

# Authenticity in Authentic Leadership of Higher Education Institutions in Uganda: a Case study of one Private University in Uganda

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## Abstract

*This article explores the concept of authenticity in authentic leadership in higher education institutions (HEIs) using the case of one of the private universities in Uganda. Authenticity has become the gold standard for leadership in organizations to make impact. The cognitive dissonance theory used in this study describes authentic leadership as one that knows its own self through self-discovery. Qualitative data was collected from 30 participants through interviews. Document review and participant observation were conducted to supplement the interviews and content analysis was done to appreciate the qualitative data. The research questions addressed were; 1) Is authentic leadership about owning one's personal experiences? 2) Why has the concept of authenticity of leaders become popular in administration today?*

*The study found that authenticity of leadership has become a game changer in organizations today. The study concluded that authenticity of leaders has become a gold standard in management today because it necessitates owning one's personal experience (self-awareness) not only as an ethical behavior but also highly valued in administration. The implication of the study was that authentic leaders have best human resource practices aligned to both the short-term and long-term strategic goals of an organization.*

**Key words:** Authenticity, Authentic Leadership, Higher Education Institutions, Private University

## Introduction

Authenticity has become the gold standard for leadership in organizations for the accomplishment of goals and objectives today (Bill, 2016). The cognitive dissonance theory by Festinger (1957) was used to underpin this study. The theory contends that authentic leaderships know themselves (strength and weaknesses) through self-awareness measured by basic values, behaviors, beliefs, attitudes, morals, opinions and ethical behavior. Authentic leaderships exhibit best human practices and manage diversity of employees (Vogel & Wanke, 2014) with the heart to influence, propel, and inspire employees by building their enthusiasm (Donna & Chellie, 2013; Mesly, 2015; Brenda & Brooke, 2016). Authentic leaders listen to others, promote constructive discussion, do the right thing, respect the organizational culture, show heart, and make informed decisions (Northouse, 2016). Nonetheless, many higher educational institutions (HEIs) still have leaders who exhibit too much power and authority that causes fear amongst employees and subordinates. Studies by Tim (2013), Peter (2015) and Cheri Swales (2017) have consistently shown poor values, emotional intelligence, attitude, trust, credibility, and moral character as unauthentic in most leaders. Kouzes and Barry (2011) further emphasize that, "If people (employees or subordinates) do not believe in the messenger, they will not believe the message".

This study was an appreciative inquiry that unpacked the concept of authenticity in authentic leadership and endeavored to break it down from pure academic conceptualization to a more practical approach, using an example of one of the private universities in Uganda. One of the researchers taught in this university for more than five years and thus saw the transition of both ownership and leadership between 2014 and 2015. The leadership in this university was expected to be better than the old one. Unfortunately, the new leaders were more authoritative and had too much power which created a gap (poor communication, motivation, lack of trust, high attrition rate) between the leadership and employees or subordinates which could greatly impact on the university's ability to accomplish its goals and objectives (Vogel & Wanke, 2014; Kendall & Tony, 2017; Morgan, 2017). This study explores authenticity in authentic leadership of HEIs in Uganda using one private university as a case study. The key questions addressed were:

- 1) Is an authentic leadership about owning one's personal experiences?
- 2) Why has the concept of authenticity of leaders become popular in administration today?

The sections of this article include: introduction, theoretical approach, literature review, methodology, findings and discussion, conclusions and managerial implications.

## **Theoretical approach to authentic leadership**

The study adopted the cognitive dissonance theory (CDT) advanced by social psychologist Leon Festinger (1957) to explain the concept of authenticity in authentic leaders. As an action opinion theory, the CDT suggests that actions can influence subsequent beliefs and attitudes of a person. The theory holds three central assumptions that: 1) human beings are sensitive to irregularities between their actions and beliefs which automatically triggers a person's humane sense when such an inconsistency is noticed; 2) the acknowledgement of this inconsistency will certainly cause dissonance, and thus will stimulate the person to resolve the dissonance although this differs from person to person; and 3) dissonance will be resolved in one of the three ways namely: change of beliefs; change actions; and change perception of action (Northouse, 2016).

The CDT was important in this study because it is counterintuitive in guiding leaders to be authentic in a logical, consistent, and coherent way. It also explains that leaders' actions can be explained largely by their beliefs or attitudes and not the cause of them. The CDT also has great intuitive charm that helps leaders in resolving the pervasive human tendency to rationalize that is important for accomplishment of organizational purpose. However, the theory's limitation is that it assumes that all people have the same ability and mental strength to change belief, action, and perception which is not true because people are naturally different (Bill, 2016).

## Literature Review

### Is authentic leadership about owning one's personal experiences?

According to Novicevic et al. (2007), leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. An earlier study by Novicevic et al. (2005), defined leadership as the quality of the behavior of individuals in guiding people or their activities in an organized effort. Thus authentic leadership is about owning one's personal experience based on process and behavior. Leaders are identified within a group of people because they act in a seemingly beneficial manner to the group.

Generally, authentic leadership concerns the inner feeling of an individual (being true to own self) and having self-regulation. According to Brenda and Brooke (2016) authentic leaders have values which is a wide preference concerned with suitable courses of action or outcome which mirror a person's sense of doing the right or wrong or what ought to be to promoted. Graham (2014) argues that authentic leaders control their emotions to avoid causing any insensitive experience by being passionate to avoid psychological pleasure or displeasure to others. Although emotions can be tangled with mood, attitude, temperament, personality, disposition, and motivation, authentic leaders have control over them. Vogel and Wanke (2014) strongly believed that attitude defined an authentic leader in leadership because this is an emotional and mental aspect to characterize a person, mainly acquired through experience and behavior. Therefore, attitude can force a person to have a negative or positive response towards a person, place, something, or event shaping their thought and action. Accordingly, attitude can be shaped from a person's past and present which moulds their character as supported by Leroy, Palanski and Simons (2012) and Morgan (2017).

### Why has the concept of authenticity of leaders become popular in administration today?

Administration is the day-to-day management of operations in organizations to ensure efficiency of people, systems, information, controls, and other resources for the accomplishment of the goals and objectives (Surbhi, 2015). Thus changes in beliefs, change actions, and change perception of actions are being constantly identified by effective administration with authentic leadership in modern organizations (Kendall & Tony, 2017). Authentic leaders also have a high level of emotional intelligence which is important for building a culture of high employee commitment, satisfaction, motivation, honesty, and trustworthy. This results in high employee productivity, flexibility, creativity, innovation, open communication and feedback (Donna & Chellie, 2013).

Although it is quite hard to find a real genuine (authentic) leader in many private HEIs due to organizational politics, institutional/founder ideology and the pressure to deliver, among others, at minimum an authentic leader should have trust, credibility, and moral character (Kassin & Markus, 2017). Northouse (2016) argued that trusted leaders can be relied upon. Thus trust is a feeling that somebody or something can be relied upon or will turn out to be good (a feeling of being sure about something) despite having no proof (Mesly, 2015). Credibility is about believability, experience, intelligence, qualification, trustworthiness and expertise propelled by the level of charisma; while moral character is a disposition to express

behavior in consistent patterns of functions across a range of situations. It concerns leaders having proper manners or ways of behavior based on a body of ethical standards or values/principles derived from a code of conduct from a particular philosophy, religion or culture. Thus morality is to do with rightness or goodness of a person (Peter, 2015).

## Methodology

The research approach was qualitative: data was collected using ethnography, specifically participant observation that combined many strategies including documentary analysis, interviews, direct participation and observation and reflexivity. The researchers engaged directly with the participants through interviews, observation and introspection for a period of three months which helped them to share as much intimate experience as possible in the lives, experiences, actions, practices and social gist of the observed people in their setting by seeing and feeling what it was like to be part of the group being studied (Fetterman, 2009; Gubrium and Holstein, 2009). The study sample included 30 people (the vice chancellor, the dean of the faculty of socio-economic sciences, heads of department and program coordinators for six taught programs) in the faculty of socio-economic sciences. These were accessed through criterion-based sampling technique which involved selection of participants that had pre-determined criterion of importance that helped to identify, understand and observe rich cases (Patton, 2001). Interview guides were used to obtain information that could not be observed, for example: feelings, experiences, opinions, and impressions that helped to construct symbol-meaningful relations) from the researchers' point of view on the study subject. Interview guides were used to triangulate with support documents and observation. The documents included written speeches and emails of the leaders in the university while observation focused on capturing photographs of staff meetings where the leaders actively participated (on two occasions) talking about work ethics, pay, discipline of academic staff and quality assurance, among others.

## Findings of the study

### Authentic leadership

### Values

The researchers observed that the leadership at this private university had inadequate essential values required by any authentic leader. One staff, argued:

*The leaderships of this university did not fully own to one's personal experiences and rarely acted in good faith which prevented them from discovering themselves (true self or self-awareness).*

The researchers also observed:

*The leaders are bossy, have poor judgment, interpersonal skills, practice micromanagement, limited communication and feedback, lack of openness, humility, taking less informed decisions, high levels of intimidation of employees, uncertain expectations and others subordinates among others.*

However, interviews with the university leadership revealed that having an effective leader at the rudder of the institution was critical for its success. Quality leaders inspire people to be able to exploit their potential. Participants cited the issues below to constitute values of a great leader:

*A good leader is empathetic, enthusiastic and they listen, care and understand their subordinates and colleagues. They try to even understand those they disagree with which builds trust, unity and open cooperation. This creates a platform that promotes greater creativity and innovation in the organization.*

Many others also cited loyalty as a key value of a good leader, as one participant said:

*Leaders today have no choice but to be loyal to their employees if they must survive the competition. It is key in making informed decisions and forging a meaningful relationship between the leadership and employees by keeping low temperament.*

The issue of respect also was used to value a good leader. One participant argued:

*Mutual respect that flows from the top to the bottom of an organizational structure is more favored than the one from the bottom to top. Leaders who believe and practice top-bottom respect were considered authentic.*

Another participant valued a good leader by the level of compassion, as he stated:

*A good leader is compassionate and not egoistic. They listen with sincerity, humility or humility, and they have vested interest in learning about their employees. The compassion they display inspires and motivates employees and promotes teamwork among others which reduces fear, distrust, and lead to confidence, openness, effective communication and work flexibility leading to a sense of purpose.*

Other participants advanced the issues of honesty which was stressed by one:

*The leaders in this institution may have their bad side, but generally, they are honest and transparent. They interact and communicate with colleagues, thus build strong grounds for trust, authenticity, integrity that are key in any business. In turn, the leaders showed vulnerability which shows executive maturity and inspire other from past experience.*

The findings above mean that leaders in this university might at times not own to their personal experiences and rarely acted in good faith seen through their actions, but generally they were seen to have good leadership attributes which can help attain the institutional purpose.

According to Howell (2012) factors that demonstrate poor values of leaders in any institution include: poor ethical behavior; lack of ideology; lack of empathy; fear to embrace change, and over-compromising among others, that undermine negotiations between the leaders and employees to accomplish specific goals. However, showing one's true self (loyalty, respect, honesty, empathy and compassion) is important; but we must keep in mind that no one is perfect. What matters is for leaders to be able to identify their weak points (imperfections) and continuously learn or improve them.

Brenda and Brooke (2016) conclude that authentic leaders act in accordance with their own values, preferences, beliefs, attitudes and opinions, among others. But some actually fake their own values than to improve over time. A study by Donna and Chellie (2013) confirms that authentic leadership is about showing one's true self despite all human imperfections. This deters use of intimidation, punishment, threats of firing employees from work, and false accusations aimed at forcing employee obedience. It is thus important to avoid the division between "them (leaders) and us" (employees/subordinates). In a study concluded by Tim (2013), authentic leaders must know themselves by separating "what is right and what is wrong" for effective leadership.

## Emotions

The researchers observed that the leaders in this private university many times acted emotionally towards employees and other subordinates even when it was uncalled for. This was manifested by, among others, sending threatening emails to workers. For example, an email was sent to the academic staff by the Vice Chancellor demanding for examination results with words like:

*"Those who would have not handed in examination results by tomorrow should come for your letters of termination from the human resource immediately"*

As a result of such an email, the academic staff were emotionally bothered and left wondering if they were valued in this institution. One respondent stated:

*I feel very low, emotionally stressed, threatened, insecure and less valued by this institution given the harsh email from the Vice Chancellor (VC) about mere examination results. This has caused confusion to all the academic staff, and I do not think they trust the leadership any more. The leadership lacks emotional intelligence and sensitivity toward the workers.*

However, the VC emphasized that the vision of the university was clearly communicated to all staff. He defended:

*As a VC, you look at where your university is and where you want it to be in the future. If you want more student recruitments, good image and long term survival as stated in the strategic plan, you have to be a little tough to attain this. All staff must do their job on time to avoid student frustration. They have to find their results ready when they come from their holidays, and there is no compromise about this.*

The researchers also observed that the VC's behavior was emotional due to lack of trust of the staff. They claimed that the university leadership acted emotionally instead of developing and empowering them. One argued:

*Any good leader has to have an essential quality of developing and empowering their staff. Among them is by trusting them to encourage innovation and flexibility, and not to always undermine their efforts and threaten to fire them whatever the reason. The VC at times reasons with emotions and that killed his trust with employees who looked at him as unfair and as a person who does not value for his staff.*

Other participants added that the VC was emotional which deterred his ability to reach the employees in a way that exceeds the intellectual and rationality of a leader to inspire others. One interviewee said:

*The leaders in this university have limited emotional intelligence which leads them to be very irrational. They do not inspire us to bring out our best potential, and yet this should be a simple task.*

The researchers observed that not all leaders are perfect since they are human and required continuous learning: This was proved by one key informant:

*Some leaders in this institution have failed to learn how to inspire employees, but you cannot blame them. The truth is that not all people can be good leaders, and there is no substitute for natural talent. So I do not expect all our leaders in this institution to have emotional intelligence, we just have to get used to them.*

The findings mean that emotional intelligence has become a key issue in measuring leadership traits. It is the critical group of non-cognitive skills, ability and proficiency which helps leaders to control and manage their emotions before they respond to events and pressures in their organizations. This can be through self-examination of such weakness thus losing credibility as not being honest, which may deter employees from exploiting their full capacity, cause employee stress and undermine collaboration. This implies that they have to continuously learn how to: control their temper, not to show emotions and manage conflicts maturely to accomplish the institutional goals and objectives.

Leaders who act with emotions towards employees are unauthentic; leaders who realize the magic of emotional intelligence will be able to stimulate employees to the accomplishment of the goals and objectives of the organization. Emotional intelligence can inspire, motivate and build teamwork and trust between employees and employers. Emotions are not bad as long as are expressed in good faith (Leroy, Palanski & Simons, 2012; Graham, 2014; Morgan, 2017).

According to Pastora (2014), emotional intelligence can produce different physiological, behavioral and cognitive changes. In a study by Carlson (2012), leaders' behavior towards employees and other subordinates is based on the internal and external events. However, a leader who can exercise emotional self-control can actually create a management style that suits the institution and use of emotions is one of them. Brenda and Brooke (2016) strongly support that studies on emotion have increased in many academic fields given its dual nature of either being used positively or negatively by leaders. Graham (2014) contends that emotion is part of human nature that, if used carelessly, can hurt other peoples' feelings, mood, attitude, temperament, personality, disposition, and motivation.

## **Attitudes**

The researchers observed that leaders generally had a negative attitude towards employees in this private university. At times their communication was rude and some would gossip among others without seeking their consent, thus causing stress, bad work environment, fear and low work morale. One participant confirmed:

*Our leaders at times are not compassionate, some treat us as if we do not have value to the institution and yet everyone is created with value and purpose. Work life is about learning from one another, even leaders can learn from us.*

The researchers also observed that the institutional leaders at this university were not inclusive in their style of leadership. For example, one person advanced:

*The leadership attitude is not inclusive since it is based more on rumors than hard knowledge and informed decisions. Our suggestions are not included in the final decision making process, and yet we are the ones they rely on to accomplish the institutional goals. Further, not every one of us is invited to contribute to decision making which lowers our motivation.*

However, other respondents added that key attitudes of a leader were based on joyfulness, gratitude and self-belief. As explained:

*Joyful leaders are positive and can actually bring happiness to the entire staff. This is because they have sincerely have the desire to see the good in others and look out for one good or best attribute in someone to keep them smiling. Such people in turn find happiness at work, and are proud to be part of the organization.*

Other participants argued for gratitude as a good attribute of a leader. One voice stated:

*Our leadership although not always, takes time to acknowledge the hard work of their staff. This has helped build a strong and trusted team. But again, at times they shout out orders and do not appreciate our contribution, making us lose trust and respect for them.*

The researchers observed that good leadership at the university could be seen by leaders exhibiting self-belief. One participant confirmed:

*Some leaders in this institution had self-belief because they knew themselves in terms of strength and weaknesses. This has particularly helped them to make decisions on when to lead and when to follow, thus they now know what they do best which boosts their confidence and improves their leadership skills.*

This means that employees can easily tell that leaders have positive or negative attitudes probably through the way they communicate. They used attributes: compassion, inclusivity, joyfulness, gratitude and self-belief to weigh their leaders. Only leaders with self-awareness and knowing of ones' own self exploited these attributes to motivate employees.

A study by Vogel, Bohner and Wanke (2014) agreed that "leadership attitude" is a complex issue that required clear evaluation of people, events, or situations and things by scholars and practitioners. They concluded that attitude can strongly be inherent in some people and can actually mould their character positively or negatively based on their past or present social behavior. According to Elizabeth and Lynn (2014) a positive or negative attitude is highly dependent on leaders' self-esteem or mindset that helps them come up with a leadership style largely founded on ideas and feelings that can cause organizational ineffectiveness, and if not tactically managed, can destroy their private and professional lives. According to Vogel, Bohner and Wanke (2014), authentic leaders have positive attitudes which lead



to organizational development, clear setting of goals and objectives, problem management, performance feedback, building cognitive confidence and team building.

### **Why has the concept of authenticity of leaders become popular in administration today?**

#### **Trust**

The researchers observed that the leadership in the private university was inadequately trusted which had negatively impacted on employees mentally. The leaders did not trust the employees, especially those who were under the old management. It lowered their motivation, performance, morale, satisfaction, level of innovation, creativity, flexibility and promoted informal communication amongst the employees, among others. One respondent confirmed:

*The new leadership in this university does not trust us and we also do not trust them. They say one thing today and act contrary the next day. For example they have been terminating most of the old employees they found in this university and replacing them with new ones. They do not trust us because they think all the old staff are aligned to the philosophy of the first owners (old ownership and leadership) who had a conflict with them.*

One interviewee counseled;

*To build trust, the new leaders must measure as authentic. They have to be genuine, sincere transparent, and true to their word (s). Colleagues at work will easily sense unauthentic leaders and will not give their full support to the leaders if they do not trust them.*

It was also observed that the majority of participants argued that a great leader has trust and can be trusted. One participant argued:

*How can you be a great leader without trust from your followers? This is the mistake our leaders have made by thinking that others must trust them simply because they hold powerful positions or titles in the university. But trust can only be earned through demonstration of your ability, integrity, consistency, and commitment among others to deliver. It cannot be earned over night because of positions.*

However, it was also observed that few employees had started gaining trust in their leaders despite all the odds. One added:

*Some few leaders actually demonstrated clarity, compassion, good character, commitment, consistency and recognized hard workers had highly contributed to the tasks that help accomplish the university goals and objectives*

Another one responded:

*The new leadership is trying as much as possible to build a culture of trust and has become the foundation of leadership in this university. Employees now trust their leaders more than before, they have faith in them and they are inspiring to many of us. We can now manage change and have staff confidence.*

The findings mean that trust in leadership has grown and can boost the potential of employees. However, this implies that trust cannot be earned overnight. The new leadership has now realized that it is important to build trust smoothly and strongly since there tends to be lack of trust between leaders and employees in cases of takeover, mergers, or transformations.

According to Mesly (2015), trust is a feeling of somebody or something being relied upon, or will turn out to be good; it is the feeling of being sure about something even with no evidence to prove it. In a similar study, Northouse (2016) agreed that authentic leaders are good at inspiring trust among employees and other subordinates especially during mergers, takeovers, transformational and transactional eras for accomplishment of their goals and objectives. Nonetheless, Bill (2016) argued that trust begins with all people in the institution and not only by leaders since no person is perfect.

## Credibility

The researchers observed that the majority of employees and subordinates at this private university looked at their leaders as lacking credibility and trustworthiness. The leaders did not show any signs that they were gradually building their credibility (trustworthiness and intelligence) for believability and reliability for all persons in the organization. One respondent lamented:

*A leader who is credible builds trust among subordinates because such leaders have professional skills and knowledge to inform, communicate and make informed decisions. They aim at a win-win position between them and the employees. They actually “walk the talk” by making their actions speak louder than words and deliver what they promise.*

Another participant confirmed:

*The new university leadership is more credible than the old one. They display credibility and have been able to build strong teams and establish a better communication channel with us the employees.*

However, other participants confirmed that leaders lacked sufficient credibility although it had become a foundation of leadership:

*I am not happy with the credibility of the leaders in this university because among others; most of them have failed to keep up with their field of expertise, withhold information, do not want to be told the object truth, try to get people to like them than respect them, and they do not want to accept personal responsibility based on their behavior.*

Another participant praised the leaders:

*Our leaders have reason, competence, take effective decisions, and have high level of accountability; of loyalty by being true, respecting the interest of others, supporting them and caring about them and; being able to effectively delegate subordinates. This among others inspires employees because they feel respected.*

Leaders who want others to believe what they say have to first believe it themselves. This implies that leaders' credibility is centered on their words and actions. Credibility requires careful management and leaders must be concerned about it and assess it from time to time. If this is missing, then their leadership will suffer (inefficient and ineffective).

Credibility in leaders is a gradual process that takes time, effort and tolerance. However, it remains popular in administration today (Kassin & Markus, 2017). The findings match those reported by Peter (2015) whose research showed alarming figures that only 49% of employees trusted their senior management as opposed to only 28% who believed that chief executive officers are a credible source of information, and are thus authentic. Peter (2015) confirms that credibility is about believability, experience, intelligence, qualification, trustworthiness and expertise on the side of leadership. Cheri Swales (2017) confirmed that credibility is the foundation of leadership across organizations for accomplishing their goals and objectives. As earlier advanced by Kouzes and Barry (2011), "if people (employees or subordinates) do not believe in the messenger, they will not believe the message".

## Moral Character

Observations showed that the majority of the employees and subordinates considered the issue of morals in their leaders to be an ethical standard although some leaders did not measure up to it. The Golden rule was: "One should treat others as one would like others to treat oneself".

One participant argued thus:

*Our leaders have moral character because they have the assemblage of certain key qualities that differentiate one person from another which has helped create teamwork amongst employees.*

Another participant added:

*This university survives on having leaders that have a disposition to express behavior at least in coherent and consistent patterns that have helped in the function of a range of situations across the institution. They have shown us their sum of moral habits, thus gaining our trust.*

Other respondents generally agreed that moral character can be seen in leaders who demonstrate a high level of honesty, loyalty, empathy, commitment, courage and resilience in their leadership. But it was observed that some employees disliked the moral character of their leaders in this university. One interviewee, a staff member said:

*The kind of leaders that we have in this university can stress. I have no peace of mind, and I have sleepless nights. The leaders are not true to us, for example they have been restructuring and terminating employees continuously and yet they keep promising that we are safe and have job security.. Really? When day in, day out I have seen my colleagues leaving?*

Another staff member added:

*Our leaders cannot be trusted, they are people without moral character, so we do not enjoy a meaningful relationship that is open, honest, and there is no mutual respect. Their behavior cannot be trusted. They promise one thing and do totally the opposite.*

Another supported:

*I think our leaders have not yet built confidence that we trust them. They seem so worried about embarrassment due to their actions if publicly disclosed. They do not know how to manage damage control or fear of possible disgrace. They are thus being a bad role model and are not proud of themselves.*

The findings mean that moral character of leaders depends on stability of their moral qualities. It implies having like or not having attributes like courage, empathy, honesty, loyalty and fortitude or good behavior, among others.

Secondary data revealed that moral character was a key measure for an authentic leader because it defined their levels of awareness, belief, values and ethical standards among others which shaped their leadership and management styles (Bill, 2015). The findings are related to Peter (2015) who advanced that moral character is to do with the degree of rightness or goodness of a person. Thus moral character is an evaluation of a person's stable moral qualities or the total collection of qualities that differentiate one individual from another. But to Kassin and Markus (2017), moral character is the ability of a person not only to have but to be able to express it through behavior in consistent patterns of functions across a range of situations (empathy, courage, determination, commitment, honesty and loyalty). Thus moral character is about ethical and professional behavior that earns individuals respect and dignity to lead others in harmony to help accomplish the organizational goals and objectives (Donna & Chellie, 2013), otherwise leaders would have displayed the worst form of moral character in their leadership.

## **Conclusion**

The study concluded that authenticity in authentic leadership of this HEI has not yet been recognized as a gold standard. This created tension and mistrust between the leaders and the employees simply because the leaders ignored owning to their personal experiences (self-awareness). The popularity and value of authentic leaders to be able to influence, propel, and inspire employees' productivity, among others, highly depends on how employees perceive them. The display of leaders' values, emotions, attitudes, trust, credibility, and moral character determines the value in change of beliefs, change of action, and change perception of action for both the leaders and those they lead to accomplish goals and objectives.

## **Implications of the study**

The practice and managerial implication of this study to this private university is that authentic leaders have best human resource management practices aligned to the strategic goals of an institution. All they require is to systematically communicate the purposes of the institution

and the different intuitions therein in an intelligent manner to avoid being perceived negatively by the employees and other subordinates. The key weapon for leaders is to realize they are human and can make mistakes, which they can correct through self-awareness. But more empirical research is still needed although many studies have concluded that authenticity in authentic leadership is a game changer in improving organizational performance.

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