, self-awareness, and intentional decision-making, with one leader emphasizing that “it means being genuine, real, and honest so that you have a better understanding with peers” (Leader questionnaire response, R04). Questionnaire responses emphasized commitment to transparency, integrity, and trust-building as central components of authentic leadership. Collectively, these responses suggested that leaders perceived a high degree of congruence between their stated values and their leadership practices.

Publicly available organizational documents consistently reinforced the importance of values-driven leadership and authenticity as foundational components of organizational culture. These documents presented leadership authenticity as both an organizational expectation and a cultural ideal, yet they primarily articulated aspirational commitments and did not address how

values were enacted across varied leadership contexts or operational challenges. Across data sources, partial alignment emerged between stated values and lived leadership practice. While leaders and organizations consistently articulated commitments to authentic and values-based leadership, employee experiences reflected variability in how those commitments were enacted in practice. This divergence was most evident in employee accounts describing situations in which leadership actions were perceived as inconsistent with stated values during periods of organizational pressure or complexity.

Descriptively, this theme aligned most closely with the Leadership Conscious Authenticity Index dimensions of self-awareness and internalized moral and ethical perspective. Leadership questionnaire responses and organizational documents emphasized moral intent and values alignment, while employee interview data highlighted the importance of leaders' awareness of how actions were interpreted and experienced by others. Alignment between stated values and leadership behavior emerged as a central criterion through which leadership authenticity was evaluated across organizational levels.

Emergent Theme 2: Ethical Behavior and Follow-Through Emerged as Indicators of Leadership Authenticity

A second emergent theme across the data sources concerned moral consistency and ethical follow-through in leadership practice. Participants frequently described leadership authenticity in relation to whether leaders acted consistently with stated ethical standards and demonstrated follow-through on moral commitments over time. This theme captures how leadership authenticity was discussed in relation to ethical decision-making, accountability, and consistency over time, rather than values statements alone. In this context, authenticity was associated with accountability, transparency, and ethical consistency, as one employee described

leadership as being grounded in “being respectful and accountable, being transparent in communication, and being open and honest” (Employee interview, E02).

Employee interview accounts frequently linked leadership credibility to moral consistency in decisions and follow-through. Several participants described leaders articulating ethical expectations or fairness principles while describing inconsistent application of those standards during situational pressure or shifting organizational priorities. One participant emphasized that accountability was most visible when leaders accepted responsibility for outcomes and consistently held themselves and their teams accountable (Employee interview, E04). In these accounts, ethical inconsistency was described alongside reduced trust in leadership and skepticism regarding stated commitments. Participants frequently emphasized that ethical follow-through was most visible during challenging situations, such as performance management decisions, organizational restructuring, or responses to employee concerns.

Conversely, some employee participants described leaders who demonstrated moral consistency through clear decision rationales, equitable treatment of employees, and willingness to accept responsibility for outcomes. One participant described how leadership accountability reinforced trust when ethical violations occurred, explaining that “one of our C-level leaders was found to be conducting business in an unethical manner... leadership made that public and addressed it directly” (Employee interview, E04). These participants associated leadership authenticity with leaders’ ability to uphold ethical standards even when doing so involved personal or organizational cost. Another participant contrasted ethical standards across organizations, explaining that “in my current company everything is done within the confines of ethical standards and doing it the right way. I’ve dealt with past companies where that was not

the case” (Employee interview, E05). Across these accounts, authenticity was described as emerging from predictable ethical behavior rather than isolated acts of integrity.

Leadership questionnaire responses emphasized ethical responsibility and moral intent as central components of authentic leadership. Leaders often described their leadership approach as grounded in ethical principles, fairness, and consistency, with one respondent defining authenticity as “leading in a way that is true to one’s values, beliefs, and personality, while consistently aligning actions with words” (Leader questionnaire response, R01). Questionnaire responses highlighted commitments to acting in accordance with organizational values and maintaining integrity in decision-making processes. Collectively, these responses reflected leaders’ perceptions of themselves as ethically consistent and committed to aligning behavior with moral standards.

Publicly available organizational documents consistently reinforced expectations for ethical leadership and moral conduct. Codes of conduct, leadership principles, and values statements emphasized integrity, accountability, and ethical responsibility as foundational leadership expectations. These documents positioned ethical consistency as a core element of organizational culture and leadership identity. The language used in these materials conveyed normative expectations for leaders to act in accordance with clearly articulated ethical standards.

When examined across data sources, findings indicated convergence in the articulation of ethical expectations and divergence in perceived enactment. Leaders and organizations consistently emphasized ethical responsibility in self-reported and public narratives, while employee experiences reflected variability in how consistently those standards were upheld in practice. Employee accounts included situations where ethical principles were described as applied inconsistently, particularly when competing organizational interests were involved.

Within the CAI framework, this theme aligned most closely with internalized moral and ethical perspective. Questionnaire responses and organizational documents described moral intent and ethical values, while employee interview accounts described the importance of consistent ethical behavior and follow-through. Across data sources, moral consistency emerged as a key indicator through which leadership authenticity was evaluated within the organizational context.

Emergent Theme 3: Psychological Safety Emerged as a Behavioral Indicator of Leadership Authenticity

A third emergent theme across the data sources concerned employee voice and psychological safety as central components of how leadership authenticity was experienced within the organizational context. Employee interview and questionnaire accounts linked leadership authenticity to whether employees could raise concerns, offer feedback, and ask questions without fear of negative consequences. This theme reflects how perceptions of leadership authenticity were shaped by leaders' responsiveness to employee input and the extent to which open communication was supported in practice.

Employee interview accounts described psychological safety as closely connected to employees' willingness to speak up. One participant explained that "there was a message sent through to everybody that if you're not comfortable, speak up. Whether you want to switch it up or adjust how you're working, that was communicated openly" (Employee interview, E06). Several participants described environments where leaders encouraged open dialogue in principle, while employees remained hesitant to speak candidly due to power dynamics or prior experiences of dismissal or retaliation. In these accounts, invitations for feedback were described as symbolic when concerns were not acknowledged or addressed through follow-up.

Authenticity was discussed in relation to how leaders responded to dissenting perspectives rather than the presence of formal feedback mechanisms alone.

Some employee participants also described leadership environments where voice was actively supported through consistent leader behavior. One participant described how psychological safety was intentionally reinforced through organizational initiatives, explaining that their company placed substantial emphasis on leadership development related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and psychological safety (Employee interview, E03). These accounts described comfort raising concerns, asking questions, and offering alternative viewpoints when leaders demonstrated attentiveness, acknowledged input, and provided follow-up communication. In these cases, psychological safety was described as emerging from repeated interactions that reinforced trust and mutual respect. Employees associated authentic leadership with leaders' willingness to engage with uncomfortable feedback and to communicate transparently about decisions influenced by employee input.

Leadership questionnaire responses emphasized the importance of open communication and inclusivity as components of authentic leadership. One leader stated, "We were encouraged to raise concerns, speak openly, and prioritize ethical decision-making, even under pressure" (Leader questionnaire response, R02). Leaders described encouraging dialogue, valuing diverse perspectives, and creating space for employee feedback. Questionnaire responses reflected leaders' perceptions that fostering psychological safety and promoting employee voice were integral to effective leadership practice. These responses suggested that leaders viewed openness and accessibility as markers of authenticity within their leadership roles.

Publicly available organizational documents described commitments to inclusion, respect for diverse perspectives, and open communication. Values statements, leadership principles, and

cultural narratives also referenced speaking up, collaboration, and employee engagement as cultural expectations. These documents framed employee voice as a positive organizational norm and positioned psychological safety as a cultural expectation. However, the documents primarily articulated aspirational commitments and did not address how psychological safety was experienced or maintained across organizational hierarchies.

Across data sources, findings reflected partial convergence in the articulation of support for employee voice and psychological safety and divergence in lived experience. While leaders and organizations consistently emphasized openness and inclusivity in self-reported and public narratives, employee interview data revealed variability in how safe employees felt expressing concerns or dissenting views. Differences in employee experiences suggested that psychological safety was shaped primarily by leadership behaviors at the local level rather than by organizational messaging alone.

When considered through the lens of the Leadership Conscious Authenticity Index, this theme emphasized relational transparency and balanced processing as central to employees' experiences of leadership authenticity. Leadership questionnaire responses and organizational documents emphasized openness and inclusivity, while employee interview data highlighted the importance of leaders' willingness to listen to multiple perspectives and incorporate feedback into decision-making processes. Employee voice and psychological safety emerged as key indicators through which leadership authenticity was evaluated across organizational levels.

Emergent Theme 4: Clear Communication of Decision Rationale Influenced Perceptions of Leadership Authenticity

This theme addressed transparency in leadership decision-making and how transparency shaped perceptions of leadership authenticity. Accounts across the data referenced whether

leaders communicated decision rationales, acknowledged constraints, and explained how outcomes were determined. Transparency was discussed in relation to trust and credibility, particularly when communication was limited or incomplete. Across employee accounts, leadership authenticity was evaluated based on whether leaders explained not only the outcomes of decisions, but also the reasoning and constraints that informed those decisions.

Employee interview accounts described transparency in terms of clarity and completeness rather than communication volume. One employee described transparency as rooted in sustained clarity and communication, noting that “there’s so many different strategies, but I think it’s really over-communication. We have everything that we need in order to do our jobs well and feel empowered to do so” (Employee interview, E05). Several participants described decisions communicated without sufficient context, which employees described as producing uncertainty and speculation. One participant described how employees at lower organizational levels often lacked visibility into leadership decision-making, noting that when the reasoning behind decisions was not communicated, outcomes sometimes felt confusing or misaligned with employee expectations (Employee interview, E02). These descriptions reflected how limited transparency in leadership decision-making contributed to perceptions of distance between leadership and employees, particularly when decisions affected workload, role expectations, or organizational stability. Employees emphasized that authenticity was influenced by whether leaders explained the reasoning behind decisions and acknowledged competing considerations.

Other employee participants described leadership practices characterized by greater transparency. One participant emphasized that transparency became especially important during organizational changes or product rollouts, explaining that when leaders clearly communicated the context behind decisions, employees were better able to understand and support those

outcomes (Employee interview, E04). In these situations, leaders were described as more authentic when decision rationales were communicated openly, trade-offs were discussed, and uncertainty was acknowledged. Transparency was also described as supporting a sense of inclusion, even when outcomes were unfavorable. These accounts suggested that employees associated authenticity with leaders' willingness to explain not only outcomes, but the reasoning and constraints that shaped those outcomes.

Leadership questionnaire responses frequently highlighted transparency as a component of authentic leadership practice. One leader described prioritizing openness despite external pressures, noting, "Despite project pressure, I prioritized transparency by disclosing a key issue... which ultimately strengthened trust and collaboration" (Leader questionnaire response, R12). In contrast, another leader acknowledged the complexity of transparent decision-making, stating, "One of the biggest challenges I've faced is balancing transparency with discretion" (Leader questionnaire response, R11). Leaders described efforts to communicate openly, provide clarity around expectations, and share information to support trust within teams. Questionnaire responses reflected leaders' perceptions that transparent communication contributed to credibility and alignment with organizational values. These responses suggested that leaders viewed transparency as an intentional leadership behavior rather than an incidental outcome of communication practices.

Publicly available organizational documents emphasized transparency as an organizational value and leadership expectation. Leadership principles, values statements, and cultural narratives frequently referenced open communication, clarity, and accountability. These documents framed transparency as integral to ethical leadership and organizational trust. As with other document-based findings, the emphasis was primarily aspirational, focusing on the

importance of transparency without detailing how transparency was operationalized in leadership decision-making across contexts.

When examined across data sources, findings reflected convergence in the stated importance of transparency but divergence in its perceived enactment. Leaders and organizations consistently emphasized transparency in self-reported and public narratives, while employee interview data revealed variability in how transparent decision-making was experienced at the local level. Employee accounts suggested that transparency was most impactful when leaders communicated not only outcomes, but also reasoning, constraints, and implications.

Considered through the Leadership Conscious Authenticity Index, this theme reflected dimensions associated with balanced processing and relational transparency, particularly in relation to leaders' willingness to share information, consider multiple perspectives, and communicate decision rationales. Transparency in decision-making emerged as a salient organizational expectation that reinforced perceptions of leadership authenticity across leadership levels.

Emergent Theme 5: Leadership Authenticity Was Reinforced Through Organizational Culture Rather Than Individual Traits Alone

This theme addressed leadership authenticity as an organizational condition shaped by norms, expectations, and reinforcement mechanisms rather than solely an individual leader attribute. Accounts across the data referenced authenticity as supported or weakened through organizational practices and cultural signals that extended beyond individual leader behavior. Although participants recognized authenticity in some individual leaders, they emphasized that its durability depended on alignment with organizational norms and reinforcement mechanisms. Participants also described tension between individual leader authenticity and broader

organizational culture, noting that authentic leadership could be constrained or diluted when systemic norms did not reinforce consistent values and behavior.

Employee interview accounts described perceptions of authenticity as shaped by patterns observed across leaders and organizational contexts rather than isolated interactions. One participant explained that authenticity was embedded within the organization's guiding principles and everyday practices, noting that "I feel like it has naturally become part of what the company stands on, the credo and what the company stands for" (Employee interview, E01). Several participants similarly described authenticity as reinforced when organizational norms and expectations supported consistent leadership behavior across teams and contexts. Some accounts described authenticity as consistent across teams and leadership levels, with shared norms reinforcing transparency, ethical conduct, and employee engagement. In other cases, participants described variability by individual leader, with authenticity unevenly supported within the broader organizational culture. One employee contrasted symbolic messaging with lived culture, stating:

Anytime they did make an announcement about something that was trending, it was like, oh, that's just a PR move. Whereas with my current company, it's like, no, that's who they are. Every employee knows that, because it is woven into the culture. (Employee interview, E03)

Several employees emphasized that organizational responses to leadership behavior influenced how authenticity was understood and sustained. Participants noted that when leaders were held accountable for actions inconsistent with stated values, authenticity was perceived as a cultural expectation rather than an individual choice. Conversely, when inconsistent or ethically questionable behaviors were perceived as tolerated or unaddressed, employees described

authenticity as fragmented and dependent on individual leader disposition rather than organizational commitment. One employee described a previous organizational environment characterized by low trust, explaining that the absence of trust across leadership levels contributed to perceptions of inauthentic leadership (Employee interview, E04).

Leadership questionnaire responses reflected an understanding of authenticity as both a personal leadership responsibility and a component of organizational culture. Leaders frequently described efforts to model authentic behavior while also referencing the importance of shared values, leadership standards, and cultural alignment. One leader reflected on tensions between personal authenticity and organizational context, noting:

In a previous role, my organization underwent a major restructuring that involved shifting teams, redefining roles, and introducing new leadership directives. As a people-first leader who values transparency and consistency, I found it challenging to navigate sudden changes that I wasn't fully aligned with or able to fully explain due to confidentiality. (Leader questionnaire response, R16)

Questionnaire responses suggested that leaders viewed authenticity as reinforced through organizational practices, communication norms, and leadership development processes rather than as an isolated leadership characteristic.

Publicly available organizational documents consistently framed leadership authenticity as integral to organizational identity and culture. Values statements, leadership frameworks, and cultural narratives emphasized authenticity, integrity, and ethical leadership as collective expectations. These documents positioned authentic leadership as a defining feature of organizational culture and a shared responsibility across leadership roles. The documents

emphasized consistency in values and behavior as a means of sustaining trust and organizational coherence.

Across data sources, findings indicated convergence in the framing of authenticity as a cultural construct and divergence in how consistently that construct was experienced in practice. Organizational documents and leadership narratives presented authenticity as a shared value, while employee accounts described variability in how consistently those values were operationalized across leadership levels and operational contexts. Employee accounts also described authenticity as stronger when organizational systems reinforced consistent leadership behavior rather than relying on individual leader disposition alone.

This theme aligned with multiple CAI dimensions, including self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and internalized moral and ethical perspective. Authenticity within organizational culture emerged as shaped by the interaction between individual leadership behaviors and systemic reinforcement mechanisms, highlighting the role of organizational context in shaping how leadership authenticity was experienced across levels.

Summary of Findings

Leadership authenticity was experienced in multiple ways within Fortune 500 technology organizations. Across the five emergent themes, leadership authenticity was described in relation to alignment between stated values and enacted behaviors, consistency in ethical decision-making, support for employee voice and psychological safety, transparency in leadership decision-making, and the extent to which authenticity was reinforced as an organizational culture rather than an individual leader attribute. Patterns identified across employee interviews, leadership questionnaires, and publicly available organizational documents reflected areas of convergence in how authenticity was articulated and areas of divergence in how authenticity was

experienced in practice. Taken together, these findings describe how leadership authenticity manifested across organizational levels and contexts and establish a foundation for evaluating the implications of these patterns in the subsequent section.

Evaluation of the Outcomes

The purpose of this subsection is to evaluate the outcomes of the patterns presented in the previous section and to interpret their significance in relation to the practice-based problem and the study's guiding research question. While the Findings subsection provided an objective, descriptive account of patterns identified across data sources, the Evaluation of Outcomes synthesizes those patterns to examine what they reveal about leadership authenticity as experienced within Fortune 500 technology organizations. Prior research similarly characterizes authentic leadership as an organizational phenomenon shaped by transparency, ethical leadership practices, and leader–follower interactions within organizational systems (Arias et al., 2024). Interpretation in this subsection is informed by the Leadership Conscious Authenticity Index (CAI), which provides a conceptual lens for understanding how authenticity is enacted and perceived across leadership contexts.

When considered across the full set of findings, leadership authenticity emerged not as a singular or static trait, but as a dynamic construct shaped by behavioral consistency, ethical follow-through, communication practices, and organizational reinforcement mechanisms. This interpretation aligns with prior scholarship describing authentic leadership as emerging through leader behaviors that reinforce trust, transparency, and ethical consistency within organizational culture (Gardiner, 2023). Across emergent themes, a recurring outcome was the presence of divergence between leaders' articulated commitments to authenticity and employees' lived experiences of leadership behavior. While leadership questionnaire responses and publicly

available organizational documents consistently reflected strong alignment with the principles of authentic leadership, employee interview data revealed variability in how those principles were enacted in practice. This pattern suggests that although authentic leadership is often described in prior research as producing consistently positive employee perceptions, the findings of this study indicate that organizational context and leadership behavior may influence how authenticity is experienced across different levels of the organization (Jun et al., 2023).

Evaluation of the outcomes related to stated values versus lived leadership practice suggests that authenticity was most salient to employees when leaders demonstrated alignment between espoused values and observable behavior, particularly during periods of organizational complexity. When leaders acted in ways that were consistent with stated commitments, authenticity was reinforced. When discrepancies were perceived, employees questioned the credibility of leadership messaging. This outcome highlights the importance of behavioral congruence in shaping perceptions of authenticity and aligns with CAI dimensions related to self-awareness and internalized moral and ethical perspectives (Koleňáková et al., 2023).

Findings related to moral consistency and ethical follow-through highlight ethics as central to authenticity across accounts. Employee data described ethical standards as most consequential when leaders applied them consistently during competing organizational priorities. Where ethical principles were perceived as selectively applied, leadership authenticity was diminished. In contrast, leaders who demonstrated consistent ethical behavior and accountability were perceived as more authentic, regardless of outcome favorability. These outcomes reinforce the CAI emphasis on internalized moral and ethical perspective as a foundational dimension of authentic leadership (Koleňáková et al., 2023).

Evaluation of outcomes associated with employee voice and psychological safety revealed that authenticity was closely tied to leaders' responsiveness to employee input rather than to the mere presence of formal feedback channels. This finding contrasts with prior research suggesting that authentic leadership environments naturally foster employee voice through supportive organizational structures, indicating that in this study employee perceptions of authenticity depended more on leaders' active engagement with employee perspectives than on formal participation mechanisms (Zheng et al., 2023). Employees described feeling most confident in leadership authenticity when leaders engaged openly with dissenting perspectives and demonstrated willingness to consider multiple viewpoints. Where employee voice was discouraged or superficially acknowledged, perceptions of authenticity were weakened. These outcomes align with CAI dimensions of relational transparency and balanced processing, emphasizing the importance of inclusive decision-making processes in authentic leadership practice. Prior research similarly indicates that authentic leadership encourages employee voice when leaders demonstrate openness to diverse perspectives and actively incorporate employee input into decision-making processes (Zhang et al., 2021).

Outcomes related to transparency in decision-making further illustrate how communication practices influenced perceptions of leadership authenticity. Employees reported that transparency was most effective when leaders communicated not only decisions, but also the reasoning, constraints, and trade-offs involved. Limited transparency during decisions with direct employee impact was described alongside uncertainty and skepticism about leadership communication. These outcomes support the CAI emphasis on balanced processing and relational transparency as critical mechanisms through which authenticity is enacted and perceived. Prior research also highlights transparent communication as a key mechanism through

which authentic leadership strengthens employee trust and organizational engagement (Cenkci & Bircan, 2024).

Research Question 1

How does leadership authenticity influence the operational culture and strategic effectiveness of Fortune 500 technology companies while considering the roles of DEI initiatives?

In response to this question, the analysis indicated that leadership authenticity influenced operational culture and strategic effectiveness through alignment between stated values and enacted leadership behavior, ethical consistency, support for employee voice and psychological safety, and transparency in decision-making. Across the data sources, authenticity was strongest when leaders demonstrated follow-through on commitments, applied ethical standards consistently, and communicated decision rationales with clarity. Where discrepancies between stated commitments and enacted practices emerged, trust and credibility appeared weaker, and employee voice and psychological safety were less stable. Publicly available organizational documents framed authenticity, inclusion, and ethics as leadership expectations, while employee accounts reflected variability in how consistently those expectations were operationalized across organizational contexts. These outcomes align with prior research reviewed in Section 1 describing authentic leadership as reinforcing trust, ethical conduct, and transparent communication within organizational systems, while also extending that literature by illustrating how employee perceptions of authenticity vary when leadership actions diverge from stated values and commitments in practice.

Integration with Existing Research and the CAI Framework

The findings extend prior literature describing authentic leadership as a driver of trust and employee engagement by showing how authenticity was contingent on follow-through during consequential decisions, not stated intent alone (Peyton et al., 2023). In this study, employee accounts indicated that authenticity was strengthened when leaders communicated decision rationales, acknowledged constraints, and demonstrated consistency over time, aligning with literature emphasizing relational transparency as a mechanism through which trust and credibility develop (Gardiner, 2023). The analysis also aligned with research describing how authentic leadership relates to employee well-being, including psychological safety and reduced workplace isolation, by showing that employee voice was more stable when leaders engaged with dissent and followed up on concerns (Cenkci & Bircan, 2024).

Prior literature often characterizes authentic leadership as a relatively stable leader attribute associated with transparency, ethical conduct, and self-awareness (Gardiner, 2023; Jun et al., 2023; Kolečková et al., 2023; Peyton et al., 2023). Participant accounts in this study reflected a more conditional understanding of leadership authenticity. Rather than describing authenticity as a consistently observable feature of routine leadership behavior, employees associated it with moments of organizational tension, including contested decisions, competing priorities, and periods of heightened pressure. Participants focused on situations where leaders faced constraints that limited options while still requiring alignment with stated values. Here, authenticity was reflected in how leaders managed complexity, communicated trade-offs, and responded to competing demands during decision-making. This distinction extends prior research by suggesting that authenticity was not evaluated through routine leadership interactions alone, but through how leaders navigated complexity and trade-offs in practice.

At the same time, the findings add specificity to what was known by demonstrating that divergence between public commitments and lived practice was described as most salient during periods of organizational pressure, when trade-offs and competing priorities shaped leadership action. This extends the literature by clarifying that the visibility of authenticity was described as situational and context dependent, particularly when decision-making affected employees directly. The CAI framework provided a structured lens for interpreting these outcomes by showing how the themes clustered around internalized moral and ethical perspective, relational transparency, balanced processing, and self-awareness as dimensions implicated in how authenticity was described across organizational levels (Koleňáková et al., 2023).

The findings challenge assumptions in prior research, including work by Jun et al. (2023), Peyton et al. (2023), Cenkci and Bircan (2024), and Zahra et al. (2024), that describe authentic leadership as directly producing positive outcomes such as trust, engagement, and employee well-being without considering how behavioral alignment and follow-through shape those outcomes in practice. Employee accounts described authenticity as weakening when organizational systems did not consistently reinforce stated values. Several accounts described leaders stating ethical intent or inclusion commitments, then making decisions that did not align consistently with those statements. When follow-through became uneven, credibility weakened. These accounts highlight organizational context as a driver of how authenticity was experienced and indicate that individual leader behavior alone was insufficient without reinforcement through systems and accountability.

Publicly available organizational documents emphasized inclusion and respect for diverse perspectives as leadership expectations. In contrast, employee accounts described differences in how these commitments appeared in everyday leadership practice. In some cases, inclusion-

related language aligned with leaders' responsiveness to employee input, transparency in decision-making, and consistent application of ethical standards. In other cases, participants described inclusion as present in policy language but less visible in leadership behavior during consequential decisions.

Across these accounts, DEI-related commitments appeared most meaningful when they were reflected in how leaders engaged employee voice, explained decisions, and followed through on stated values. This pattern reflects prior research noting that inclusion-oriented commitments gain credibility through implementation rather than messaging alone (Baum, 2021). Within this study, authenticity was described as emerging from organizational systems and accountability structures that reinforced consistent leadership behavior, rather than from individual leader intent in isolation.

Using the Leadership Conscious Authenticity Index as the interpretive lens, participant accounts did not describe authenticity in terms of separate CAI dimensions. References to self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and internalized moral and ethical perspective tended to appear together rather than in isolation, unlike the CAI framework in which these elements are conceptualized as analytically distinct dimensions. When transparency or ethical consistency was described as uneven, authenticity was also described as weakening across the broader leadership experience. These accounts suggest that authenticity was shaped by the interaction between leader behavior and organizational systems rather than by the presence or absence of a single CAI dimension. Overall, participant accounts suggested that authenticity functioned as an integrated leadership dynamic in which transparency, ethical consistency, and responsiveness to employee perspectives were evaluated collectively within the broader organizational context.

Finally, evaluation of outcomes associated with authenticity as an organizational culture rather than an individual trait highlighted the systemic nature of leadership authenticity. Findings suggested that authenticity was most strongly perceived when organizational structures, norms, and accountability mechanisms reinforced consistent leadership behavior across levels. When authenticity depended on individual leader disposition alone, employee experiences were fragmented and inconsistent. This outcome reflects the integrative nature of CAI, suggesting that authentic leadership emerges through the interaction of individual leader characteristics and organizational context.

Collectively, the evaluation of outcomes indicated that leadership authenticity within Fortune 500 technology organizations is shaped by both individual leader behavior and organizational reinforcement mechanisms. While leaders and organizations frequently articulated commitments aligned with authentic leadership principles, employee experiences revealed that authenticity was most meaningful when values were enacted consistently, ethically, and transparently across contexts. These outcomes directly address the practice-based problem by illustrating how misalignment between stated commitments and lived experience can undermine leadership authenticity, and they provide a foundation for considering implications and recommendations for leadership practice.

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

In this study, leadership authenticity was examined through employee interviews, leadership questionnaires, and organizational documents. Across these sources, authenticity was not described as a stable leadership attribute or as something established through stated values alone. Instead, participants repeatedly evaluated authenticity during moments when leaders were required to act on those values through concrete decisions. Employees referenced situations

involving constraints, trade-offs, or direct consequences as particularly influential in shaping their assessments of leadership behavior (e.g., Employee 2 and Employee 5). In these contexts, authenticity was associated with whether leaders followed through in ways that aligned with prior commitments, rather than with the presence of formal values language. This framing positioned authenticity as an evaluative judgment grounded in observed leadership behavior across decision-making contexts.

Authenticity was evaluated most sharply under conditions of pressure, when constraints limited available options and trade-offs became unavoidable. Employees described credibility as strengthening when leaders made constraints explicit, explained the reasoning behind decisions, and acknowledged impacts to employees rather than obscuring uncertainty or defaulting to corporate language. Transparency in these contexts was not described as excessive disclosure, but as disciplined explanation. This finding indicates that transparency should be treated as an intentional leadership practice and an organizational expectation, particularly during contested decisions and periods of competing priorities.

Employee accounts also indicated that authenticity was not sustained by individual leader behavior alone when organizational systems inconsistently reinforced stated commitments. Authenticity weakened when inclusion-oriented or ethics-oriented commitments were followed by decisions that appeared misaligned or unevenly applied, particularly when accountability mechanisms were unclear. In these situations, credibility erosion was associated less with the decision outcome itself than with the absence of visible follow-through. This pattern suggests that authenticity operates as a combined leadership-and-systems outcome, requiring reinforcement through consistent decision standards, accountability practices, and organizational memory rather than reliance on individual leader intent.

Several practical actions for Fortune 500 technology leaders responsible for culture and strategic execution were identified through the analysis. Follow-through emerged as a core credibility signal rather than a soft leadership expectation. Employees described trust as strengthening when leaders returned to prior commitments, explained what changed when constraints shifted, and addressed outcomes directly instead of allowing commitments to remain unresolved. Operationalizing follow-through through visible commitments, timelines, ownership, and progress updates offers a concrete mechanism for reinforcing authenticity when decisions have direct employee impact.

Decision transparency also emerged as a practice with clear implications for leadership behavior. For consequential decisions affecting teams, resources, or employee experience, transparency was described as most effective when leaders provided a clear rationale linking decisions to organizational values and strategy, explained key constraints and trade-offs, and acknowledged next steps to mitigate negative impacts where feasible. Employee accounts indicated that transparency functioned as a signal of inclusion and respect even when outcomes were unfavorable, suggesting that trust is reinforced not by agreement, but by forthright explanation.

Employee voice and psychological safety were most stable when leaders engaged with dissent, treated concerns as legitimate inputs, and closed feedback loops after issues were raised. Structured channels that require leadership response and follow-up were described as particularly important for sustaining voice across time and leadership changes. Practices such as recurring listening forums, protected escalation pathways, and documented response commitments reduce the likelihood that psychological safety becomes dependent on individual leader temperament rather than organizational expectation.

Finally, the findings support using the Leadership Conscious Authenticity Index as an applied diagnostic lens rather than a checklist of independent traits. Self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and internalized moral and ethical perspective tended to appear together in employee descriptions rather than functioning as isolated elements.

Weaknesses in transparency or ethical consistency shaped broader perceptions of authenticity across leadership experience. This suggests that improvement efforts should focus on integrated patterns of leadership behavior and organizational reinforcement, supported through CAI-informed reflection on decision-making, accountability, and transparency practices over time (Koleňáková et al., 2023).

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should further examine how authenticity perceptions form and change over time in organizational contexts where pressure, trade-offs, and competing priorities are persistent. Findings from this study suggest that authenticity was evaluated most visibly during consequential decisions, raising questions about whether authenticity is best understood as a stable leader attribute or a context-dependent perception shaped by organizational reinforcement. Longitudinal qualitative designs could track how employee perceptions of authenticity shift across major organizational events, leadership transitions, or periods of strategic change. Such work would clarify when credibility strengthens, when it erodes, and how authenticity is potentially repaired following perceived misalignment.

Additional research should examine the relationship between stated commitments, accountability structures, and employee credibility judgments across organizational levels. In this study, perceptions of authenticity weakened when follow-through became inconsistent, even when leadership intent was clearly communicated. Future studies could explore how specific

accountability mechanisms, such as decision documentation practices, ethics escalation processes, or structured follow-through expectations, shape employee trust and authenticity perceptions. This line of inquiry would help clarify how authenticity operates as an outcome of organizational systems rather than solely as an individual leadership behavior.

Future research could expand upon this study by increasing sampling breadth and representation across roles, functions, and organizational contexts. While this study focused on Fortune 500 technology organizations, replication across other industries would support assessment of transferability and help distinguish context-specific patterns from more generalizable dynamics. Researchers could also incorporate additional data sources, such as observational data from leadership communications, internal decision artifacts where accessible, or repeated pulse measures that capture shifts in employee experience following major decisions. These approaches would strengthen triangulation while preserving the qualitative depth needed to understand how authenticity is interpreted in practice.

Future research should also explore intervention-oriented designs that examine whether specific leadership practices measurably strengthen authenticity perceptions. For example, quantitative studies could test whether structured decision transparency routines, formalized follow-through mechanisms, or psychological safety interventions lead to observable improvements in credibility, trust, and employee voice stability. Mixed-method designs may be particularly useful in this context, as they allow qualitative explanation of employee experience to be paired with quantitative indicators of perceived trust or engagement. This direction represents a logical progression from explanation toward applied testing of practices intended to support authentic leadership under pressure.

Conclusions

This study examined how leadership authenticity was experienced and evaluated within Fortune 500 technology organizations, with attention to operational culture, strategic effectiveness, and the context in which DEI-related commitments are enacted. Across employee interviews, leadership questionnaires, and publicly available corporate documents, authenticity was described as strongest when leaders aligned stated values with decisions, demonstrated ethical consistency, supported employee voice, and communicated decision rationales with clarity. Participants described authenticity as most visible during consequential decisions, when constraints and trade-offs surfaced and employees experienced the direct impacts of leadership action. These conclusions reinforce that authenticity was not assessed through values language alone, but through credible patterns of follow-through and consistency over time.

The results indicated that organizational context played a decisive role in shaping how authenticity was experienced. Where systems reinforced stated values through consistent accountability, transparency expectations, and follow-through practices, employees described authenticity as more stable and credible. Where reinforcement was uneven, credibility weakened even when leaders communicated ethical intent or inclusion-oriented commitments. This conclusion emphasizes that authenticity, as described in this study, functioned as an interaction between leader behavior and organizational systems rather than as a standalone trait expressed by individual leaders.

The implications for practice are clear and bounded by the findings of this study. Leaders who want authenticity to strengthen organizational culture and strategic execution should prioritize visible follow-through, decision transparency, and accountability mechanisms that employees can observe and experience over time. Across the data sources, credibility was

reinforced when commitments were carried through and weakened when follow-through became inconsistent, regardless of how clearly values were stated. Future research can build on these findings by examining authenticity perceptions longitudinally, exploring how accountability structures influence credibility, and evaluating intervention-oriented practices designed to support authentic leadership during periods of organizational pressure.

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Appendix A

Proof of Permission to Use the Leadership Conscious Authenticity Index (CAI)

The following document provides evidence of permission granted by Kolečáková to use the Leader's Conscious Authenticity Index (CAI) in this study. This approval was obtained via email on December 3, 2024, and it verifies that the instrument may be used for the purposes outlined in this dissertation.

Request Email to Kolečáková

The following email was sent to Kolečáková on November 17, 2024 requesting permission to use the Leader's Conscious Authenticity Index (CAI):

My name is Nicholas Wright, and I am a doctoral student in Organizational Leadership at National University. I am researching leadership authenticity within Fortune 500 technology companies as part of my dissertation, "Exploring Leadership Authenticity in Fortune 500 Technology Companies." I am kindly requesting permission to use the Leader's Conscious Authenticity Index (CAI), developed by you and your team, as a key instrument in my study.

If you agree to grant permission, I would be grateful if you could confirm via email or provide any formal documentation.

The goal of my research is to explore how leadership authenticity influences organizational practices and outcomes, particularly in high-stakes, complex corporate environments like Fortune 500 technology companies. Your work on the CAI provides a comprehensive and well-validated measure of leadership authenticity across essential

dimensions, including transparency, ethical leadership, balanced decision-making, and self-awareness. I believe the CAI aligns exceptionally well with the objectives of my study, and its integration would allow for a structured analysis of these critical leadership dimensions.

I am committed to maintaining strict ethical standards throughout the research process, in line with Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocols. Participant confidentiality and privacy will be upheld rigorously, and data will be securely managed and stored. The CAI will be used solely for academic research purposes within my doctoral study, and no modifications will be made without your consent.

Thank you very much for considering this request. I greatly admire your contributions to the field of leadership research and would be honored to incorporate your work into my study. Please feel free to contact me at n.wright2906@o365.ncu.edu should you have any questions or need further information.

I look forward to hearing from you soon,

Nicholas Wright
Doctoral Student, Department of Education, Organizational Leadership
National University

Response Email and Permission Approval from Kolečáková

Dear Mr. Wright,

I am very pleased with your interest in exploring the topic of authenticity which was also the subject of my doctoral thesis and several publications.

We definitely agree with the use of the Leader's Conscious Authenticity Index (CAI) which my team and I developed, as a key tool. We would be happy if you reference our publications.

If you are interested we are open to future collaboration on the topic of authenticity. Wishing you the best of luck during your Ph.D. studies!

Kind regards

Mgr. Veronika Koleňáková, Ph.D., MBA

Director of Postgraduate Studies

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Appendix B

Leadership Authenticity Questionnaire

Section 1: Demographics

1. Age:
 - 18–24
 - 25–34
 - 35–44
 - 45–54
 - 55–64
 - 65+
2. Gender:
 - Male
 - Female
 - Non-binary/Third gender
 - Prefer not to say
3. Years in Leadership Role:
 - Less than 5 years
 - 5–10 years
 - 11–15 years
 - 16–20 years
 - 20+ years
4. Current Role/Title:
 - (Open-ended)
5. Company Size:
 - Fewer than 500 employees
 - 500–999 employees
 - 1,000–4,999 employees
 - 5,000–9,999 employees
 - 10,000+ employees

Section 2: Closed-Ended & Likert-Scale Questions

6. Rate the extent to which transparency informs your leadership decisions, especially when sharing difficult or sensitive information.
 - Not at all
 - Slightly
 - Moderately
 - Considerably
 - Extremely

7. To what extent do ethical considerations guide your decision-making processes?
 - Not at all
 - Slightly
 - Moderately
 - Considerably
 - Extremely
8. How frequently do you find yourself making balanced decisions that incorporate diverse perspectives within the organization?
 - Never
 - Rarely
 - Sometimes
 - Often
 - Very Often
9. To what degree do you believe your authenticity as a leader impacts employee trust and engagement?
 - Not at all
 - Slightly
 - Moderately
 - Considerably
 - Extremely
10. How aligned do you feel your personal values are with the mission and values of your organization?
 - Not aligned
 - Slightly aligned
 - Moderately aligned
 - Considerably aligned
 - Fully aligned

Section 3: Open-Ended Questions

11. What does leadership authenticity mean to you?
12. Provide an example of how your personal values align or conflict with your organization's values. How does this alignment or conflict impact your approach to authentic leadership?
13. Describe specific instances where you've prioritized transparency or ethical considerations over organizational pressures or challenges. What was the outcome?
14. What strategies do you employ to maintain authenticity in leadership during challenging situations (e.g., conflict resolution, strategic shifts)?
15. In what ways do you notice your leadership style either resonating with or creating dissonance among employees? How do you address these reactions?
16. Describe a time when organizational initiatives influenced or challenged your approach to authentic leadership. How did you navigate this experience?
17. Reflect on a situation where your leadership decisions directly impacted organizational culture or employee engagement. What role did authenticity play in this scenario?
18. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences or challenges with authentic leadership?

Appendix C

Frequency Summaries

Appendix C presents frequency distributions for the closed-ended and Likert-scale questionnaire items. These descriptive summaries provide contextual insight into leaders' self-reported perceptions of transparency, ethical decision-making, balanced processing, authenticity, and values alignment. Frequencies are reported to complement the qualitative findings presented in Section 3 and to support analytic transparency.

Closed-Ended Employee Interview Frequency Summary (n = 6)

Response Category	Q6 Transparency	Q7 Ethical Guidance	Q8 Balanced Decisions	Q9 Authenticity Impact	Q10 Values Alignment
1	0 (0%)	1 (16.7%)	0 (0%)	1 (16.7%)	0 (0%)
2	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (16.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
3	1 (16.7%)	1 (16.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (16.7%)
4	4 (66.7%)	1 (16.7%)	2 (33.3%)	1 (16.7%)	2 (33.3%)
5	1 (16.7%)	3 (50.0%)	3 (50.0%)	4 (66.7%)	3 (50.0%)

Closed-Ended Leadership Questionnaire Frequency Summary (n = 20)

Response Category	Q6 Transparency	Q7 Ethical Guidance	Q8 Balanced Decisions	Q9 Authenticity Impact	Q10 Values Alignment
1	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
2	1 (5%)	0 (0%)	3 (15%)	0 (0%)	1 (5%)
3	5 (25%)	4 (20%)	3 (15%)	5 (25%)	3 (15%)
4	5 (25%)	6 (30%)	8 (40%)	7 (35%)	9 (45%)
5	9 (45%)	10 (50%)	6 (30%)	8 (40%)	7 (35%)

Note. Q6, Q7, and Q9 response anchors: 1 = Not at all; 5 = Extremely. Q8 response anchors: 1 = Never; 5 = Very often. Q10 response anchors: 1 = Not aligned; 5 = Fully aligned.

Triangulation Cross-Source Convergence by CAI Dimension

CAI Dimension	Leader Data (n codes)	Employee Data (n codes)	Document Analysis Evidence	Convergence Pattern
Relational Transparency	72	145	Codes of conduct formalize speak-up protections, non-retaliation policies, and integrity expectations. Leadership doctrine documents emphasize trust, openness, and direct communication.	Convergence is evident across all three data sources. This dimension appeared most prominently in employee interviews, suggesting that relational transparency is experienced primarily at the interpersonal level.
Self-Awareness	51	40	Leadership doctrine documents articulate values alignment, personal accountability, and identity-based leadership expectations (e.g., credos, leadership principles).	Clear cross-source convergence between leader and employee data. Organizational doctrine reinforces leader self-identity and values alignment as central to authentic leadership.
Balanced Processing	5	23	Codes of conduct establish formal decision-making protocols, escalation pathways, and accountability structures. Impact reports reference governance mechanisms supporting decision transparency.	Present across all sources, though more frequently reflected in employee narratives than in leader self-report. Document analysis reinforces these accounts by identifying formal structures that support decision accountability.
Internalized Moral / Ethical Perspective	25	15	Codes of conduct consistently define ethical standards, compliance expectations, reporting obligations, and moral consistency requirements.	Strong documentary grounding with moderate convergence across perception-based data. Ethical expectations are formally codified and are reflected to varying degrees in leader and employee accounts.

Triangulation Cross-Source Divergence by CAI Dimension

CAI Dimension	Leader Data (n codes)	Employee Data (n codes)	Divergence Observed	Analytic Interpretation
Relational Transparency	72	145	Higher frequency in employee data relative to leader self-report.	Employees emphasized interpersonal openness and communicative transparency more frequently than leaders articulated these behaviors in self-description.
Self-Awareness	51	40	Relatively comparable representation across sources.	Limited divergence observed; leader and employee accounts reflect similar emphasis on values alignment and leader self-identity.
Balanced Processing	5	23	Lower representation in leader data compared to employee narratives.	Employees referenced decision accountability and inclusion of perspectives more frequently than leaders described formal decision processes.
Internalized Moral / Ethical Perspective	25	15	Moderate variation across perception-based sources.	Ethical standards appear consistently codified in organizational structures and reflected in leader accounts, though less prominently emphasized in employee interviews.

Note. Code counts apply to Triangulation Cross-Source Convergence and Divergence tables and reflect the frequency of coded excerpts within leader and employee datasets. Document analysis evidence reflects structural or doctrinal mechanisms aligned with each CAI dimension.

Appendix D

Document Analysis Form

Research Title: Exploring Leadership Authenticity in Fortune 500 Technology Companies

Purpose: To systematically analyze corporate documents to assess alignment with the study's theoretical framework and the CAI dimensions of transparency, ethical leadership, balanced decision-making, and self-awareness.

Document Information

- **Document Title:**
- **Department/Source:**
- **Date of Publication:**
- **Type of Document** (e.g., DEI Policy, Strategic Plan, Employee Engagement Survey):
- **Brief Description:**

Document Review Sections

1. Transparency

- **Guiding Questions:**
 - How does the document reflect transparency in leadership practices?
 - Are there specific policies or statements about open communication or information-sharing?
- **Evaluation:**
 - Strongly Aligns
 - Moderately Aligns
 - Weakly Aligns
 - Not Addressed
- **Notes:** *(Includes specific examples, quotes, or observations related to transparency)*
- **Overall Rating for Transparency:** ___ /5

2. Ethical Leadership

- **Guiding Questions:**
 - How are ethical guidelines or standards represented in the document?
 - Are there references to ethical decision-making or principles guiding leader behavior?

- **Evaluation:**
 - Strongly Aligns
 - Moderately Aligns
 - Weakly Aligns
 - Not Addressed
 - **Notes:** *(Includes specific examples, quotes, or observations related to ethical leadership)*
 - **Overall Rating for Ethical Leadership:** ___ /5
-

3. Balanced Decision-Making

- **Guiding Questions:**
 - Does the document indicate inclusive or balanced decision-making practices?
 - Are diverse perspectives mentioned or encouraged in leadership decisions?
 - **Evaluation:**
 - Strongly Aligns
 - Moderately Aligns
 - Weakly Aligns
 - Not Addressed
 - **Notes:** *(Includes specific examples, quotes, or observations related to balanced decision-making)*
 - **Overall Rating for Balanced Decision-Making:** ___ /5
-

4. Self-Awareness

- **Guiding Questions:**
 - Is there mention of leader development programs that foster self-reflection or self-awareness?
 - Are there references to personal growth or feedback mechanisms for leaders?
 - **Evaluation:**
 - Strongly Aligns
 - Moderately Aligns
 - Weakly Aligns
 - Not Addressed
 - **Notes:** *(Includes specific examples, quotes, or observations related to self-awareness)*
 - **Overall Rating for Self-Awareness:** ___ /5
-

5. Additional Observations

- **Alignment with Organizational Culture and Employee Engagement:**
 - How do the document's contents reflect or influence organizational culture?
 - Are there elements that specifically address or impact employee engagement?
 - **Notes:**
-

Overall Document Summary

- **Summary of Alignment with CAI Dimensions:**
 - Transparency: ___ /5
 - Ethical Leadership: ___ /5
 - Balanced Decision-Making: ___ /5
 - Self-Awareness: ___ /5
 - **General Observations:** *(Summarize insights, trends, or any unique aspects of this document in relation to leadership authenticity)*
-

Final Rating for Document Alignment with Leadership Authenticity

- Strongly Aligned
- Moderately Aligned
- Weakly Aligned
- Not Aligned

Appendix E

Comprehensive Deductive and Inductive Coding Framework

Code Type	Code Name	Operational Definition	Data Sources Applied	CAI Dimension
Deductive	Self-Awareness	Evidence that leaders demonstrate reflection on their values, behaviors, and impact on others.	Interview, Questionnaire, Document	Self-Awareness
Deductive	Relational Transparency	Evidence of open communication, emotional honesty, and willingness to share relevant information.	Interview, Questionnaire, Document	Relational Transparency
Deductive	Balanced Processing / Decision-Making	Evidence that leaders consider diverse perspectives and multiple data points before making decisions.	Interview, Questionnaire, Document	Balanced Processing
Deductive	Ethical Integrity	Evidence that leaders act consistently with stated ethical values, even under pressure.	Interview, Questionnaire, Document	Internalized Moral / Ethical Perspective
Inductive	Authenticity as Alignment	Perceptions that leader behavior aligns with stated organizational values.	Interview, Questionnaire	—
Inductive	Authenticity as Moral Consistency	Perceptions that leaders demonstrate predictable ethical behavior across situations.	Interview	—
Inductive	Authenticity Under Pressure	Descriptions of leader behavior when navigating organizational or performance pressure.	Questionnaire	—
Inductive	Authenticity as Inclusion	Descriptions of psychological safety and employee voice within teams.	Interview	—
Inductive	Authenticity as Clarity	Descriptions of transparency in communication and decision rationale.	Interview, Questionnaire	—
Inductive	Authenticity as Accountability	Instances where leaders accept responsibility for decisions and outcomes.	Interview, Questionnaire	—
Inductive	Authenticity as Culture	Descriptions of authenticity reinforced through systemic organizational norms.	Interview, Questionnaire, Document	—

Appendix F

Publicly Available Organizational Documents Reviewed for Document Analysis

Code	Company	Leadership Doctrine / Principles	Code of Conduct / Ethics	People & Inclusion / Impact Resource
C01	Amazon	Leadership Principles	—	Diversity & Inclusion Hub
C02	Microsoft	Model, Coach, Care Framework	Standards of Business Conduct (Trust Code)	2024 Global Diversity & Inclusion Report
C03	Apple	—	Business Conduct Policy	Inclusion & Diversity Hub
C04	Alphabet (Google)	—	Google Code of Conduct	2024 Diversity Annual Report
C05	Cisco	Conscious Culture	Code of Business Conduct	FY24 Purpose Report
C06	Intel	—	Intel Code of Conduct	2023–24 Corporate Responsibility Report
C07	NVIDIA	—	NVIDIA Code of Conduct	FY2025 Sustainability Report
C08	Adobe	—	Code of Business Conduct	2024 Annual Report (People Sections)
C09	Dell Technologies	—	“How We Win” Code of Conduct	ESG & Diversity Hub
C10	IBM	—	Business Conduct Guidelines	IBM Impact Hub
C11	Oracle	—	Code of Ethics & Business Conduct	Social Impact Report
C12	Visa	—	Code of Business Conduct & Ethics	Inclusion Hub
C13	Verizon	Credo	Code of Conduct	2024 EEO-1 Report
C14	ServiceNow	—	Code of Business Conduct & Ethics	2024 DEI Report
C15	Salesforce	—	—	FY25 Stakeholder Impact Report
C16	HP Inc.	—	—	2024 Sustainable Impact Report

Appendix G

CAI Dimensions and Associated Inductive Codes

The Leadership Conscious Authenticity Index (CAI) informed post-coding alignment of emergent themes. Inductive codes were first generated from employee interviews and leadership questionnaire responses without imposing deductive categories. Following thematic development, codes were examined in relation to the four CAI dimensions to support conceptual coherence while preserving inductive integrity. This matrix summarizes how recurring inductive codes aligned with established CAI constructs.

CAI Dimension	Operational Focus in This Study	Representative Inductive Codes (Across Data Sources)	Data Sources
Self-Awareness	Leaders' reflection on personal values, alignment, and internal consistency	Authenticity as Reflection; Authenticity as Belonging; Authenticity in Practice	Employees; Leaders
Relational Transparency	Openness in communication, clarity, vulnerability, and honest disclosure	Authenticity as Clarity; Authenticity as Vulnerability; Authenticity as Reflection	Employees; Leaders
Balanced Processing / Decision-Making	Inclusion of diverse perspectives and thoughtful evaluation prior to decisions	Authenticity as Inclusive Process; Authenticity as Understanding; Authenticity as Accountability	Employees; Leaders
Internalized Moral / Ethical Perspective	Consistency in ethical standards, moral courage, and value-based decision-making	Authenticity as Moral Consistency; Authenticity as Courage; Authenticity under Pressure	Employees; Leaders