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**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON**

FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND LAW

Business School

**Authenticity in Leadership in the Cultural Context of  
Saudi Arabia**

By

**Mohammad Algarni**

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

## ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND LAW

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### **Authenticity in Leadership in the Cultural Context of Saudi Arabia**

**Mohammad Algarni**

Recent theory development in the field of leadership has focused on authentic leadership (Anderson et al., 2016). Authentic leadership is built on the concept of authenticity, which is about being real and true to oneself (Boyraz, 2014). Despite authentic leadership still being in its infancy both conceptually and empirically, a large increase in research within western cultures has emerged. However, very little is known about how it is viewed and how it works within non-western cultures (Li et al., 2014). This study addresses this significant gap and explores how Saudi leaders and followers perceive the concept of authenticity and how their perceptions of leadership are shaped by a cultural perspective. An exploratory qualitative study was undertaken using semi-structured interviews. 36 participants (18 leaders and 18 followers from 18 organisations) were interviewed within six different private sector industries in Saudi Arabia. This study takes a social constructivist view and uses an inductive design in order to give a better understanding of authenticity in leadership in a non-western culture (Gulf Cooperation Council GCC cultures), specifically within the Saudi context. This research finding conceptualise authenticity in leadership based on Islamic and Saudi perspectives, with eight distinct behaviours and practices of authenticity in leadership. It furthermore identifies the challenges and obstacles of applying authenticity in leadership within a Saudi culture. Additional findings illuminate the influence of organisational culture on authenticity in leadership and the relationship between authenticity in leadership and followership. The study yields a number of contributions. The impact of religion in general, and Islam in particular, on authenticity in leadership is a theoretical contribution to the extant body of literature concerned with authenticity in leadership. Methodologically, this study is one of few that explores authenticity qualitatively.

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## DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Mohammad Algarni declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

Authenticity in Leadership in the Context of Saudi Culture I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself
7. None of this work has been published before submission.

Signed: .....

Date: .....



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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Background and Research Gap

The history of leadership research has demonstrated that organisational success highly depends on its leadership (Behrendt et al., 2017). Globalisation has prompted the study of leadership to be deeply connected to culture, as the actions of leaders and responses of followers reflect the cultural values, attitudes and behaviours of each individual (Shahin and Wright, 2004). Moreover, culture not only influences how leaders emerge, develop and are chosen, but also affects the success of organisations (Dickson et al., 2012). Culture has been defined by Hofstede (1998) as *“the collective programming of the mind”* (p.19). It is also defined as the shared values, norms, customs and attitudes of a group of people (Javidan et al., 2006; Northouse, 2012). According to Cullen-Lester (2017) the leadership literature has established that the leadership phenomenon, is not only about leaders, but also involve followers, relational, social and cultural processes. Despite the significance of culture, most leadership theories consider leadership as a universal or general practice and take the view that leadership behaviours and processes are relatively constant across cultures (Steers et al., 2012). One major drawback of this approach is that leadership theories have a strong bias of Western culture (Dickson et al., 2003) and it can be argued that leadership processes in fact vary significantly across geographical regions (Mittal and Dorfman, 2012). An example of one of the most recently developed North American or Western theories in the field of leadership is authentic leadership. Authentic leadership is built on the psychological concept of authenticity, which is about being real and true to the self (Boyras, 2014). Authenticity is predominantly embedded in human psychology and is particularly related to ethics and the self (Clegg et al., 2007). Additionally, authenticity is defined as something genuine, real, true, or original, as opposed to fake (Peterson, 1997). The emergence of authentic leadership theory concentrates on ethics and morality, areas which have not been adequately dealt with in previous leadership theories (Conger, 1998). These issues were first mentioned by George (2003), as well as Luthans and Avolio (2003) when the Gallop Leadership Institute sponsored a summit at the University of Nebraska. Based on this summit, a special issue of the *Leadership Quarterly Journal* focussed on authentic leadership (Northouse, 2012). The concept of authentic leadership is built on previous leadership theories such as transformational and charismatic leadership, which

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are generally perceived as positive approaches to leadership (Gardner et al., 2011). Although authentic leadership is still in the initial stages of development, various studies have been conducted to explore how this new concept works (Banks et al., 2016). Additionally, the current literature on authentic leadership pays attention to the importance of followers as well as leaders. Authentic leadership emerges not only from individual leaders but from the interaction between leaders and followers, and the influence they have on each other (Tapara, 2011). Despite the large increase in articles and studies on authentic leadership, leadership studies indicate that little is known about how authentic leadership operates and is perceived in Eastern cultures (Li et al., 2014). As literature to date on authentic leadership mainly represents the Western view of authenticity (Li et al., 2014). A recent research by Kokkories and Kuhen (2014) found that the perception of authenticity is different between Western and Eastern cultures such as China. Thus, exploring the perception of authenticity in leadership in other cultures is valuable before continuing to examine the Western perception of authentic leadership. Avolio et al. (2009) argue that one of the areas of top priority for research is studying leadership in cultures that are underrepresented in the literature, such as Islamic cultures. Additionally, current leadership and culture research is lacking in studies from Saudi Arabia, (Aseri, 2015; Khan and Varshney, 2013). Besides, to the best of the author's knowledge, to date no studies have been undertaken on authentic leadership in any of the Arabian Gulf countries. This thesis, therefore, explores how Saudi leaders and followers perceive authenticity in leadership. It aims to understand perceptions and opinions of authenticity in Saudi leadership, as Figure 1 shows below.

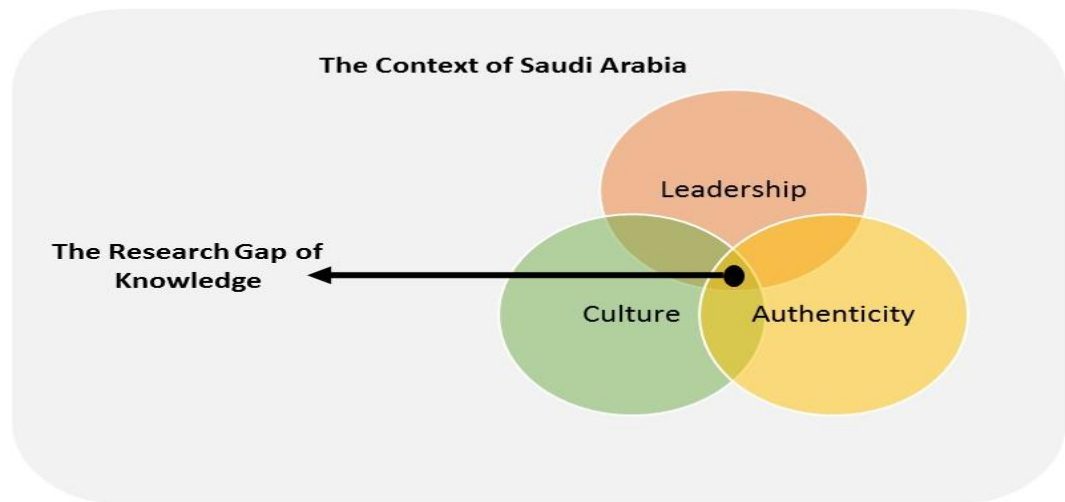


Figure 1: Research Gap of Knowledge

## 1.2 Research Aim and Objectives

The main aim of the proposed research is to explore the concept of authenticity in leadership within a Saudi context. The objectives of this study are identified as follows:

- To understand the concept of authenticity in leadership from the Saudi cultural perspective,
- To investigate specifically the influence of Saudi national culture on authenticity in leadership behaviours,
- To explore the relationship between authenticity in leadership and followership within a Saudi culture and
- To conceptualise a model of authenticity in leadership based on the findings from a Saudi culture.

## 1.3 Research Questions

The main research question to be addressed in this study is:

How do Saudi leaders and followers perceive authenticity in leadership?

The following associated questions will also be answered by the study.

1. How do Saudi leaders and followers define authenticity in leadership?

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2. What are the leadership behaviours that are associated with their perception of authenticity in leadership?
3. What is the relationship between the cultural dimensions of Saudi Arabia and authenticity in leadership?
4. To what extent do Saudi leaders influence their followers' authenticity?

### **1.4 The Context of the Study**

Understanding the context of this study is vital as the research relies deeply on the national culture of Saudi Arabia. Thus, this section begins with a general background of Saudi, moves on to a discussion of Saudi culture, and concludes with a description of the private sector in Saudi.

#### **1.4.1 Background of Saudi Arabia**

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was established on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September, 1932 by King Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, who united the different states of the Arabian Peninsula (AlGhamdi, 2012). Saudi Arabia gained global significance due to its religious, economic and geographical position.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has religious importance as it is the birthplace of Islam and the home to two of the holiest Muslim sites, the holy Mosque in Makkah and the Prophet Mohammad Mosque in Madinah. This has made the country the main spiritual centre for Muslims the world over, with millions of pilgrims visiting Saudi Arabia every year (Abdulwahab, 2015).

Economically, Saudi Arabia owns approximately 16% of the world's proven petroleum reserves and ranks as the largest exporter of petroleum, playing a leading role in OPEC. The oil industry dominates the economy, yielding roughly 80% of revenues, 45% of GDP and 90% of export earnings (Forbes, 2015). Saudi Arabia is a member of G20, an international forum for the major twenty economies in the world.

Geographically, Saudi Arabia occupies almost 80% of the Arabian Peninsula. Located in the southwest corner of Asia, the Kingdom lies at the crossroads of Europe, Asia and Africa. It

is the second largest country in the Arab world and the fifth largest state in Asia (Abdulwahab, 2015). According to the Saudi Ministry of Economy and Planning (2016) Saudi population was estimated at approximately 29.2 million in 2013, where the number of Saudi nationals is 19.84 million, or 67.9% of the total population, and the foreign population is 9.36 million, or 32.1% of the total population.

#### **1.4.2 Saudi Culture**

Islam has an enormous influence on the core belief system of the Saudi people. All aspects of life are based upon it, including values, beliefs, behaviours, rules, and morals, and community and business relationships are established on its principles (Aseri, 2015). It is believed that there are two main strands that shape Saudi Arabian culture; firstly, Bedouin and tribal traditions, customs and values, and secondly, Islamic culture. Saudi culture is therefore a blend of both (AlGhamdi, 2012). According to Al-Awaji (1989), the primary feature of Saudi culture is the centrality of the family in the social structure of the tribe, the village and the town. Since tribal ties are still significant in Saudi society, those with tribal backgrounds still have a sense of pride about it. The tribal culture emphasises family networks, personal relationships and connections (Khan and Varshney, 2013). According to Khan and Varshney (2013) most of the current literature on Saudi values only reflects Arabic values that originated in Bedouin and tribal culture. However, equality and human values are central to Islamic culture, and Islam discourages discrimination based on class and socioeconomic status (Syed and Ali, 2010). The Quran says: *“O believers, be your securers of justice, witnesses for God. Let not detestation for a people move you not to be equitable, be equitable – that is nearer to the God-fearing”* (Chapter 5 verse 8).

Current Saudi society is evolving and changing as a result of the rise in consumerism due to oil wealth, the young population, social media and the influence of globalisation and the western world (Bechtold, 2012). Although these changes affect social life, the Saudi Arabian people are still very connected to their religion, families and tribal identities (Aseri, 2015). Thus, these cultural aspects are expected to affect how leadership is practiced and also, how authenticity is perceived.

### **1.4.3 The Private Sector of Saudi Arabia**

The private sector of Saudi Arabia is significant in this research, as the study participants were recruited from this sector. Saudi Arabia has a growing private sector despite its high dependence on government spending and oil production. Due the current decrease in oil prices, the government of Saudi Arabia decided to privatise some of the government entities, such as health care, communication, education, power supply, and water (Abdulwahab, 2015). Therefore, it is expected that the private sector will grow in order to diversify its economy and employ more Saudis. Despite growth in the private sector, there is an issue of low employment among Saudi nationals in the private sector. A recent report by Voice of America (2013) estimated that about nine out of ten working Saudis were employed by the public sector, which is funded by oil revenue. The current private sector employs more than 9 million expatriates, who transfer their earnings to their home countries, despite the efforts of the Ministry of Labour to establish a saudisation project which introduced strict quotas regulating the number of Saudis and expatriates in private sector jobs (Voice of America,2013). However, the government needs to do more to make jobs in the private sector more attractive to young Saudis.

According to the Ministry of Commerce and Investment the current private sector in Saudi Arabia includes over 21 different major industries and the following gives a brief overview of the six industries that were selected for this study based on they are the largest industries and easy to access them.

- **The petroleum and petrochemical industry** accounts for roughly 80% of budget revenues of Saudi. The main player in this sector is Aramco, which is the world's largest oil producer. The petrochemical industry produces industrial products that constitute more than 90% of the Kingdom's non-oil exports (Aseri, 2015).
- **The telecommunications industry** is considered to be one of the most competitive markets in the Middle East region. The Saudi market accounts for over 50% of the mobile connected devices shipped across the Gulf Cooperation Council GCC. The total number of mobile subscriptions reached around 53 million by the end of 2015. Saudi Arabia's dominance can be attributed to its sheer size and the rapid rate at

which IT adoption is occurring across the kingdom (Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, 2015).

- **The construction industry** is responsible for the roads and railways as well as the hundreds of thousands of new homes and industrial and medical cities. The main organisations in this sector are family owned companies, for example the Saudi Binladin Group and Saudi Oger (Aseri, 2015).
- **Food industry** the rapid increase in the Saudi population has led to increased consumer spending on food. Food sales in Saudi Arabia are worth more than \$70 billion in 2016, with consumption expanding. In spite of being the largest food and beverage market in the GCC, Saudi relies heavily on imports to meet rising consumption needs (Arab News, 2016).
- **The motor industry** in Saudi continues to be the largest market for cars sales in the region, and has shown resilience in the last decade, in spite of the discouraging economic situation and decrease in oil prices. It is believed that car sales are an important indicator of business activity in a region (Arabian Business, 2014). In 2015 more than 870,000 cars were sold. Toyota has the highest market share, accounting for over a third of the total market (BMI, 2016).
- **Private Education** in Saudi one of the components supporting governmental education at all education levels. Many Saudi families choose to send their children to private schools, which is not free, because the standard of education is higher and they have modern facilities also, the extra teaching of the English language (Chesters and Hughes, 2011). The private school sector is expected to grow in the coming years because government decide to include educations as one of the sectors to privatize (Sahoo,2016).

## 1.5 Structure of The Thesis

This section introduces the layout of the thesis, which contains five chapters, including the current chapter.

**Chapter One** gives the general background to the research, followed by the aims, objectives and questions. Then the context of the study is explained with reference to the situation in Saudi Arabia, its private sector.

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**Chapter Two** critically evaluates the literature on culture, leadership, authenticity and authentic leadership, and defines the most significant theoretical foundation of the research.

**Chapter Three** Sets out and describes the research methodology, first giving an overview of the philosophical assumptions of the study and then discusses the nature of qualitative research. The design of the research is then outlined, followed by arguments for the validity and reliability of this study.

**Chapter Four** highlights the findings of this research and links them with the literature. Both results and discussion are integrated in this chapter since this gives the reader a better understanding of the findings and their place within the current state of knowledge.

**Chapter Five** concludes this thesis by describing in detail, how the research questions have been answered. Then it highlights the research contributions from theoretical, contextual, methodological and practical perspectives. Limitations and directions for future research are also discussed in this chapter.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

The significance of any research and its findings is always judged in relation to that of other studies (Saunders et al., 2012). Thus, it is essential for researchers to critically examine the current state of knowledge in their fields and to demonstrate how their particular area of study fits into the wider body of literature (Gill and Johnson, 2010).

This thesis focuses on exploring the concept of authenticity in the context of leadership in Saudi Arabia. The research focuses on the four main theoretical dimensions of culture, leadership, authenticity and authentic leadership as Figure 2 shows. First, the concept of culture is examined in depth by discussing its definition, levels, nature and cultural dimension models. Second, three aspects of leadership including, definitions of leadership, the relationship between leadership and culture, and the main leadership theories will be discussed. Third, the concept of authenticity is reviewed by addressing its definitions, components and relationship with culture. Finally, four aspects of authentic leadership are discussed and critically evaluated including, definitions of authentic leadership, approaches of authentic leadership, authentic followership, authentic leadership and culture and the contested nature of authentic leadership.



Figure 2: Topics of Literature Review Chapter

## 2.2 Culture

Culture is a significant, popular and complex concept that touches our lives in fundamental ways (Elgammal, 2007). Psychologists such as Middleton (2002) and Nisbett (2003) assert that culture affects our values, perceptions and decision making. The large number of published studies on culture tends to use different terminologies for the concept of culture, depending upon the discipline. For example, in social science literature, other terms for culture include: *value orientations*, *basic beliefs*, *schemas*, and *philosophy of life* (Taras et al., 2009). The following sections attempt to shed light on this construct by examining definitions, levels and nature of culture, and cultural dimension models, in order to link culture with leadership and authenticity.

### 2.2.1 Definitions of Culture

Although the concept of culture is widely studied, it is still difficult to define (Spencer-Oatey, 2012) and a generally accepted definition of culture is lacking (Bik, 2010). Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) listed 164 different definitions of culture and this number is increasing (Taras et al., 2009). This large number of definitions creates difficulty in understanding the concept of culture (Spencer-Oatey, 2012).

Below are eight different definitions and views of culture. These were selected from the available management literature published between 1871 and 2010 in order to reflect both a cross-section of definitions over time, as well as a variety of perspectives on the concept of culture. Thus, these definitions are intended to highlight the diversity of thought regarding the meaning of culture over time.

The origin of the word *culture* comes from the French word *colere* which means to till, as in 'till the earth', and from the Latin *cultus*, which means care. It is also believed to come from the adjective *cultivated*, in the sense of carefully grown (Berger, 2000), which is the closest meaning to that of *culture*. Thus already we can see that there are different explanations for the roots of the word, as well as different definitions.

It is believed that the British anthropologist Edward Taylor was the first to define culture, describing it, in 1871, as *“that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”* (Tharp, 2009, p.3). A later definition by Herskovits in 1955 viewed culture as a set of norms, e.g. thought patterns and values, which are tacitly agreed upon by members of a particular society and which can be learned by new members (Dickson et al., 2012). Hofstede (1980, p.260) defined culture as *“the collective programming of the human mind that distinguishes the members of one human group from those of another”*, while Edgar Schein (2010, p.14), focusing more on the organisational level, defined culture as: *“A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems that has worked well enough to be considered valid and is passed on to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems”*. Additionally, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997), in their book *Riding the Waves of Culture*, suggest that culture is the shared meanings of a group which cause it to interpret things in particular ways, but which are also open to change if more effective solutions to problems of survival are found by the group. In the GLOBE project, culture is defined as *“shared motives, values, beliefs, identities, and interpretations or meanings of significant events that result from common experiences of members of collectives and are transmitted across age generations”* (House et al., 1999, p.13). Moreover, culture has been described as a system which ties a group of people together in terms of common values, beliefs and ideas (Connerly and Pederson, 2005). Bik (2010) states that in recent years culture has often been defined as a set of values adopted by a group of people that describe the way of life of that particular group, and that cultural values translate into norms, beliefs and morals. From these eight definitions and views of culture some similarities and differences can be recognised, as Table 1 illustrates.

Table 1: Comparison between Definitions of Culture

Author	Year	Main Idea in The Definition	Difference from Other Definitions
Edward Taylor	1872	Acquired knowledge, belief, arts and morals by society members	It is a complex concept
Herskovits	1955	Society members' agreement that can be learned	It is an agreement
Hofstede	1980	Collective programming of the human mind	It distinguishes one group from another
Schein	1992	Shared basic assumptions	It may emerge to solve a problem
Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars	1997	Shared meanings of a group	It is open to change
GLOBE	1999	Shared motives, values, beliefs and identities	It could emerge from significant events
Connerley and Pedersen	2005	Values, beliefs and ideas that tie a group of people together	It is a system
Bik	2010	A set of values adopted by a group	It describes a way of life

The comparison in Table 1 shows that the terms *beliefs* and *values* are the most frequently used in the eight definitions. Other similar terms occur, such as *morals*, *customs*, *thought patterns*, *assumptions*, *habits* and *norms*. The table shows that all of the definitions are similar in their main meaning but each definition uses different phrases. For example, Hofstede's definition focuses on two points. Firstly, that culture is a type of collective mind programming and secondly, that it is a method by which a group differentiates itself from others. However, it is clear from the table that each definition has a distinguishing point. For instance, Taylor's definition views culture as a complex concept; it also includes the specific areas of knowledge, the arts, and law, which are usually left out of other definitions. Taylor's definition thus focuses more on the tangible products of culture. Another distinction is mentioned by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) in their view of culture, which is that culture is open to change. The of definition of Herskovits views culture as an agreement between individuals.

Despite the large number of definitions and the differences between them, common factors can be seen. Firstly, culture is a shared construct between groups of individuals. Secondly, it is built over time. Thirdly, it is a complex concept that has different meanings

(Taras et al., 2009) and fourthly, it is learned (Tharp, 2011). Finally, it is a way to distinguish the beliefs and values of one group from another.

### **2.2.2      *Levels of Culture***

Culture can be examined and studied at different levels, such as the national and organisational levels. According to Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) there are three distinct levels of culture: national, organisational and individual. National culture refers to shared values, attributes, beliefs, and attitudes between people in a country or regional society. Organisational culture is made up of shared common values and attitudes within a specific organisation. Individual culture refers to the tendency of people with certain functions to share certain professional and ethical orientations. Erez and Gati (2004) have identified five levels of culture: global, national, organisational, group and individual.

National and organisational cultures are similar to those mentioned by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997); however, global culture was added as another level to highlight the emergence of the particular cultural characteristics of globalisation. This represents a new layer of culture which affects the other levels, and which is also affected by them. As Western societies tend to dominate the global environment, global culture reflects the basic values of Western cultures, such as the free market and individual freedoms and rights (Gupta and Govindarajan, 2002). Group culture, as identified by Erez and Gati, is similar to the individual culture of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner. The fifth level of culture is individual culture, the values of which are represented by the self. For example, collectivistic values are expressed in the interdependent self, whereas individualistic values are represented in the independent self (Earley, 1994). One question that needs to be asked, however, is whether individual values can be described as culture in the same way as for a group of people. Based on the basic assumption about culture that is shared, as stated in the previous section, it can be argued that personal values should not be considered as culture. In this five-level model it is assumed that culture is a multi-level construct where each level influences the others. Erez and Gati (2004) have claimed that very few studies have examined culture at multiple levels except for the GLOBE project, which studied leadership at three levels: organisational, industry type, and national.

To conclude this section, culture is a complex concept which has been constructed to describe the many different facets and levels of society. Thus the relationship between

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these factors should be carefully observed when studying culture and in generalising findings across its elements (e.g. value and practices) and levels (e.g. individual, organisational and national). It is essential to define as precisely as possible the elements of culture, which the study will focus on, and to avoid making unjustified generalisations. Thus, this study adopts the definition of culture by GLOBE which is “*shared motives, values, beliefs, identities, and interpretations or meanings of significant events that result from common experiences of members of collectives and are transmitted across age generations*” (House et al., 1999, p.13). This definition is adopted because the nature of GLOBE study about both national culture and leadership (discussed in 2.3.3) such as this study.

In this section two models of culture were mentioned which recognise three and five cultural levels, and as it is generally believed that the influence of national culture is stronger than that of organisational culture (Erez and Gati, 2004) so, this research focus on the concept of national culture (Taras et al., 2009). Therefore, while a variety of levels of culture are discussed, this study will focus on the national level of culture in Saudi Arabia.

### **2.2.3 The Nature of Culture**

Culture is a complex construct which is constantly at work in the background of individual behaviours, values, attitudes and ideas (Maznevski et al., 2002). Its influence occurs mostly on a subconscious level, shaping our values, beliefs and experiences (Nisbett, 2003). It is crucial to understand the nature of this concept of culture and so this section discusses three aspects: the components of culture, the characteristics of culture, and cultural change.

#### **2.2.3.1 Components of Culture**

Schein (2010), in his model of culture, attempts to explain the nature of culture, asking the question what is beyond culture? He argued that culture consists of three components or levels, *artefacts*, *espoused beliefs and values* and *basic underlying assumptions*. These components refer to the degree to which culture is visible and observable. Furthermore, Schein states that by understanding these components, much of the confusion surrounding the notion of culture will be clarified (Schein, 2010). The first level is *artefacts*, in other

words, that which is seen, heard and felt within a given society. It includes observable and tangible products such as language, architecture and social environment. The second component of culture is *values and beliefs*, including ideologies, belief systems and philosophies that find expression in how individuals behave and in their assumptions about what is right or wrong, but are not in themselves directly observable as behaviours. The third and deepest level is the *basic underlying assumptions* that a group shares and which are historically established structures used to direct our relationship with the environment, with reality and with other human beings (Kong, 2003). These assumptions are often treated as reality and become taken for granted between members of a culture. This level is the least apparent, but has much more influence on our behaviour than artefacts and values (Schein, 1996). According to Erez and Gati (2004), in commenting on Schein's model, theories of culture vary in their focus on the various components or layers of culture. Most theories focus on values, the middle level between the visible and invisible elements of culture.

### **2.2.3.2 Characteristics of Culture**

From the previous definitions of culture, various characteristics can be recognised. Firstly, culture is a group and social construct that exists and results from interaction and communication between people through social activities. Culture does not exist in isolation (Nisbett, 2003). Secondly, culture is learned and people do not inherit it biologically. It is acquired by experiencing the behaviour of families, friends, institutions, and media (Craythorne, 2000). For this reason, any baby can be placed into any family in the world and will grow up to learn its culture, accepting it as his or her own (O'Neil, 2012). Thirdly, culture is shared between people with specific elements in common, such as customs, traditions, beliefs, ideas and values (Bueno, 2012). Fourthly, culture is transmitted and transferred from one generation to another. It is possible for a culture to exist for millennia and equally possible for it to disappear entirely; the extinction of languages illustrates this point (Bueno, 2012). These four characteristics are the most cited; however, there are other characteristics that have been identified by individual academics. For example, Craythorne (2000) claims that culture is based on symbols, i.e. tangible phenomena that stand for something else. Symbols acquire meaning when people in a culture agree on their use. Language, money and art are all symbols.

### 2.2.3.3 Cultural Change

One of the main characteristics of culture is that it does not remain constant but is continually changing over time (Bueno, 2012). Despite the fact that people are predisposed to change, at the same time they can also be strongly resistant to it. Some cultures resist change more than others and pass laws for the protection of cultural patterns. For example, in France, English words such as *sandwich*, *computer*, *weekend* and *shopping* are popular, especially among young people, but in order to protect their linguistic heritage, the French government eventually decided to ban any English words in commercial use if there exist equivalents in the French language. However, in other cultures change is welcomed as a form of progress, for example in 2003 the Chinese government decided that English would be taught in schools from the third grade of elementary school onwards (O'Neil, 2006). Culture can be changed by regular contact with another culture, through international business and migration. It depends on how much people are attracted to the new culture and on how strongly they attempt to keep their own cultural identity (Erez and Gati, 2004).

O'Neil (2006) distinguished three types of cultural change from an anthropological perspective: *diffusion*, *acculturation* and *transculturation*. *Diffusion* is the mechanism by which ideas and traits move from one culture to another, and while the trait may be transmitted to another society, the original meaning may not. For example, in North America, MacDonald's restaurants are believed to offer cheap, fast food; however, in China they are considered as luxury food restaurants for special occasions because they are somewhat expensive and regarded as exotic. Secondly, *acculturation* occurs when a large number of unfamiliar traits move from one culture to another and replace traditional cultural patterns of the original culture. For instance, in Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia many young people now wear jeans and western dress instead of Saudi traditional clothes, which was not the case twenty years ago. Similarly, the third mechanism of cultural change is *transculturation*, which is what happens when an individual moves to another society and adopts its cultural patterns, such as when immigrants take on the beliefs and behaviours of their adopted country and accept its cultural norms (O'Neil, 2006).

Culture is a powerful survival tool for humans and is subject to constant change because it is constructed on a psychological level. Thus our buildings, written language and laws are



not culture as such, but are rather the products of culture (O'Neil, 2012) the artefacts as Schein calls them.

#### **2.2.4 Cultural Dimensions Models**

People can be distinguished by various factors; for example, their nationality, ethnicity, religion, values, beliefs, and behaviours. A large amount of literature has been published in the attempt to explain cultural differences. Some models of cultural difference focus on a single dimension as the major distinguishing factor, while a number of other models have been developed which identify multiple cultural dimensions. The next section discusses both single dimension and multiple dimension models of describing cultural differences in order to understand cultural differences and the relationship between them.

##### **2.2.4.1 Single Dimension Models**

Hall (1977), in his book *Beyond Culture*, has differentiated between cultures of high and low context, which relates to how people receive and interpret information. Individuals in high context cultures seek information from personal interactions and rely on their perceptions and relationships with others in decision making and business dealing. Hall categorises countries such as China, Japan, Italy, Spain, Portugal and France, as well as Latin American and Arabic countries such as Saudi Arabia, as having high context cultures. Thus, people in Saudi Arabia rely more on their relationships and friends in business. Conversely, in low context cultures such as in the USA, Germany, Britain and Scandinavia, individuals obtain information from a research base. They rely on what is written in contracts and legal agreements more than on information from personal networks (Cardon, 2008). Hall's context model is cited in nearly all of the academic literature of cross-cultural comparisons, particularly in the cross-cultural communication field (2008). Nevertheless, this model has been criticised for having no empirical validation, as Hall did not explain or provide the method he used to create this model (Cardon, 2008).

Another single dimension model was developed by Hall in 1983, this time involving monochronic and polychronic cultures (Dahl, 2003). People in monochronic cultures focus on doing only one thing at a time, tend to follow systems, and are punctual and task-oriented. Cultures such as those in Germany, Northern Europe and North America are categorised as monochronic cultures. In contrast, individuals in polychronic cultures tend

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to prefer doing more than one thing at time (Morden,1999). In addition, they tend to pay little attention to punctuality, play many roles simultaneously and are considered as being more people-oriented. Indians, Latin Americans and Arabs can be categorised as belonging to polychronic cultures (Dahl,2003). As Saudi Arabia is part of the Arabic world, it is considered as a polychronic culture. Morden (1999) argues that when people from monochronic and polychronic cultures come into contact with each other, either disagreements and cultural clashes can occur or cooperation can develop between them.

Dahl (2003) states that both of Hall's models are useful, but ultimately they are unclear and it is difficult to apply them, particularly when comparing close cultures, for instance US culture and Canadian culture. Thus, Connerley and Pedersen (2005) suggest that further research is needed to develop cultural categories or dimensions of context.

A study by Nisbett (2001) investigates the differences between Western and East Asian cultures in terms of thought processes and mentalities. He distinguishes Westerners and Easterners as having either holistic or analytic thinking (Monga and John, 2007). The concepts of holistic culture, which are more representative of East Asian societies, focus on the whole context of phenomena rather than on individual parts. In other words, a holistic culture tries to view whole objects in terms of the bigger picture and pays attention to relationships between objects (Oshlyansky, 2007). Western cultures on the other hand are perceived as analytical cultures, which are the opposite of the holistic, concentrating more on individual objects (Nisbett, 2001). They also tend to separate the object from its context and focus more on the rules and the processes of objects without thinking of relationships with other objects. To understand holistic and analytical thought further, Monga and John (2007) cite an experimental study by Chiu in 1972 who asked Chinese and American children to choose two objects from a set of three and give reasons for their choice. Chiu observes that,

*"Americans adopted a style of thinking where objects were grouped based on category membership or attributes (e.g. a jeep and boat grouped together because both have motors). However, Chinese adopted a relational contextual style of thinking, in which similarities were based on functional or thematic interdependence between objects (e.g. table and chair grouped together because you sit on the chair to eat at a table)" (p. 530).*

Another single dimension is Fukuyama's (1995) model of trust. This model analyses the role of trust in individuals and institutions across a number of different cultures. Fukuyama investigates the level of trust between people who work together to achieve a common purpose. Low trust and high trust cultures are identified and compared in this model (Brewster, 1998). In high trust societies (e.g. Japan, Germany and the US), people organise their business in more flexible environments that rely on groups. In addition, responsibility is delegated more to employees from lower levels in the organisation (Morden, 1999). By contrast, in low trust cultures (e.g. China, Korea, Italy and France) people trust their families more, so they prefer to hire relatives rather than strangers in their business. Responsibility and trust is given based on relationship more than on competence. For instance, Fukuyama mentions that in low trust cultures such as China, the development of various small family-owned businesses is strong, but observes that the leaders of these types of businesses generally fail to grow their organisations into larger companies because of the trust issue (Morden, 1999). Therefore, cultures with high levels of trust have more ability to create large, successful and competitive companies than cultures with low levels of trust (Brewster, 1998).

From the previous four single dimension models it can be clearly seen that the creators of these models simplify cultural difference into one dimension. Therefore, this simplification may be considered a major limitation of single dimension models, as they may not fully explain the complex concept of cultures. Thus, multiple dimension models could be a better way to understand cultural differences and these are discussed in the next section.

#### **2.2.4.2 Multiple Dimension Models**

One of the first systematic discussions of cultural differences was developed by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck in 1961 (Bhagat and Steers, 2009). Their model is based on five value orientations that emerge from five questions. Maznevski et al. (2002) stated these questions, the first of which is "What is the basic nature of human beings?" (p.276) from which they identified three types of people: good, evil and mixed. Good people tend to be good and are trusted by others, while evil people are not trusted and exhibit anti-social and criminal behaviour. Mixed individuals are those showing characteristics of both the good and evil categories. The second question is, "What is the relationship of human beings to nature?" (p.276). In answering this, they distinguish between three types of people.

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Subjugation people believe nature controls human activities, harmony people believe we should be integrated with nature to maintain balance, and domination or mastery people believe they should master or control nature (Bhagat and Steers, 2009). As a result of the third question, "What is the orientation of human beings toward time?" (Maznevski et al., 2002; p.276) the model divide people into three orientations. Past-orientation people who focus on history to determine their present life, present-orientation people who concentrate on their current situation, and future-orientation people who act based on future goals (Connerely and Pederson, 2005). Next they asked, "What is the nature of human beings toward activity?" (Maznevski et al., 2002; p.276) . Three different behaviours were identified: being, doing and becoming. Being people believe they should focus on living for the present moment. Becoming people believe they should develop themselves in order to fit into their environment. Doing people believe they should determine their own goals and accomplishments. The final question in Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's values orientation model is "*What is the nature of human beings toward each other?*" (Maznevski et al., 2002; p.276) . They differentiate between three types of individuals. Individualistic, who believe that social life is based on individuals, collateral types, who believe that social life is based on groups of equal individuals, and lineal individuals, who believe that social life is based on groups with clear hierarchical relationships (Bhagat and Steers, 2009).

The Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) model is considered to be one of the earliest comprehensive models that tries to explain cultural differences. However, it has some limitations; for example, Hofstede points out that it comprises "*classification of all kinds of social comparisons, without concern for their geographic limitations, without considering the effect of levels of aggregation, and without empirical support*" (2011, p.4). In addition, its value orientations and variations are not precisely defined (Bhagat and Steers, 2009).

Hofstede's (1980) well-known model of cultural dimensions is known to be based on data from the multinational company IBM which employed people from fifty different countries. At first he identified four cultural dimensions and then added a fifth dimension based on research by Chinese scholars. Yet another dimension was added in 2010 based on recent World Value Survey items (Hofstede, 2011). Hofstede's seven dimensions are *power distance*, which is the degree of inequality of power between people (Hsu et al., 2013) *uncertainty avoidance*, which refers to how cultures deal with uncertain situations;

*individualism and collectivism*, which is how individuals perceive themselves in society; *masculinity and femininity*, which measures the extent to which cultures favour one role of gender over the other (Smith et al., 1996) *long or short term orientation*, which is how cultures deal with past, present and future in their life decisions also, in the business context this dimension is named as "(short term) normative versus (long term) pragmatic"; and *indulgence versus restraint*, which is about happiness and how much gratification of needs is fulfilled such as, the desire to have fun and enjoy life. According to a recent study by Hofstede (2013), Arab countries including Saudi Arabia have been reported as being high in power-distance and uncertainty-avoidance, and are collectivist cultures where masculinity is higher than the world average.

Hofstede's (1980) model is the most influential cultural framework in cross-culture studies (Hsu et al., 2013). It is also popular because it is easily understandable (Tung and Verbeke, 2010). However, the Hofstede model has been criticised by many scholars such as Schwartz (1992), who argued that Hofstede's samples of countries did not correctly reflect the full scale of national cultures. Additionally, for example, Baskerville (2003), in his paper *Hofstede Never Studied Culture*, identifies a number of limitations and argues that Hofstede's work has been rejected by both anthropology and sociology as they believe that there is no link between culture and nationality, a point on which Hofstede relies heavily. For example, Baskerville (2003) mentions that ethnographic research acknowledges that in some countries there is more than one society and culture, such as in Australia, where there are more than 500 ethnicities and distinct societies. A study by Chanchani in 1998 found three out of five value dimensions relevant to India and New Zealand were opposite to those identified by Hofstede (Baskerville, 2003). Furthermore, Baskerville (2003) is claimed that the research is now too old to be of real modern value, particularly given the changing global and business environments of the modern world.

Schwartz has worked on cross-cultural studies since (1992), and in 2006, building on his previous theories; he surveyed schoolteachers in 73 countries to determine their cultural value dimensions. He found six value orientations emerging from three dimensions which are: Hierarchy versus Egalitarianism, Mastery versus Harmony and Embeddedness versus Autonomy (Shwartz, 1992). The six value orientations are briefly described as follows. In *egalitarianism*, social justice is represented in the culture, and wealth, power and responsibilities are shared between people. However, in *hierarchical* cultures such as

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Arabic (e.g. Saudi Arabia) people are unequal in their roles, and power, welfare and responsibilities vary widely according to the class system (Terlutter et al., 2006) The *embeddedness and autonomy* dimension is similar to Hofstede's dimension of individualism and collectivism, and concentrates on the relationship between the individual and the group (Smith et al., 1996) Schwartz differentiates between two types of autonomy, *intellectual autonomy*, which focuses on the right of individuals to independently express their own ideas, while *affective autonomy* emphasises the right of individuals to have positive experiences for themselves. On the other hand, in embeddedness cultures, individuals like to be part of a group and their meaning in life comes from social relationships (Shwartz, 1992). Arab societies were classified as embedded cultures that match Hofstede's categorisation of the collectivism dimension. The sixth cultural value orientation is *mastery*, where individuals seek to change and direct the world to achieve their goals, and in *harmony* cultures people accept and affirm the natural and social world (Terlutter et al., 2006). According to Drogendijk and Slangen (1992), Schwartz's model overcomes Hofstede's limitations. Moreover, Steenkamp (2001) acknowledges that the Schwartz model has strong theoretical dimensions; however, he questions its validity as it is not supported by empirical studies.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997), in their book *Riding the Wave of Culture*, concentrate on explaining cultural differences in business. They sent questionnaires to more than 46,000 managers in 40 countries and seven cultural dimensions were identified as a result.

*Universalism versus Particularism*: in universal cultures such as the US, Canada, the UK, the Netherlands, Germany and Scandinavia, people rely on standards and agreed rules while in particularist countries such as Russia, Latin-America and China, each relationship and situation has to be dealt with in its own way and rules may change according to different people.

*Individualism versus Communitarianism*: this dimension concerns how individuals deal with others (Bhagat and Steers, 2009), which is similar to the dimension of individualism and collectivism of Hofstede's (1980) model and Schwartz's (1992) dimension of embeddedness and autonomy.

*Neutral versus Affective:* this dimension looks at how people deal with their emotions. In neutral cultures people show more control over their feelings, such as in the UK and Japan, but in affective cultures they prefer to express their emotions, even in more formal situations (e.g. the workplace), for example in Latin American and Arabic countries.

*Specific versus Diffuse:* individuals in specific cultures keep their different roles separate, for example they separate work from home life, as in the US, the UK, Switzerland and Germany. However, in diffuse societies various personal roles are commonly integrated, for instance people may enjoy good relationships with work colleagues outside of work time in countries such as Spain, Russia, India, Arabs and China.

*Achievement versus Ascription:* how status is gained. In achievement cultures (e.g. the UK, the US and Australia) individual status is based on achievement, whereas in ascription countries (e.g. France, Italy, Japan, and Saudi Arabia) social status is based on age, gender, education and job position.

*Sequential versus Synchronic:* How we think about time: past, present and future, which is similar to the Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) dimension. In this dimension Arab cultures emphasise past events and glory.

*Internal versus External Control:* how we deal with the environment; similar to the *harmony* and *mastery* dimensions of Schwartz' model. Internal control cultures exist in countries such as Israel, the US, Australia, New Zealand, and the UK. External control societies exist in countries such as China, Russia, and the Arab countries (Mordon,1999).

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's (1997) model has been criticised because the origin of their dimensions come from other models such as those by Hofstede, Schwartz, Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, and Parsons and Shils (Bhagat and Steers,2009)

The two main cultural dimensions models of Hofstede (1980) and Schwartz (1992) were examined by Steenkamp (2001), a marketing academic who analysed data from 24 countries. He identifies four dimensions in a unified framework as follows: Autonomy /Collectivism, Egalitarianism /Hierarchy, Mastery /Masculinity and Uncertainty Avoidance /Harmony. It is clear from their names that these dimensions exist in other models. The first dimension deals with relationships between individuals and the group, as in Hofstede and Schwartz, but with a slight difference in the dimension's name (Hsu et al., 2013) The

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second dimension is identical to that of Schwartz and concentrates on the value placed on equality in cultures. The third dimension, Mastery and Masculinity, is a mixture of the Schwartz dimension Mastery versus Harmony and Hofstede's dimension Masculinity versus Femininity. The fourth dimension is Uncertainty Avoidance and Harmony, which is also a combination of the corresponding dimensions in Hofstede and Schwartz. Steenkamp believes these two dimensions from different models are correlated thus: *"maintaining harmony is one way to handle uncertainty situations, essentially by avoiding the uncertainty inherent in conflict"* (2001, p.35).

According to Coonerley and Pedersen (2005), possibly the most comprehensive study of cultural dimensions to date has been conducted by the Global Leadership and Organisation Behavioural Effectiveness project (GLOBE). The study was conducted by 170 researchers in 62 countries. Nine dimensions have been identified by the GLOBE team and four of them derive from Hofstede's model (*power distance, in-group collectivism, uncertainty avoidance and institutional collectivism*) (Javidan et al., 2006). The other five are *assertiveness*, which is the degree to which people are assertive and competitive in relationships with others; *humane orientation*, referring to how cultures encourage people to be fair and kind to others (Connerley and Pedersen, 2006); *performance orientation*, which is the degree of high performance encouraged by a culture; *future orientation*, which looks at how planning and strategic thinking are encouraged; and *gender egalitarianism* which refers to how gender differences are maximised or minimised. According to Bhagat and Steers (2009), the GLOBE project is considered the most ambitious study of cultural dimensions to date. It contributes not only to the current knowledge and understanding of cultural differences but also examines how cultural dimensions affect leadership effectiveness. Moreover, the GLOBE research is perceived as both a national culture study and an organisational culture study as the data is taken from 62 countries and 951 organisations. Hofstede (2011) has criticised GLOBE and argued that while his own work is decentred, the GLOBE study is United States-centric. The GLOBE scholars have disagreed with this view, arguing that Hofstede's work is largely based on consultancy research conducted for IBM in the 1960s (Javidan et al., 2006). Table 2 below shows all of the cultural dimensions mentioned in the single and multiple models of culture.



Table 2: Summary of Cultural Dimensions Models

Cultural Dimension		Hall context Model	Hall Choronic & Polychronic Model	Nisbett Model	Fukuyama	Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck Model	Schwartz Model	Hofstede Model	Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner Model	Steenkamp Model	GLOBE Model
1	Seeking Information	x									
2	Single or Multiple Focus Behaviour		x								
3	Holistic Or Analytic Thinking			x							
4	High Or Low Trust				x						
5	Nature Of Human(Evil, Good, Mixed)					x					
6	Relationship With Nature (Controlled, Integrated, Master)					x					
7	Time Orientation (Past, Present, Future)					x			x		x
8	Nature of Human Activity (Being, Doing, Becoming)					x					
9	Individualism & Collectivism					x	x	x	x	x	x
10	Power Distance					x		x		x	x
11	Uncertainty Avoidance							x		x	x
12	Masculinity And Femininity							x		x	x
13	Long or Short Term							x		x	x
14	Indulgence & Restraint (Happiness)							x			
15	Egalitarianism& Hierarchal Relationship					x	x				
16	Mastery or Harmony						x			x	
17	Universalism & Particularism								x		
18	Neutral & Affective								x		
19	Achievement Versus Ascription								x		
20	Institutional Collectivism										x
21	Human Orientation										x
22	Performance Orientation										x

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The previous table shows all of the cultural dimension models, from single dimension models such as those by Hall (1977), Fukuyama (1995), and Nisbett (2001) to the nine dimensional model developed by the GLOBE project. In between these are Steenkamp's four dimensional model and the six dimensions of the Hofstede, Schwartz and the Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck models. Seven dimensions were found in the model of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner. In all 22 dimensions, individualism and collectivism is the most common pair of traits, and can be found in six of the models under slightly different names. Moreover, this dimension is not only common to many of the models discussed above, but also appears in other cultural dimension studies in the existing literature, such as Triandis (1995) and Mead (2002).

Scholars such as Schwartz (1992) and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) believe that it is difficult to measure a complex construct such as culture. In spite of this, there has been much progress in the development of models of cultural differences, although this progress has been mainly achieved by adding new dimensions or improving on the data collection methods of existing models (Taras et al., 2009). According to Bhagat and Steers (2009), the six models which are the most cited in the organisational research literature are those by Hall, Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, Hofstede, Schwartz, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner and GLOBE. It can be seen that these six models do not include Saudi Arabia, which is the context of this research, in their data of the original studies of cultures. This highlights a significant need to study Saudi culture. Nevertheless, previous studies have included other Arab countries such as Egypt, Morocco, Qatar and Kuwait, which are assumed to have much in common culturally. Thus, the understanding of Saudi culture presented in previous models has come under the general category of Arab and Middle Eastern cultures. The extent to which cultural dimensions differ between societies in current westernized world is the consideration of the next section.

### **2.2.5      *Global culture and its impact on Saudi culture***

As well as the cultural differences between societies discussed in the previous section, recent years have seen the rise of what is termed global culture. Rather than being a blend of world cultures, however, global culture tends to reflect the basic values and norms of developed Western societies, and embraces concepts such as the free market and

individual rights (Gupta and Govindarajan, 2002). Below, the emergence of global culture and how it may have influenced Saudi cultural values since the inception of this idea is discussed.

Globalisation has taken on particular cultural characteristics (Erez and Gati, 2004) and has created a broad new layer of culture which appears to pervade others (national, organisational, group) to varying degrees. Global culture is rapidly evolving as a result of massive growth in world business and trade, revolutionary developments in digital technology, telecommunications and media, and increased opportunities for leisure and business travel. Affordable access to Western television, radio, film, or products of international trade also plays a part (Ladhari et al., 2015). Globalisation has been enabled principally by the digital age, technological development and scientific innovation in such a way that borders seem to fade and the world becomes the 'global village' (Raikhana et al., 2014). Accordingly, sociologists expect that traditional cultural differences will start to disappear as the world becomes influenced by a generic Western culture (Ladhari et al., 2015). Discussing the McDonaldization theory, Clark and Mathur (2003) point out that global culture is based mainly on the culture of the United States, as it relentlessly exports its products and therefore its values to the rest of the world.

The emergence of a global culture has deep implications for national cultures as it represents shared norms and values that are different to the set of values of the original national culture. (Raikhana et al., 2014; Erez and Gati, 2004). Cultural shifts toward the values, attitudes, norms and behaviours of the new culture mean that traditional values and beliefs are being replaced by more Western norms (Ladhari et al., 2015). As we have seen in Section 2.2.3.3, three types of cultural change can be identified, and the move towards global culture can be categorised as *acculturation*. *Acculturation* occurs when a large number of unfamiliar traits moves across the cultural boundaries and replaces traditional patterns of the original culture (O'Neil, 2006). For instance, in Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia, many young people now wear jeans and Western dress instead of traditional Saudi clothes, which was not the case twenty years ago. The question here is whether this cultural change only exists in external aspects such as clothes, or whether it affects deeper components of culture such as *espoused beliefs and values* and *basic underlying assumptions* as Schein (2010) has classified. Recent research by Ladhari et al. (2015) compares Hofstede's (1980) findings with current data and found that in Morocco

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(an Arab country) the individualism-collectivism relationship has changed towards a less collectivist and more individualistic society. The authors believe this to be a consequence of exposure to Western culture. Although this is a single example, it gives an indication of change in the values of Moroccan people. Raikhana et al. (2014), however, argue that the values of global culture can be adopted while at the same time deeper national cultural beliefs can be retained. The authors also point out that some cultures view globalisation as threat to cultural identity, especially since the younger generation easily take on other fashions, habits, norms and preferences. Thus, cultural change is a complex construct and it is no easy task to determine the effect of global culture on the deeper components of culture without evidence from a large-scale study.

So, to what extent has Saudi culture been influenced by global culture? Over the last century the Arab world's response to globalisation has been slow and, at times, in conflict with the cultural influences of the West. However, ease of travel and recent advances in digital media have allowed the Arab world to interact with many aspects of Western culture in unprecedented ways. For example, in 2005 the Saudi government established scholarships which have enabled over 150,000 young Saudis to pursue higher education in countries such as the US, UK, Canada and Australia (Saudi Ministry of Education, 2017). Inevitably, living in a Western culture has a strong impact on students. Contemporary Saudi society is also evolving and changing as it explores the possibilities offered by Western digital media applications (Bechtold, 2012). According to Kuppuswamy and Rekha (2015), the acceptance and use of digital devices in Saudi Arabia is among the highest worldwide, and social media has had a particularly strong impact on culture (Cummins, 2015). The massive increase in freedom of communication in Saudi has not only brought people together in a radically new way, but has also led to greater public awareness of current events and political doings. For example, the Saudi government was forced to dismiss a number of ministers after scandals broke out and were spread via social media. In terms of cultural values in Saudi Arabia, Hofstede (1980) and Schwartz (1992) both identified the high power-distance and hierarchical aspects, but the influence of Western culture, as communicated via digital media channels, is lowering the power-distance relationship. For example, young Saudi professionals are nowadays much more likely to stand up to their managers at work and are no longer afraid to challenge their superiors when necessary. In

the dimension of masculinity and femininity, which measures the extent to which cultures favour one gender over the other (Smith et al., 1996) we can again see the influences of globalisation. The role of women is rapidly changing, and there is now much higher female participation and visibility in business, politics, and social life. Other cultural dimensions such as uncertainty avoidance, assertiveness, individualism and collectivism are also being affected by globalisation in Saudi Arabia; however, these changes are yet to be formally documented by the social sciences research. On the other hand, Aseri (2015) points out that although globalisation is influencing culture and behaviour especially that of the younger generation, the Saudi Arabian people remain very connected to their religion, families and tribal identities.

To conclude, many societies are becoming increasingly Westernised, which means that culture is becoming more rational, scientific and predictable (Ladhari et al. 2015) it is suggested that globalisation is leading to the loss of traditional, alternative culture, however, it is also argued that better communication through globalisation fosters the protection and strengthening of traditional cultures (Raikhan et al., 2014).

To conclude the whole section of culture, this discussion has attempted to understand the construct of culture, which is the foundation for exploring leadership and authenticity across cultures, specifically leadership in Saudi Arabia, which forms the context of this study. This leads to the next section, which deals with leadership.

## **2.3 Leadership**

The concept of leadership has long captured the interest of practitioners and academics (Silverthorne, 2001) as well as that of the general public (Hiebert and Klatt, 2001). According to Higgs (2003) leadership is the most studied aspect of human behaviour. This part of the literature review is divided into three sections. First, the review seeks to provide an answer to the question of what is leadership. The second section briefly reviews the main schools of thought within leadership theories and in the third section leadership studies are examined from a cultural perspective.

### 2.3.1 *What is Leadership?*

What is leadership? Such a simple question has become a challenge to answer (Day and Antonakis, 2012), because although leadership has been studied for many years, it remains a complex concept that researchers and scholars continue to grapple with (Trottier et al., 2008). Northouse (2012) claims that there are unlimited ways to complete the sentence, “Leadership is ...”. The literature on leadership contains a huge variety of definitions of leadership, and Yukl (2010, p.4-5) argues that any definition of leadership is by its very nature a subjective one, as are many other constructs in the social sciences. The literature of leadership shows that some definitions are easier to operationalise and understand than others and that there is no right or wrong definition (Beddoes-Jones, 2013). Below are three definitions of leadership selected to demonstrate the concept of leadership from different perspectives.

The first view is that the central focus of leadership is to inspire and influence people. For example, Kaye describes it as *“the ability to inspire other people to achieve goals”* (2006, p.23), while Maxwell goes so far as to say that *“leadership is influence, nothing more, nothing less”* (2007, p.3).

The second perspective defines leadership from a process point of view. For instance, Northouse (2012) states that *“leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group so as to achieve a common goal”* (2012, p.3). Furthermore, Rowe (2006) argues that leadership is primarily a process of interrelationships rather than of individual behaviour or competency.

The third perspective defines leadership as a team construct and is popularly thought of as simply *“organizing a group of people to achieve a common goal”* (Saunders and Iszatt-white, 2014; p.23).

Although there are multiple definitions of leadership, Northouse (2012) considers that there are four basic components which comprise the foundation of the leadership construct. Firstly, leadership is a process, secondly, it involves influence, thirdly, it is a group construct, and fourthly, it involves shared goals.

More understanding of the leadership phenomenon is discussed in the next section by looking to the main theories in leadership.

### 2.3.2 *Leadership Theories*

The literature on leadership theories show a number of main schools of thought that have contributed to our understanding of this phenomenon. The evolution of leadership theories has become increasingly long and complex, and over time they have built upon each other's concepts (Garrick, 2006). The current leadership theories emphasise not only the leaders' characteristics or types of behaviour, but also other aspects that affect leadership practices, such as followers, work context and culture. Such theories also examine these aspects in different organisations in public, private and non-profit organisations (France, 2008). This section will briefly examine the key schools of thought in leadership theory from a historical perspective.

One of the first ideas about leadership was the ***Great Man theory***, which evolved in the 1840s. This theory assumes that certain people possess innate qualities and characteristics that make them superior and therefore natural leaders (Vroom and Gago, 2007). This conclusion is first mentioned by the Scottish writer Thomas Carlyle in his book *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* in 1841. The Great Man theory holds that during human history there have been extraordinary people (heroes) who display personal traits, character and superior qualities that give them influence over the masses (Garrick, 2006). However, this theory has received a number of criticisms, such as the absence of evidence-based research to support it, and the argument that it is society and circumstances which make individuals great, and so heroes are made, not born (Organ, 1996).

The Great Man view of leadership predominated until the ***Trait theory*** emerged in the 1930s as one of the first systematic studies of leadership. This theory argues that people are born with traits and characteristics which mark them for leadership roles (France, 2008). Stogdill, in 1948, for example, identified a set of traits, which are typical of leaders, such as intelligence, alertness, insight, responsibility, initiative, persistence, self-confidence and sociability (Northouse, 2012). Although the trait approach now has almost a century of research to back it up, the list of traits, which has emerged is seemingly endless, as each study lists different traits (Northouse, 2012). Another criticism of trait theory is that it fails

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to consider cultural or situational factors affecting leadership; for instance, Judge et al. (2009) argue that leader emergence and leadership effectiveness may depend on context.

During the 1940s, a number of ***Behavioural theories*** emerged which assume that effective leadership is grounded in behaviours that can be learnt; these focus on what leaders actually do and how they act (Derue et al., 2011). The main studies in this approach are those from Ohio State University in the 1940s, the University of Michigan in the 1950s, and Blake and Mouton in 1964. The studies divide leadership behaviours into two styles, task-oriented leadership, which is concerned with production and people-oriented leadership, which is concerned with people.

Another leadership theory arose in the 1960s, the ***Situational or Contingency theory*** (France, 2008). This considers the situation of applied leadership, which was ignored by the previous theories. This view believes that successful leadership is based on how well leaders fit their style to the context (Northouse, 2012). Various models were developed based on the contingency approach, such as Fiedler's contingency theory in 1967, the Path-Goal theory in 1971 and the concept of situational leadership by Hersey and Blanchard in 1984 (France, 2008). Although many studies support the validity of contingency theory, it fails to explain why specific styles are suitable to different situations (Northouse, 2012).

Instead of leaders' traits and behaviours, or leadership situations, a different perspective arose which focused on the relationship between the leader and the follower; this became known as the ***Leader-Member Exchange*** (LMX) theory (Gerstner and Day, 1997). According to LMX, leadership effectiveness occurs when the leader develops a separate dyadic relationship with each follower (Graen and Schiemann, 2013). It is argued that creating positive rapport between leaders and subordinates will increase organisational success. However, it should be noted that LMX theory has been criticised for failing to consider the social and cultural contexts that affect both leaders and followers (Avolio et al., 2009).

Within the same decade, the 1970s saw the rise of the notion of ***Transformational leadership***, which has been one of the most widely studied theories in leadership since its conception by Burns (1978) and development by Bass (1985) (Yuki, 2010). Transformational leaders are those who can change, inspire and transform their followers through their charismatic personality (Bass, 1985). Transformational leadership theory is usually



contrasted with the transactional style of leadership. Transactional leadership refers to the exchange relationship between leaders and followers in order to meet their own self-interests (Bass, 1999). Transactional leadership takes on two forms: contingent reward and active management-by-exception (Bass, 1999). Transactional leaders give rewards in exchange for followers' loyalty and for the work they do. Conversely, transformational leaders are more involved with followers and are concerned with their basic needs and motivations; they raise awareness about the importance of outcomes and creative ways to achieve the required work (Bass and Avolio, 2000). One of the strengths of transformational leadership is the emphasis on followers' needs, values, and morals (Northouse, 2012). However, researchers have not yet been able to establish whether or not transformational leaders are actually able to transform individuals and organisations (Avolio et al., 2009). Additionally, Yuki (2010) points out that in transformational leadership, qualities that make a transformational leader can also lead to unethical actions, such as the leader abusively influencing the followers to commit crimes.

During the 1970s, as the ideas of transformational leadership took shape, Greenleaf (1977) introduced the concept of servant leadership. In this approach, the leader's primary objective is to serve and meet the needs of others (Mahembe and Engelbrecht, 2014). Servant leadership is one of a number of ***ethics-based approaches to leadership***, which concern leading with values by practising moral responsibilities to followers and to the community in general (Northouse, 2012). Another approach representing this school of thought is ethical leadership, which was developed by Heifetz (1994). He describes ethical leaders as helping followers to face conflict by making appropriate changes. Other theories have been categorised as belonging to the ethical school of leadership, e.g. the transformational leadership of Burns (1978) and Bass (1985), and the most recent approach of ***Authentic Leadership*** by Luthans and Avolio (2003). One of the general principles of ethical approaches is to know and do the 'right' thing, which is often very difficult to define (Brown and Treviño, 2006).

During the next decade the work of Hofstede (1980) opened the door to ***Culture-based leadership studies***, which considered the individual cultural backgrounds of both leaders and followers and looks at how these affect the leadership processes. The study of leadership and culture has been specifically examined by Schein (1996) and by GLOBE House et al. (2004), as discussed previously in Section 2.2.4.2. The question raised here is,

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can these studies of culture and leadership be considered as leadership theories in themselves?

The previous trends in leadership have emphasised the individual leader(ship) in the organisational context. However, a different and valuable perspective is taken by ***collaborative approaches to leadership***, which focus on leadership as a team construct and explores how team members can lead each other. These approaches perceive leadership as a horizontal process involving a team, which shares the power and responsibility, instead of as a vertical process which involves an individual leader with particular leadership qualities (Wart, 2013). The literature of group leadership uses a number of different concepts, e.g. shared leadership, distributed leadership, collaborative leadership, horizontal leadership and team leadership. However, Collinson (2008) argues that these distinctions and definitions are still rather blurred and can lead to a certain level of confusion and ambiguity.

In concluding this historical review, three closing comments can be made. Firstly, it can be noticed the previous theories of leadership are products of Western cultures, being built on American and European values and beliefs, and so it is significant to examine these theories in non-Western cultures in order to understand what works in different cultural contexts (House et al., 2002). Secondly, it can be seen that the number of leadership theories is very large and it is therefore difficult to cover all of the many schools of thought and theories of leadership. For this reason, the schools of thought discussed here have been selected based on their citation popularity in the leadership literature. Thirdly, although the large numbers of theories show that leadership is a very complex phenomenon, these theories collectively enrich our knowledge of leadership. As leadership operates in a changing and dynamic world, wide range of theories has been developed in order to meet the new situations that are constantly challenging individuals and organisations. Consequently, the emergence of authentic leadership, discussed in Section 2.5, is timely and valuable, since trends such as the rise in corporate scandals and the threat of terrorism have resulted in the need for responsible and accountable leaders with high standards of integrity (Wong and Cummings, 2009).

How the previous theories of leadership are perceived in different cultural context is covered in the next section about leadership and culture.

### **2.3.3 Leadership and Culture**

Globalisation has created the need to connect the study of leadership deeply with culture. The actions of leaders and responses of followers reflect the cultural values, attitudes and behaviours of each (Dickson et al., 2012). Moreover, culture not only influences how leaders emerge, develop and are chosen but also affects the success of organisations (Shahin and Wright, 2004). The purpose of this section is to review and understand current research into leadership and culture, with specific reference to national culture. Three areas will be covered: how leadership theories are perceived in a cultural context, classifying cultural studies in the field of leadership and reviewing major contemporary research into leadership and culture.

In order to understand leadership in a global business or cross-cultural context, Steers et al. (2012) have categorised leadership theories and models into three approaches. The first is the **universal approach**, which considers leadership as universal or general practice taking the view that leadership behaviours and processes are relatively constant across cultures. Many Western theories of leadership are based on this premise. One major drawback of this approach, however, is that it has a strong North American bias (Dickson et al., 2003) and it can be argued that leadership processes in fact vary significantly across geographic region (Mittal and Dorfman, 2012). For example, research has demonstrated that some countries, such as Malaysia, prefer leaders who are humble and remain part of the crowd, while other cultures, such as Spain, prefer leaders who stand above the crowd and command respect (Tsui et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2008).

The second category of leadership theory with regard to different cultures is the **normative approach**, which concentrates on the global leader. It is argued that there are sets of leader-like behaviours and abilities common to all leaders around the world. Leaders who have these skills and competencies are assumed to be able to lead successfully anywhere in the world. For instance, a study has found that effective global leaders display honesty, cognitive complexity, mental inquisitiveness, and personal resiliency (Steers et al., 2012). Nevertheless, practices of international companies with employees from different countries reveal the cultural differences in perceptions of leadership. This highlights the

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vital need to study the impact of cultural values on organisational leadership (House et al., 2002).

The third way of thinking about leadership in a global context is the **contingency approach**, in which leadership is perceived as a culturally embedded process rather than a series of personal characteristics of the leader or followers (Lu, 2012). Furthermore, in describing effective leadership it is argued that the leader is a local leader not a global one. For example, successful leaders in the US may fail in China or Italy unless they modify their behaviours to suit the unique culture. An example of the contingency approach is the GLOBE Project. (Steers et al., 2012). These three contemporary models enhance our understanding of leadership in a global context, although a recent study by Takahashi et al. (2012) has shown the complexity and difficulty of classifying every leadership theory into one of the three approaches.

Fundamentally there are two basic approaches to cultural studies, known as the emic and the etic. The emic approach examines one culture at a time to identify culture-specific aspects and concepts related to leadership behaviour (Goethals et al., 2004; Lu, 2012). It is a single-culture study to determine how the participants inside the culture interpret leadership. An example of the emic approach is Khuntia and Suar's (2004) study, *Scale to Assess Ethical Leadership of Indian Private and Public Sector Managers' Performance*. They found that employees in Indian culture are prepared to tolerate external control which determines their behaviour and outcomes in life. It was also reported that they feel threatened by uncertain situations and lean on their leaders for advice, guidance, and support.

In contrast, the etic approach seeks to investigate multiple cultures to evaluate their leadership behaviours. Etic studies believe that all cultures can be compared in terms of generalisable phenomena such as leadership. An example of the etic approach is a study conducted by Walumbwa et al. (2007) entitled *Leadership, Individual Differences, and Work-related Attitudes: A Cross-Culture Investigation*. They collected data from 38 bank branches in four countries, China, India, Kenya and the US, to examine four variables of transformational leadership, individual differences, organisational commitment and satisfaction with supervisor. The results show that individual differences control the

relationships between leadership and followers' work-related attitudes. Moreover, in all countries employees perceive their leaders as transformational, but to a lesser extent in China than the in the other countries. Additionally, they found that transformational leadership was most positively related to organisational commitment. Another important example of the etic approach is the GLOBE research by House et al. (2004). A large number of the published studies and research into leadership and culture cite the studies of Hofstede and GLOBE. However, recent studies have focused more on GLOBE as it is more comprehensive than Hofstede. For example, an etic research by Kabasakal et al. (2012) focuses on leadership and culture in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, using data from the GLOBE Project. They studied the same seven countries of the MENA region as the GLOBE research: Iran, Israel, Qatar, Kuwait, Turkey, Egypt and Morocco. They reinvestigated the nine cultural dimensions and used 21 leadership prototype scales identified by the GLOBE research. The main findings of their study show that cultural practices express higher in-group collectivism and power distance, whilst cultural values are represented by a common desire for higher performance and future orientation. Other etic studies examine leadership theory across culture. For instance, Mittal and Dorfman (2012) published a paper about servant leadership across cultures. They examined five aspects of servant leadership: egalitarianism, moral integrity, empowerment, empathy and humility, and GLOBE Project questionnaires and culture clusters were used in the study. It was found that three of the five aspects of servant leadership were endorsed as effective leadership qualities across cultures. From these examples it can be argued that leadership behaviours are different across cultures which highlight the need for this research to study leadership in unrepresented cultures in the literature of leadership such as Saudi (Khan and Varshney, 2013). Additionally, Lu (2012) understands culture from the native point of view rather than giving an external cultural view. While the etic approach identifies universal aspects of human behaviour, it also helps scholars to study cultural differences and similarities (Lu, 2012). However, scholars disagree on whether the best approach is to find these differences and similarities from etic or from emic studies. The literature of cross-cultural leadership has been enhanced by both approaches (Goethals et al., 2004). Both the emic and etic approaches are needed in leadership and cultural research, as many of the studies on leadership have been conducted by Western researchers. This has led researchers to raise questions concerning the extent to which these theories apply globally. The emic approach has some advantages, such as revealing how leadership behaviours are

manifested in a specific local environment. Accordingly, this study adopted an emic approach by studying authenticity in leadership in Saudi context.

In conclusion, despite the large number of studies which focus on leadership and culture it is still the case that *“some of the most important questions about leadership in an international context have not been addressed”* (Scandura and Dorfman, 2004, p.13). For example, if the phenomenon of leadership is universal and found in all societies, it can be asked to what extent leadership is culturally contingent. These points need more detailed research (Takahashi et al., 2012). Finally, it can be seen that in the current literature of leadership and culture studies, there is a lack of precision in the definition of related terms such as ‘global leader’, ‘transnational leader’, ‘cross-cultural leader’, and ‘expatriate leader’. This lack of agreement regarding even the basic terms of ‘leadership’ and ‘culture’ is another point which needs to be addressed in order to produce useful research in this field (Goethals et al., 2004).

Before discussing authentic leadership, the concept of authenticity is explained in the next section.

### **2.4 Authenticity**

The concept of authenticity is about being real and true to oneself (Boyras, 2014). Authenticity is predominantly embedded in human psychology and is particularly related to ethics and the self (Clegg et al., 2007). Authenticity was first conceptualised in ancient Greek philosophy and is reflected by the saying “know thyself” (Gardner et al., 2011). Originating from the Greek word *authento*, which means “to have full power” (Trilling, 1972), an authentic individual is one who is *“the master of his or her own domain”* (Grégoire et al., 2014, p.346). Over the previous decade, authenticity has become a significant notion in business and management literature, specifically in leadership studies (Banks et al., 2016; Avolio and Gardner, 2005). This section will explain authenticity by focusing on its defining points; mainly the components of authenticity and its relation to culture.

### 2.4.1 Definition of Authenticity

Authenticity is a philosophical term which has been defined from several different perspectives. For example, according to Grégoire et al. (2014), authenticity is derived from interpersonal perspectives as expressed by the individual's ethical and moral choices; to be authentic one must respect others and their social norms. However, authenticity is viewed from one perspective as being true to the self and aligning individual actions with personal values. From this perspective the central focus is the self, which is seen as a psychological entity and is distinct from concepts of the mind and soul (Grégoire et al., 2014). According to Erickson (1995), authenticity occurs when the individual makes a commitment to self-value. In addition, Kofman and Senge described authenticity as *"a willingness to recognise, include and embrace all of our aspects, even dark or demonic ones"* (1993, p.35), while Kernis and Goldman (2006) believes authentic individuals are those who follow their preferences and values, acting not to satisfy others or for rewards or to avoid punishments (Beddoes-Jones, 2013). Kernis and Goldman (2006) pointed out that authenticity revolves around individual emotions, thoughts, and behaviours that reflect the self.

From the above views and definitions at least two important issues can be raised. First, is authenticity an individual or a social construct? While the majority of available studies have addressed and defined authenticity from the intrapersonal perspective and self-perspective (Kokkoris and Kühnen, 2014), this might be because most of these studies were conducted in the West, where the self is viewed from an individualist point of view, while collectivist cultures view the individual self-concept as being embedded into interpersonal relationships (Slabu et al., 2014). Thus it is suggested that further study is required to examine the concept of authenticity in non-Western cultures (Kokkoris and Kühnen, 2014). The second significant issue is that several studies have claimed that the multiple roles which individuals take on in modern life and the associated social pressures cause difficulties in achieving authenticity (Boyraz et al., 2014; Tapara, 2013). Complete authenticity is an ideal which is unlikely to be obtained by any individual, so it is more realistic to describe an individual as being more, or less, authentic (Gardener et al., 2011). Thirdly, in the Arabic language, which is the language of the participants of this study, the word authenticity is translated into Arabic as *alasalalah*. Furthermore, the word *alasalalah* is not a common and known word in Arabic language. However, this word in Arabic actually means *originality*, which is a different concept. In the Arabic language there is no one word

which represents the actual meaning of authenticity as defined in Western cultures. This issue raises the question as to whether the concept of authenticity exists in Arabic cultures such as in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, exploring the concept of authenticity in the Arabic context is relevant rather than assuming that authentic leadership exists in Saudi Arabia and solely examining and applying it.

The next section goes deeper than the previous definitions to discuss the components of authenticity.

### **2.4.2      *Components of Authenticity***

Kernis and Goldman (2006) conceptualised authenticity as a combination of four components rather than being a single process. These four components are awareness, unbiased processing, behaviour, and relational orientation.

The component of awareness means increasing self-knowledge, which includes emotions, motives, desires and values. This component implies not only knowing the self, but also accepting and trusting one's self aspects as they are, thus possessing confidence in one's ability to deal with various situations in life. The second component is unbiased processing, which refers to respecting and accepting objectivity with regard to the positive and negative aspects of the self, such as feelings and motives. Kernis and Goldman (2006) describe unbiased processing as having an accurate and true sense of the self, which is reflected in one's behavioural choices and their implications. The third component is behaviour, which in terms of authenticity means acting in concurrence with one's needs, values, and preferences. At its roots, authentic behaviour is based on the driven and motivated intentions that come from awareness and unbiased processing. The fourth component is relational orientation, which refers to being open, honest and truthful in relation to others. It endorses being genuine and letting others see the real person, encouraging people to shy away from being fake. It is believed that each of these parts concentrates on one aspect of authenticity, while still relating to the others (Kernis and Goldman, 2006).

A later study by Wood et al. (2008) demonstrated that authenticity could be divided into three components. Their first component, self-alienation, relates to the degree of



misalignment between one's conscious awareness and one's actual experience of emotions and cognitions. The second component of authentic living refers to the congruence between cognitive awareness and behaviour. This means one can be true by behaving according to personal values. The third component is accepting external influence, which refers to the degree to which one accepts others' views and values. By combining levels of self-alienation, authentic living and external influence, a person-centric view of authenticity can be created (Wood et al., 2008).

Similarities and differences can be clearly observed between these two approaches to the components of authenticity. They both focus on the process of increasing authenticity. Moreover, the three components that Wood et al. (2008) describe are similar to the first, third and fourth components described by Kernis and Goldman (2006), although they are named differently. However, the second component in the Kernis and Goldman (2006) model, unbiased processing, is not mentioned at all by Wood et al. (2008).

According to Gardner et al. (2011), the multi-component model of authenticity presented by Kernis and Goldman (2006) was the theoretical foundation behind some of the theories of authentic leadership, such as Gardner et al. (2005), Walumbwa et al. (2008) and Spitzmuller and Ilies (2010).

### **2.4.3      *Authenticity and Culture***

People feel most authentic when behaving in a normative way (Slabu et al., 2014) that matches their values and beliefs, which are deeply attached to their cultures (Taras et al., 2009). The concept of authenticity is a creation of the Western cultural idea of the ideal individual (Kokkoris and Kühnen, 2014). However, Erickson (1995) argued that an individual's authenticity is deeply influenced by their culture and society. Two recent studies investigating the impact of culture on authenticity emphasise this point.

The first piece of research was conducted by Kokkoris and Kühnen (2014), who carried out an experimental study to examine how authenticity is perceived across different cultures. They used self-expression such as likes and dislikes to study authenticity in two different countries, Germany and China. They used self-expression because previous studies have claimed that this is a critical determinant of authenticity. The research studied 73 German and 87 Chinese students. The main finding of this study was that self-expression enhances

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the perceptions of authenticity when they are matched with the default culturally-determined self-expression norms. They argued that in collectivistic societies such as China, individuals pay more attention to fitting into their social environment, thus they are more likely to moderate their expressions to only those that are socially endorsed. Accordingly, in this type of culture, individuals focus more on maintaining interpersonal relationships, and so their authenticity is expected to originate from their readiness not to inhibit some of the expressions that may harm their relationships (Le and Impett, 2013).

The second study was undertaken by Slabu et al. (2014), who examined whether authenticity is a uniquely Western concept, or a universally endorsed phenomenon. Participants from four countries were surveyed, those being the United States, China, India, and Singapore. This study distinguished between trait authenticity and state authenticity. Trait authenticity was viewed as a stable attribute, while state authenticity was perceived as a situational and changeable phenomenon based on the psychological state of the individual. The authors examined both trait and state authenticity and obtained the following results. The US participants had a higher level of perceived trait authenticity than the Eastern participants, due to the norm differences between the Western and Eastern cultures. For example, individuals in Western societies have a relatively independent view of the self, whereas people from Eastern cultures (collectivist cultures) have more of an interdependent view of the self (Triandis, 1995). State authenticity was similarly scored in both Western and Eastern cultures.

From these studies, two implications of studying authenticity across cultures can be identified. Firstly, as authenticity is a complex construct, it can be defined from different perspectives. For instance, English and Chen (2011) argued that if authenticity were defined in a way that was more relevant to Eastern cultures, e.g. the interpersonal relationship perspective, they would seem more authentic than Western cultures. Thus, the way in which authenticity is defined and formulated is significant from a research perspective. Secondly, the question arises as to whether authenticity is a stable and steady attribute of individual personality or whether it is changeable and situational based on an individual's state. Despite the fact that most of the previous literature views authenticity as a constant trait, recent studies now tend to define it as a state-dependent phenomenon (Slabu et al., 2014). To conclude, it can be argued that authenticity is a universal phenomenon but one

which is contingent upon cultural norms (Slabu et al., 2014). The concept of authentic leadership is discussed in the next section.

## 2.5 Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership is one of the most recently developed theories in the field of leadership studies and over the last decade there has been a dramatic increase in articles and discussions on this subject (Anderson et al., 2016; Banks et al., 2016; Gardner et al., 2011). The concept of authentic leadership is built on previous leadership theories such as transformational leadership and charismatic leadership, which are generally perceived as positive approaches to leadership (Banks et al., 2016; Tapara, 2011). Authentic leadership concentrates more on ethics and morality; areas that have not been touched on deeply by previous leadership theories (Conger, 1998). These issues were first mentioned by Luthans and Avolio in 2004, when the Gallop Leadership Institute sponsored a summit at the University of Nebraska. Based on this summit, a special issue of the *Leadership Quarterly* Journal was published, which focussed on the topic of authentic leadership (Northouse, 2012).

The next section firstly gives a brief overview of the history of authentic leadership followed by its definitions. Subsequently models of authentic leadership will be discussed before linking them with cultural considerations and concluding by its' critiques.

### 2.5.1 Defining Authentic Leadership

*Leadership Quarterly* reviewed the current literature on authentic leadership in the study by Gardner et al. (2011). They found thirteen different definitions of AL and the authentic leader. Authentic leadership was defined by Brown-Radford in 2006 under the topic of organisational authenticity.

*“A hierarchical organisation, in short, like an individual person, is ‘authentic’ to the extent that, throughout its leadership, it accepts finitude, uncertainty, and contingency; realizes its capacity for responsibility and choice; acknowledges guilt and errors; fulfils its creative managerial potential for flexible planning, growth, and charter or policy formation; and responsibly participates in the wider community”* (Gardner et al., 2011, p.1122).

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Shamir and Eilam (2005) claim that authentic leaders who exhibit genuine leadership qualities perceive their leadership role as central to their identity and self-image. In addition, authentic leaders are those who have achieved a high level of self-resolution, with self-concordant aims and self-expressive actions. It can be seen that these views focus on leaders' self-concepts rather than the interpersonal aspect of leadership. However, there are other academic definitions which do highlight the interactive side of the role. That is to say, that authentic leadership emerges not only from the individual leader but from the interaction between leaders and their followers and that both influence each other.

Yet other definitions of authentic leadership combine both aspects of leadership, i.e. leaders' self-concepts and how leaders relate to followers. For instance, George et al. (2007) argue that authentic leaders who are genuine people are also true to themselves, building trust and developing genuine relationships with others.

Northouse (2012) suggests a developmental aspect of authentic leadership, which views it as a process which is developed and enhanced through life events. An example of this view is the definition by Walumbwa et al. (2008, p. 94) below:

*"We define authentic leadership as a pattern of leader behaviour that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development"*

Another definition by Avolio et al. (2009) who defined it as *"a pattern of transparent and ethical leader behaviour that encourages openness in sharing information needed to make decisions while accepting input from those who follow"*(p. 424). A recent definition by Anderson et al. (2016) who view authentic leadership as a concept of genuine functioning is based on being true to the self which is concentrate on self-awareness and the congruence between the values and behaviours.

### 2.5.2 Approaches of Authentic Leadership

It is assumed that authentic leadership goes beyond transformational leadership as it is concerned with two main issues, the leader's self-awareness and leading with ethical and moral values (Beddoes-Jones, 2013). Although authentic leadership is still in the initial stages of development, various studies have been conducted to explore how this new concept works (Banks et al., 2016). The following are different models of authentic leadership which have been the most cited studies in the paper reviewing the work of Gardner et al. (2011).

According to Gardner et al. (2011), the most cited theoretical framework of authentic leadership is the model created by Gardner et al. (2005) as shown Figure 3 below.

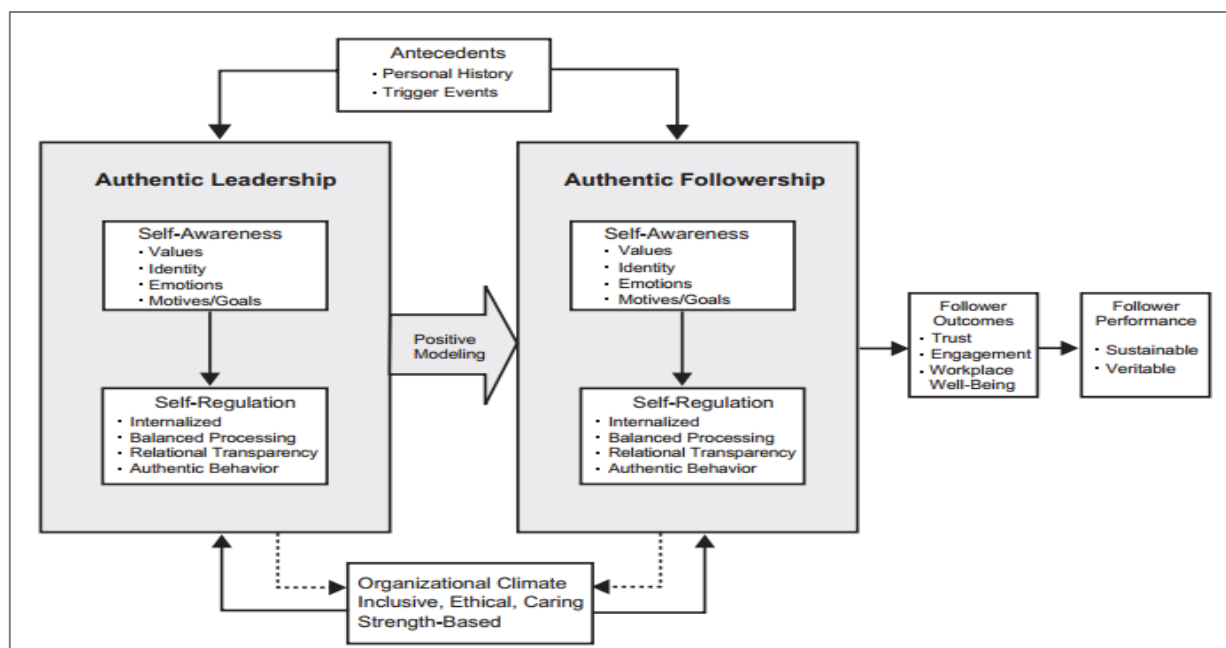


Figure 3: Conceptual Framework of Authentic Leadership (Gardner et al., 2005, p.346)

As Figure 3 shows, there are two main parts to this framework: authentic leadership and authentic followership. This model suggests that self-awareness and self-regulation allow the authentic leader to act as a role model for followers' development, which mirrors the development of the leader. It also highlights the role of leaders' and followers' personal history and trigger events in shaping their growth. Additionally, there are other factors that affect authentic leadership, such as organisational climate and ethics (Gardner et al., 2005). As a result of this process there are three direct outcomes: greater feelings of trust between

leader and followers, more engagement and higher workforce wellbeing. These three outcomes enhance the performance of followers (Zehndorfer, 2014).

Avolio and Gardner (2005) have formulated an authentic leadership development model that consists of nine components. These components are: positive psychological capital, positive moral perspective, leader self-awareness, leader self-regulation, leadership processes and behaviours, follower self-awareness and regulation, follower development, organisational context and veritable and sustained performance beyond expectations.

A different perspective of authentic leadership development has been suggested by Shamir and Eilam (2005), involving a process they call 'life stories'. The life stories approach focuses on storytelling as a source of self-knowledge and clarity of self-concept for the authentic leader. They argued that leaders' life-stories are self-narratives, which are the outcomes of the relationship between their life experiences and the stories of these experiences. Shamir and Eilam (2005) identify four components of the life stories model. The first is the development of a leader identity as an essential component of the individual's self-concept. The second is the development of both self-knowledge and the clarity of self-concept. The third component is the development of personal goals, which are in congruence with the self-concept, and the fourth component is that of increasing self-expression behaviours.

Another key model helping to understand authentic leadership is mentioned by Walumbwa et al. (2008) whose comprehensive review of the literature suggests four components of authentic leadership (Northouse, 2012). Firstly, *self-awareness* means that the leader should understand his or her core values and emotions, as well as strengths and weaknesses. Secondly, the *internalised moral perspective* refers to the self-regulatory process of a value system that makes the leader act according to his values rather than as a result of external pressure from employees or social group. This component is essential for genuine leaders who want to behave in a way that is based on their beliefs and morals (Tapara, 2011). Thirdly, *relational transparency* is the leader's ability to express their true feelings to others. Leader authenticity is observed by followers when the leader reveals his or her emotions (Northouse, 2012). Fourthly, *balanced processing* refers to the processes of acknowledging the viewpoints of others by analysing them objectively before making a

decision. Authentic leaders who have high self-esteem perceive negative views about themselves as an opportunity for self-development (Tapara, 2011). Although this study was conducted in three countries, China, Kenya, and the United States, it has been criticised for not taking into account the cultural influences on authentic leadership (Walumbwa et al., 2008).

The above models of authentic leadership are the most cited, according to a study of Gardner et al. (2011). However, as authentic leadership is a current research topic, a number of other models have been developed since the review of the work of Gardner et al. For example, Beddoes-Jones (2013) proposes a four factor model, as Figure 4 illustrates, arguing that authentic leadership is the interaction between two domains, the psychological self and philosophical self.

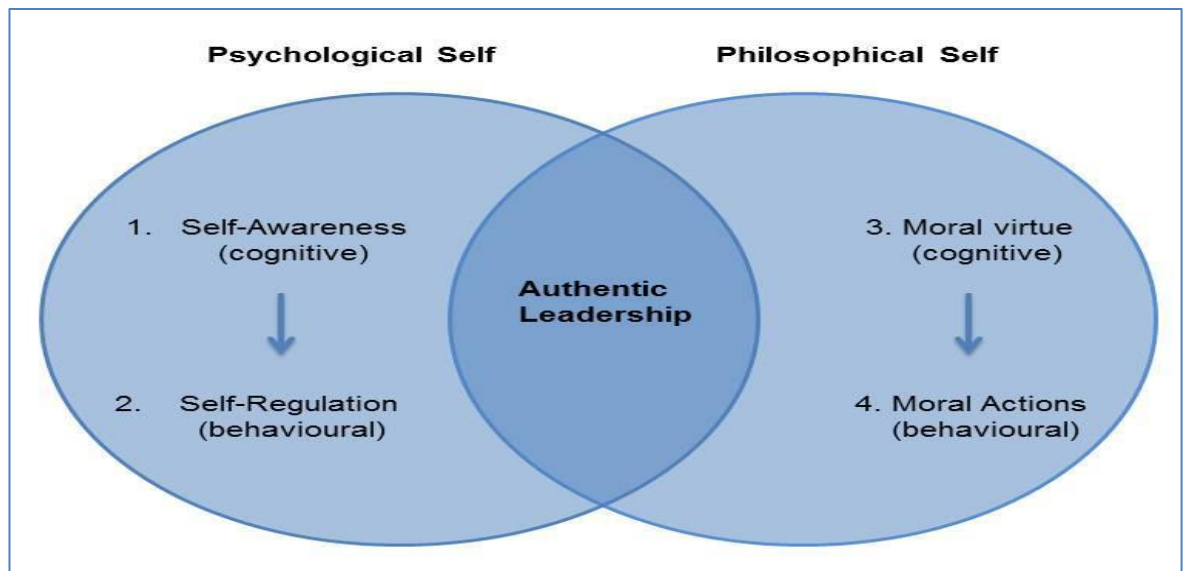


Figure 4: The Four Factors model of Authentic Leadership by Beddoes-Jones (2013,p.70)

The philosophical self comprises the two factors of self-awareness and self-regulation while the philosophical self includes ethical virtue and ethical action. The four factor model believes that self-awareness is a cognitive factor that is translated behaviourally by the self-regulation factor. Likewise, ethical virtue is translated behaviourally into ethical action. Figure 4 shows how the four factors model of authentic leadership work together. This model argues that authentic leadership occurs only when the psychological self and the philosophical self overlap.

The next section addresses the relationship between authentic leadership and authentic followership.

### **2.5.3      *Authentic Followership***

It is believed that leaders and followers are both key to understanding the concept of leadership (Banks et al., 2016). Leadership and followership are linked, and as dynamic interrelated processes, one cannot be understood without the other (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Followers are defined as people who follow and have less power than their supervisors (Epperson, 2015). Despite it being known that followers and followership are vital to the leadership process, nevertheless, the role of followers has been largely neglected in leadership studies (Malakyan, 2014; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014; Yukl, 2010). This situation is changing gradually, however, and the literature of leadership has recently begun to pay more attention to research into followership (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). One of the few leadership theories where followership is fully present in research is authentic leadership (Malakyan, 2014). Authentic leadership is better understood by exploring how authentic leaders influence followers and how followers influence authentic leaders (Epperson, 2015). Therefore, the following is a discussion of some of the studies that concentrate on authentic followership. One of the key studies that explains how authentic leaders influence authentic followers is that of Gardner et al. (2005). This study argues that authentic followership is the result of followers mirroring the positive modelling of authentic leaders. Authentic followers therefore also exhibit self-awareness, internalised regulatory processes, balanced processing and relational transparency. Another of the few empirical studies concentrating on authentic followership is that of Leroy et al. (2012), who examined the role of authentic followership in the relationship between authentic leadership and follower in-role and extra-role performance behaviours. Their study found that the interaction between authentic followership and authentic leadership was positively related to the basic needs satisfaction of followers. Leroy et al. also looked at the role of authentic followership within authentic leadership, which helps to better explain how authentic leadership fosters the autonomous work motivation of followers and the associated improvements in work role performance. An interesting recent study of authentic followership by De Zilwa (2016) focuses on the strengths and outcomes of



authentic followership. De Zilwa's study produced a model that views the outcomes of authentic followership on three levels: individual follower level, which is about the follower's capacity for authenticity; the dyadic level, which is about the dyadic relationship between the leader and his follower; and the organisational level, which is about positive organisational culture, as Figure 5 shows.

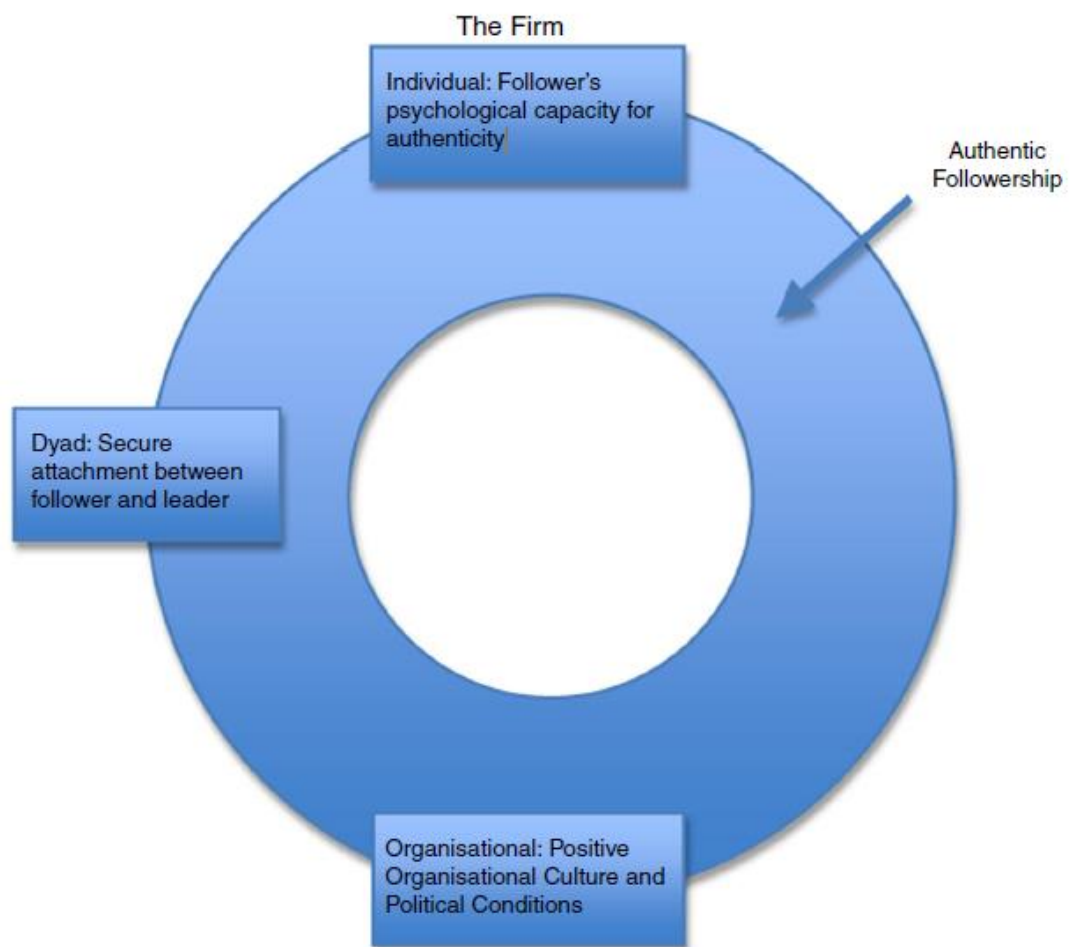


Figure 5 Authentic Followership Model by De Zilwa (2016, p.313)

The results of De Zilwa's study found that at the individual follower level, authentic followership enhances followers' strengths and attributes such as self-motivation, self-regulation, self-development and self-direction. The main consequence at the dyadic level is that the follower has more trust and respect for the leader. The key strength at the organisational level is that authentic followership increases organisational performance.

De Zilwa also identifies the relationship between the three levels, or components, as she calls them, whereby each component is dependent on the others. She states, *“when the three components of authentic followership are enacted (followers’ authenticity, secure attachment between followers, and leaders and positive organisational culture), each component is strengthened and reinforced”* (De Zilwa, 2016, p.318).

To conclude this section on authentic followership, two important points can be made. The first is that although authentic leadership research has paid attention to the significance of authentic followership, few studies in the literature focus on it. According to Leroy et al. (2012), the current literature concentrates mainly on leader authenticity in the workplace while offering less recognition to followers. The second point is that as De Zilwa (2016) argues, there are cultural aspects which affect the emergence and impact of authentic followership, such as hierarchical organisational structures in which high power-distance relationships usually exist between leaders and followers. In these types of cultures, two factors can minimise the emergence of authentic followership; first, as followers have minimal input, they are less engaged, and so their true personality is challenged. The second factor is that in hierarchical cultures leaders are treated as heroes and have ultimate power which can be used unethically. Thus, these two points affect whether leaders and followers show their true selves. It is suggested here that more studies are needed on authentic followership across cultures in order to identify the cultural impact on both authentic leadership and followership. The relationship between culture and authentic leadership is critically examined next.

### **2.5.4 Authentic Leadership and Culture**

Authentic leadership theory acknowledges the significance of values and beliefs in both the leader and the follower. It is believed that culture plays a vital role in shaping individuals’ values and the question to be asked here is, to what extent does culture affect the values of authentic leaders and followers?

Surprisingly, the current literature on authentic leadership lacks in studies that link it with culture, and to the knowledge of the author only two empirical studies have been noted to date that link national culture with authentic leadership. The first is *Authentic Leadership*,

*Traditionality and Interactional Justice in the Chinese Context* by Li et al. (2014) and the second, *The Role of Authentic Leadership and Cultural Intelligence in Cross-Cultural Contexts* by Vogelgesang et al. (2009).

The first study examined the effect of authentic leadership on employees in Chinese culture. The authors surveyed 369 employees in 83 work units from various organisations in China. The main findings of this study affirm the effectiveness of authentic leadership in China. The authors state that *“the more authentic leadership behaviours displayed in organisations, the more productive, creative, and helpful the employees become,”* (p.20). Moreover, they have found that a leader is more effective when his/her behaviour is in accordance with subordinates’ cultural values (Li et al., 2014).

The second study, by Vogelgesang et al. (2009), focused on linking the two emerging theories of authentic leadership and cultural intelligence by explaining how cultural intelligence moderates the relationship between authentic leadership and ethically grounded cultural adaptation (cultural change). Cultural intelligence has been defined as *“the ability to interact effectively with people who are culturally different ...to generate appropriate behaviour in a new cultural setting”* (Thomas, 2006, p.80). The research demonstrated that there are three types of interaction between authentic leadership and cultural intelligence, cognitive, motivational and behavioural, which allow global leaders to adjust to different cultures without losing their personal values and beliefs. These adjustments are not only found to be effective but also to remain genuine. This will help to develop leaders by enabling them to learn and adapt to foreign value systems (Vogelgesang et al., 2009).

Avolio et al. (2005) argued that exploring authentic leadership was not about the creation of another new theory but a way of returning to the fundamental essence of leadership (Wong and Cummings, 2009). There are a number of reasons why the emergence of authentic leadership is timely and valuable, such as the rise in corporate scandals and the threat of terrorism, which have resulted in the need for responsible and accountable leaders with high standards of integrity (Wong and Cummings, 2009). Nevertheless, the current literature on authentic leadership lacks the dimension of cultural considerations. For example, Li et al. (2014) argue that although authentic leadership has been widely examined in the context of Western cultures (Gardner et al., 2005), we still know very little

about how it functions in Eastern societies. Exploring and examining authentic leadership in non-Western culture can be done in different ways. However, it is argued that investigating the concept of authenticity and its relation to leadership in Eastern cultures is more effective than examining or testing the current models of authentic leadership, as they have a Western cultural bias. For example, the results of Slabu et al. (2014) and Kokkoris and Kühnen (2014) showed that individuals from Western cultures such as Germany and the US are more authentic than those from Eastern. Further critiques of authentic leadership is discussed next.

### **2.5.5      *The Contested Nature of Authentic Leadership***

Various studies have proven that authentic leadership has a positive impact on followers and organisations. For instance, the meta-analysis of authentic leadership by Banks et al. (2016) has found that it is positively correlated with the six outcomes of follower job satisfaction, follower satisfaction with the leader, task performance, team or organisation performance, organisational citizenship behaviours (OCB), and leader effectiveness. Furthermore, Diddams and Chang (2012) state that the positive impact of authentic leadership includes behavioural changes such as increased employee engagement (Walumbwa et al., 2010) and trust (Wong & Cummings, 2009), and more commitment to the leadership (Walumbwa et al., 2008).

On the other hand, other scholars identify some issues and limitations in authentic leadership theory. For example, a recent study by Anderson et al. (2016) asserts that authentic leadership can generate conflict between the values and beliefs of leaders and those of followers. They argue that when authentic leaders develop self-awareness, followers who have a high level of individualism may move away from the leader if their values and beliefs contradict those of the leader. The second limitation of authentic leadership is suggested by Diddams and Chang (2012) who state that,

*“While a key attribute of authentic leadership is a balanced approach to processing information about one's self, the focus on strengths provides no guidance on how to process negative self-referenced information. This positive focus alone may actually weaken leadership effectiveness by increasing defensiveness and lessening motivation toward*

*development as leaders become aware of their own weaknesses”* (Diddams and Chang, 2012, p.594-595).

Another major drawback of authentic leadership is that it does not consider the social and cultural aspects that influence individuals’ authenticity and their leadership ability (Gardner et al., 2011). Gardner et al. (2011) also asserts that the concept of authenticity is constructed differently according to an individual’s place and culture. Similarly, according to Bishop (2013), it is difficult to define authenticity precisely because it greatly depends on peoples’ perceptions, which, he believes, manifest from their cultural and organisational values and evolve through relationships and communication with others.

A serious critique was raised by Gruenfeld and Zander (2011), who argue that being who you are and saying what you think can be highly problematic, especially if an authentic leader has a corrupt or manipulative personality. This opinion is supported by observations from practice in which being authentic is used as an excuse for bad behaviour and socially irresponsible acts by leaders.

Another issue is highlighted by Sharen (2011), who argues that authentic leadership focuses on the true self and that a leader’s values and beliefs should match their actions. She points out that our authentic self is based on our values regardless of what behaviours and traits are expressed. It is too often assumed that the authentic self is acceptable to others and that expressing the authentic self is somehow more important than considering the needs of the group. Sharen asks therefore why our authenticity seems to be valued more highly than our relationship with others, since this stands in contradiction to the basic assumption that leadership is about others, rather than about the self. Thus, one drawback of the ethical dimension, which is one of the bases of authentic leadership, is that it appears to be vague (Beddoes-Jones, 2013). As individuals have different personal ethical frameworks, the whole construct of authentic leadership is subject to influence by leaders’ personal beliefs and values.

To summarise this section, the literature shows that some research has revealed the positive impact of authentic leadership. However, the concept of authentic leadership has been criticised in various ways. The main problem is that the construct of authenticity concentrates only on the true self, regardless of other people. If we look back to the weaknesses of the authentic leadership concept above, we can see that Anderson and

colleagues (2016) noticed that authenticity could result in potential conflict between leaders' and followers' values. This conflict occurs because the concept of authenticity is only perceived as self-construct and tends not to pay attention to others around the leader. Similarly, Gardner et al. (2011) stated the same limitation, which is that authentic leadership ignores the influential factor of culture and how other people impact leader authenticity. Likewise, Sharen's (2011) critique is that authentic leadership assumes that the leader's values are accepted by others. Thus, it can be argued that the key limitation of the current authentic leadership construct is that it ignores the interpersonal aspect and is built only on the self, irrespective of the cultural, relational effect of followers

Conclusion

### **2.5.6 Responsible Leadership**

It has been argued that current theories of leadership, including authentic leadership, focus principally on the dyadic leader-follower relationship (Antunes and Franco 2016; Shi and Ye, 2016) while ignoring the impact of leader behaviour and its consequences on stakeholders and community (Shi and Ye, 2016). As a result, theory and practice are struggling with the task of re-conceptualizing the role of leadership and corporations in society. To fill this theoretical gap, the idea of responsible leadership has recently appeared in the leadership literature. Responsible leadership is a **concept, which** effectively balances the conflicting interests between stakeholders inside and outside of organisations (Maak and Pless, 2006), **thereby helping to** promote corporate reputations, earn public trust, and achieve the sustainable development of businesses within society. Responsible leadership examines the impact of leaders' decisions and behaviour on other stakeholders, an area which is noticeably disregarded by current leadership theories such as transformational leadership, servant leadership, ethical leadership and authentic leadership (Antunes and Franco 2016). Being responsible means acting correctly in relation to others and setting oneself up as an "agent for world benefit" (Cunha et al., 2007, p. 476). The focus is on responsibility and directing attention to those to whom the leader is responsible. Responsibility is also commonly associated with freedom of action and capabilities, indicating that responsible individuals are willing, and have the necessary authority, with the available means and resources, to attain objectives or results (Cameron, 2011). Responsible leadership is a relational and ethical phenomenon which occurs in social

processes of interaction with those who affect or are affected by leadership and have a stake in the purpose and vision of the leadership relationship. This theory helps to broaden the view from a leader-subordinate relationship to a leader-stakeholder relationship and it challenges some of the underlying assumptions of traditional leadership theory.

To better understand the concept, Antunes and Franco (2016) have introduced a four dimensional four-dimensional model of responsible leadership. The first dimension is the *aggregate of virtues*, which means a common pattern of correctness, morality and goodness, and is concerned with distinguishing between what is right and wrong in the leadership context. The second dimension is *stakeholder involvement*, in which all stakeholders are viewed as interacting with leadership, taking a wider viewpoint than the simple 'leader-follower' perspective. The third is that of the *leader's role*, meaning that responsible leaders must have the intellectual ability to lead and balance multiple and diverse perspectives. This dimension includes solving complex problems and respecting the interests of different points of view, even conflicting objectives. The fourth dimension of responsible leadership is *principles and ethical values* in respect of leaders' decisions and actions, and in satisfying different interests if possible. Antunes and Franco (2016) summarise the four dimensions of responsible leadership as being

*"A concept of responsible leadership based on value, through ethical principles and the relationship between leaders and interested parties. The role of ethical principles can be strategic and presents the scale of development of virtue in organizations. This dimension considers business ethics as the basis of leadership in companies" (p.131).*

In comparing responsible leadership and authentic leadership, we can see that they are similar but different. Both have emerged in the literature of leadership in order to address corporate scandals, financial crises, and misconduct by organisational leaders (Antunes and Franco, 2016), and both focus on ethical conduct and moral values in leadership. Conversely, there are distinct differences between them. Although both were introduced to answer the call for trustworthy and accountable leadership, each has responded from a different standpoint. For example, authentic leadership concentrates on leader integrity and insists that authentic leaders should act upon their values. Authentic leadership theory assumes that leader self-awareness and self-regulation generate ethical and moral conduct. Responsible leadership, on the other hand, focuses on the role of business leaders

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integrating their company's stakeholders, not just their followers, into the relationship, and it examines the impact of leaders' decisions and behaviours on all stakeholders and assesses whether the leadership is ethical, accountable and responsible. Thus, authentic leadership is based on the dyadic leader-follower relationship, while responsible leadership expands this relationship to include stakeholders.

According to Freeman and Auster (2011), current discussions of authenticity mainly reflect the idea that each individual has a set of values, and that these values are knowable. Nevertheless, authentic leadership, unlike many other leadership theories, does not assume that these values are transparent to individuals and organisations, nor that the self is mainly defined by these values. However, in practical terms this may mean that acting authentically is either taken for granted or rendered impossible, and therefore we need a more nuanced approach that reflects our past.

To conclude, both authentic and responsible leadership research attempts to bridge the gap in leadership theory by identifying those factors contributing towards trustworthy and accountable leadership. Responsible leadership is currently an under-researched topic and it will be interesting to see how this field develops its themes (Antunes and Franco, 2016).

To summarise, this chapter has critically reviewed and discussed the literature surrounding four theoretical dimensions of culture, leadership, authenticity and authentic leadership. As a result of this wide literature review a research gap has been identified as Figure 6 shows.



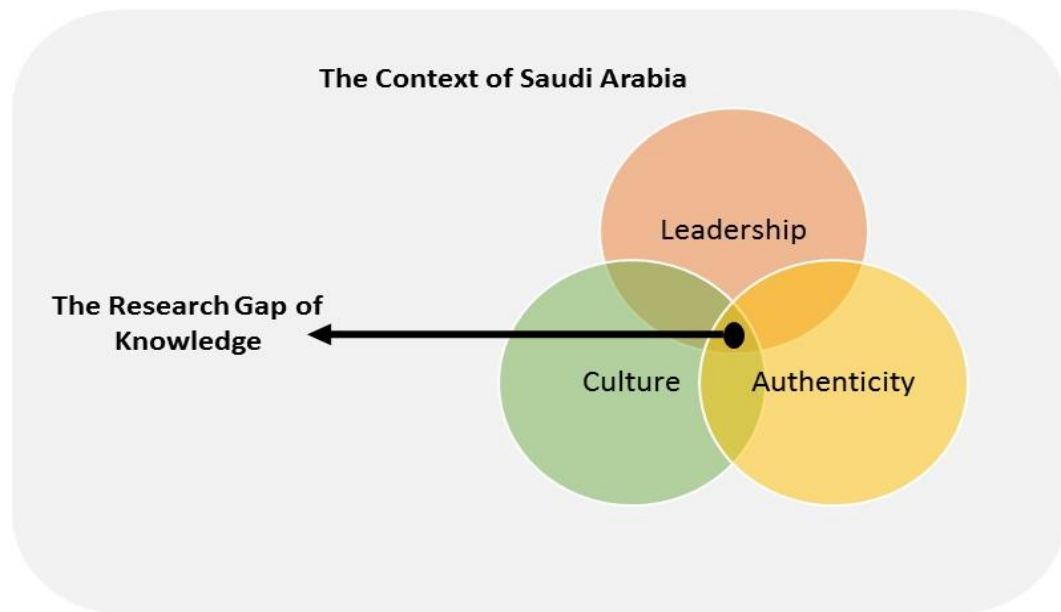


Figure 6: Research Gap

The research gap lies in the intersection of the dimensions and can be expressed as exploring authenticity in the context of leadership in Saudi Arabian culture. This topic has been developed based on the following processes. Firstly, the areas of leadership and culture were selected at the beginning of the study. After exploring these two dimensions the researcher asked the following question. If the phenomenon of leadership is universal and found in all societies, to what extent is leadership culturally contingent? This points to the need for more detailed research in this area (Takahashi et al., 2012). Moreover, Avolio et al. (2009) argued that one of the top priority areas to be researched is studying leadership in cultures that are underrepresented in the literature, such as Muslim cultures. Saudi Arabian culture was selected for this reason.

Thus the literature of leadership theories has been examined and authentic leadership identified as the most appropriate theory to study for three reasons. Firstly, it is the most recent leadership theory and the topic of current research (Anderson et al., 2016). Secondly, there are few studies of authentic leadership in non-Western cultures. For example, Li et al. (2014) point out that authentic leadership has been extensively examined in the context of Western cultures but not so much in others, and Gardner et al. (2005) have argued that we still know very little about authentic leadership and how it works in Eastern cultures. Thirdly, authentic leadership in Saudi culture has never been studied.

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The researcher then asked whether it is better to examine and test one of the current models of authentic leadership within the Saudi culture or to explore the concept of authenticity in Saudi leadership. The second option was selected for three reasons. First, the current models of authentic leadership have originated in Western cultures, as has been argued previously. Second, these models have been produced based on Western concepts of authenticity (Kokkoris and Kühnen, 2014). Thirdly, as mentioned in section 2.4.1 in the Arabic language there is no one word which reflects the actual meaning of authenticity as defined in Western cultures. Thus, the research objective is to understand the meaning of authenticity in non-Western cultures by exploring how leaders and followers in Saudi culture perceive the concept of authenticity.

## Chapter 3: Research Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research process and explains the paradigmatic assumptions which underlie the research. This study aims to explore how Saudi leaders and followers perceive authenticity in leadership. Research methodology refers to the general principle that guides the research questions (Dawson, 2009), which in this study are as follows. The main research question to be addressed in this study is: *How do Saudi leaders and followers perceive authenticity in leadership?* The following associated questions are also to be answered by the study.

1. How do Saudi leaders and followers define authenticity in leadership?
2. What are the leadership behaviours that are associated with their perception of authenticity in leadership?
3. What is the relationship between the cultural dimensions of Saudi Arabia and authenticity in leadership?
4. To what extent do Saudi leaders influence their followers' authenticity?

This chapter is divided into three main sections: the research philosophy and paradigm; the design of the study which includes the sample, methods of data collection and analysis; and finally the trustworthiness of the research. The following Figure 7 shows an overview of the research methodology of this study

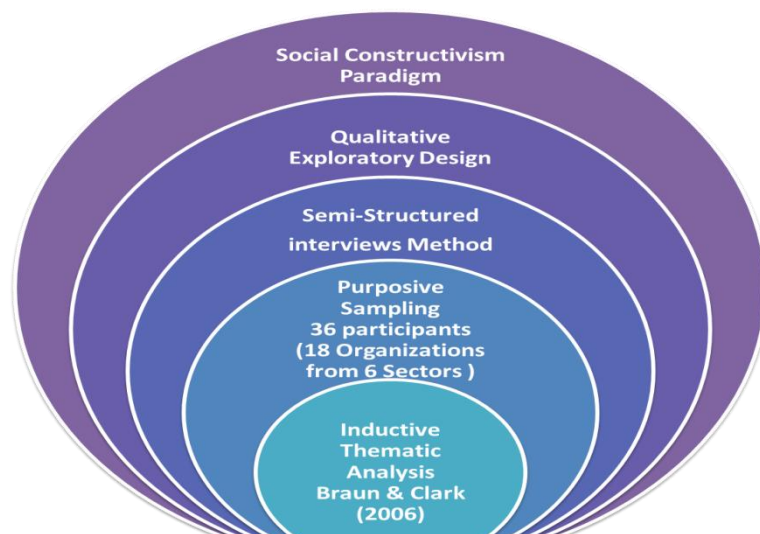


Figure 7: Overview of Research methodology

### 3.2 Research Philosophy

Deciding upon the most appropriate research philosophy is crucial in social science as it influences how the researcher thinks and acts, and is reflected in the research process (Klenke, 2008; Collis et al., 2003). A research philosophy or paradigm embodies the assumptions, which lie behind the researcher's view of the world and the nature of knowledge (Johnson and Clark, 2006). A paradigm in social science research is defined as a *"comprehensive belief system, world view, or framework that guides research and practice in the field"* (Willis, 2007, p8). Creswell (2014) sees it more in terms of worldview, describing it as the researcher's beliefs about the nature of the research and the world which underlie the study. This section briefly discusses a number of basic research paradigms before examining the philosophical position of this research more deeply.

Social science research makes use of a number of different philosophical paradigms. Crowther and Lancaster (2012) recognise four main paradigms of positivism, interpretivism, pragmatism and realism. **Positivism** is based on knowledge gained from the positive verification of observable experience. Achieving this knowledge can be done via experimental testing or scientific methods (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006). Positivism views phenomena as valid knowledge which can be measured and observed independently and objectively (Collis and Hussey, 2013).

The **interpretivist** paradigm believes that in conducting research it is essential to understand the differences between human beings as social actors (Flick, 2009). Thus, the study of a social phenomenon can only be understood from the point of view of the individuals who are directly involved in the activities to be studied (Burrell and Morgan, 1994).

**Realism or critical realism** focuses primarily on the reality and beliefs which already exist independently of the perceiving mind, i.e. the reality existing in the environment (Willis, 2007). Realism can be divided into two types. Direct realism argues that what we experience with our senses is the accurate reality while critical realism holds that sensory experience is not true reality (Crowther and Lancaster, 2012; Patton, 2002).

**Pragmatism** emphasises finding new ways to solve problems and focuses on their application (Creswell, 2012). Pragmatism is not committed to any one system of philosophy or reality and the key factor in this paradigm is the research question.

As the nature of research paradigms are dynamic and developing, other paradigms have been added to the literature. Creswell (2014), for example, has derived two separate paradigms from the above. The first is the **postpositivist** paradigm, which shares similar assumptions to positivism and carries a positivist worldview. There is more interaction between the researcher and the participants in postpositivism than in positivism (Taylor and Medina, 2013). Additionally, postpositivism uses a variety of quantitative techniques such as surveys and qualitative methods such as interviews and participant-observation (Creswell, 2012). The second is the **constructivist** paradigm, which holds that the social world can be understood by investigating the meaning of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it (Carsten et al., 2010; Klenke, 2008). Therefore, the meanings of social phenomena are diverse, multiple and situated in the researched context (Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, research is a product of the values of the researchers and cannot be independent of them (Taylor and Medina, 2013). Constructivism shares certain tenets of the interpretivist paradigm but goes further (Creswell, 2014).

When a researcher adopts a particular paradigm it then becomes rather like a lens through which the fieldwork and analysis are seen according to that particular set of established assumptions (Burke, 2007). After considering the above philosophical worldviews, this study has been positioned in a social constructivist paradigm.

Social constructivism has been adopted over other paradigms as the research paradigm for this study for three main reasons. Firstly, it reflects the researcher's view of the world. Secondly, a social constructivist researcher focuses on a specific context, which in this case is the Saudi Arabian culture in which people live and work. This helps to obtain an understanding of the historical and cultural setting of the participants (Creswell, 2014). Thirdly, social constructivism serves the exploratory nature of this study and is the philosophy that is most congruent with the general research aim, i.e. to explore how Saudi leaders and followers perceive authenticity in leadership. Social constructivism seeks to understand how people make sense of their reality as they act and interact in meaningful ways (Klenke, 2008). Constructivism assumes that the meaning of a construct is contextual

and shared. Therefore, it is congruent with the social processes that help humans to construct their world and to make sense of it. As the research question of this study concerns the shared meaning of authenticity in a Saudi context, social constructivism is an appropriate approach as it will shed light on the way in which authenticity is constructed here. Thus, the researcher will *“rely as much as possible on the participants’ view of the situation being studied”* (Creswell, 2014, p8).

### **3.2.1 Social Constructivism**

The constructivist paradigm is explained more through the four basic aspects of ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology are discussed below. The information here is adapted from Guba and Lincoln (2005).

#### **3.2.1.1 Ontology**

The basic ontological concerns focus on the nature of existence and reality (Mertens, 2014; Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Crotty, 1998). It asks whether reality is objective, singular and concrete, or whether it is subjective, multiple and constructed by people through their actions and interactions (Atiq, 2014). Within the constructivist paradigm, reality is subjective and based on relativism, which mean reality cannot exist without context. Also, it focuses on looking for meaning rather than truth (Kilam, 2013). As a piece of constructivist research the reality of this study is subjective, changeable, multiple and socially constructed by the actors within the research process (Crowther and Lancaster, 2012). Additionally, from a constructivist point of view, it is believed that reality and knowledge are created, not discovered, during the act of giving meaning to what is observed (Klenke, 2008). Thus, reality according to social constructivism is not a single universal reality but can only be understood by people within their social, historical and cultural contexts (Carsten et al., 2010). Constructivists take a subjective view of the world and attempt to understand the processes through which reality is produced (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). In this study the research aim is to understand how Saudi executives and their followers construct authenticity in leadership. Thus, the reality of this study is local and relative to Saudi culture.

### 3.2.1.2 Epistemology

The epistemological question is concerned with how we know reality and within the relationship between the researcher and what is known (Klenke, 2008). Epistemology deals with what is considered to be the evidence for knowledge (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). Social constructivism believes that knowledge is constructed socially through the interaction between people (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). The researcher and the participants interact and affect each other in meaningful ways, and thus knowledge is socially constructed (Burr, 1995). Social constructivism asserts that the authority of knowledge ultimately derives from a knowledge community of people who agree about the truth. As Thomas Kuhn (1970, p. 210) states in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, “*knowledge is intrinsically the common property of a group or else nothing at all*”. Continuous communication creates knowledge that is shared by the members of society. This does not mean that people do not have ideas, but that ideas are ultimately given meaning by their social context (Resnick et al., 2001). Social constructivism recognises the engagement of both participants and researchers as co-creators of the research findings (Ritchie et al., 2013). Thus the epistemology of this study is humanistic in nature and the researcher interacted meaningfully with the participants, who provided the data for this research (Creswell, 2012). This study attempted to discover the shared meaning of authenticity in leadership and followership within the Saudi Arabian context.

### 3.2.1.3 Axiology

Axiology deals with the researcher’s view of the role of values and ethics in research (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). This study is value-bound and the researcher is part of what is being researched (Flick, 2009; Saunders et al., 2012). Constructivist researchers and participants are expected to bring their values to the research process; this includes the choice of the problem, the guiding paradigm, and the method of data collection and analysis (Klenke, 2008). The researcher and the research participants interacted and influenced each other in meaningful ways, and thus knowledge is socially constructed (Burr, 1995).

### 3.2.1.4 Methodology

The methodological question is concerned with how we should study the world (Johnson and Clark, 2006). From the foregoing discussion it is clear that this study is qualitative in

nature. Qualitative research can be defined as a way of studying *“things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them”* (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008, p1). Klenke (2008) identifies the distinctive characteristics of qualitative research, and these are applied in this study. Firstly, qualitative research seeks to capture the richness of people’s experience of social phenomena. Secondly, qualitative research design is flexible and can be changed to align with the active and developing research processes. Thirdly, qualitative studies are primarily inductive and are conducted within natural settings. Accordingly, this study is inductive as it aims to build and develop a theory from the collected data, although the research problem and question were generated from the literature.

To conclude, it is worth mentioning that there is considerable on-going academic debate regarding research paradigms, as each has its own advantages and limitations. In addition, due to the variety and complexity of the various research paradigms, any attempt to categorise all research in terms of a paradigm is a difficult and beyond the remit of this thesis (Taylor and Medina, 2013).

### **3.3 Research Design**

A research design is a plan for gathering and analysing data in order to answer the questions proposed by the study (Ragin, 2010). The research design provides a specific direction for the study procedures (Creswell, 2014) and should reflect the objectives of the research as well as the philosophical world view of the researcher (Ibrahim, 2014). In research design significant decisions will be made, such as the choice of data collection methods and analysis techniques (Creswell, 2014). Silverman (2010) suggests that research in general can be categorised as either quantitative or qualitative, or more specifically such as case study, grounded theory. The methodological position of the current research is broadly defined as exploratory and qualitative (Patton, 2002). Exploratory qualitative research was conducted in order to understand the concept of authenticity in leadership from the points of view of both Saudi leaders and followers. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that in exploratory research the researcher should investigate social phenomena with minimal a priori expectations in order to develop explanations of these phenomena



(Bowen, 2005). Consequently, the researcher in this study acted as an explorer, which means being open and having as few preconceptions as possible in order to make the unknown known (Bergers, 2000). Before moving on to data collection, the sampling of the study is discussed below.

### 3.3.1 *Sampling and Sample Rational*

The central research question of this study is that how do Saudi leaders and followers perceive authenticity in leadership? To answer this question, the criteria for selecting the study sample and the rational for sample selection are stated Table 3

Table 3: Sampling Criteria and Rational

Sample Criteria	Sample Rationale
1. All participants are Saudi nationals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The core of this study relates to Saudi culture and the main aim is to explore the concept of authenticity in leadership in the specific context of Saudi Arabia.</li> </ul>
2. The sample includes both leaders and followers in equal numbers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The sample includes two group leader and followers. The first group consisted of organisational leaders and executives in roles such as CEO, president, vice president, managing director, executive manager and general manager. The second group consisted of followers of the leaders in the first group. Both leaders and followers were studied in order to answer the research question, which specifies the perceptions of both leaders and followers. As key participants in the leadership process, followers were included in order to yield richer and more comprehensive research as both leaders and followers are key components of the leadership process (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Although authentic leadership theory recognises the importance of authentic followership, the current literature focuses mainly on leader authenticity, while giving far less attention to follower authenticity (Leroy et al., 2012; Gardner et al., 2011).</li> <li>The followers were selected mainly by their leaders; it is acknowledged that this could cause bias in the data. However, the interview was not about leaders and followers assessing each other's performance or behaviours. It</li> </ul>

	<p>focused simply on perceptions of authenticity in leadership. In addition, about nine follower participants were selected by the HR manager who organise the researcher interviews in their organisation.</p>
<p><b>3. The participants were employed in private sector organisations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence shows that employees in the Saudi private sector are more developed than those in the public sector (Dincer et al., 2004). Executives in the private sector are involved more in leadership than in managerial roles, while in the public sector the opposite is the case (Al-Qahtani, 2014). Also, the researcher has found from experience that leaders and followers in the private sector are easier to access than those in the public sector.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. The organisation size was large, i.e. over 500 employees and they are from six sectors which are: motors, petrochemical, telecommunication, food, private education and construction.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The organisations size is large which is 500 employees and above this number is based the Saudi Ministry of Labour categorisation of size. Larger organisations were used because in the researcher's experience, larger companies select their executives based on competencies. In smaller and middle-sized organisations, employees are often chosen on the basis of relationship or friendship with the owner.</li> <li>• The six sectors were selected according to the Ministry of Commerce and Investment. The current private sector in Saudi Arabia includes over 21 different major industries and the six industries that were selected for this study based on them being the largest industries and access was possible within the confines of this PhD research</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. All the participants were male</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although having both genders in this study would have been ideal in terms of obtaining a more diverse sample, for cultural reasons it is difficult to find women leaders in the private sector in Saudi Arabia. It is also difficult for a male researcher to meet a female study participant because of Saudi cultural boundaries between men and women.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. The level of education of both participants' leaders and followers was at</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The interview questions require a high level of analysis and participants with less education may not have been able to give the required data. In addition, according the Ministry of</li> </ul>

<b>least a bachelor's degree</b>	Labour, the majority of Saudi people who work in the private sector companies have a bachelor degree as a minimum level of education.
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Based on the criteria outlined in Table 3, this study recruited 36 participants, 18 leaders and 18 followers, all of whom were male and educated to at least a bachelor's level. They were from 18 large companies in six industries in the Saudi private sector.

The sampling technique for this study was purposive sampling, in which the researcher selected participants with certain traits or qualities, based on particular knowledge already held about the population (Knox and Burkard, 2009). In this sampling method, the researcher considered the aim of the research and selected samples accordingly (Coyne, 1997). This enables the researcher to actively match the sample to the research question (Silverman, 2010). One of the advantages of using purposeful sampling is that the study becomes less time-consuming (Black, 1999). Only the most appropriate participants for the study were selected, as those who did not fit the criteria were eliminated (Coyne, 1997). Research suggests that the results of purposeful sampling are usually expected to be more representative of the population than those achieved with an alternative form of sampling (Silverman, 2010).

### **3.3.2 Data Collection Method**

The data was collected by conducting face-to-face interviews. This method was selected because it facilitates the exploration of the construction of meaning (Zintel, 2012). According to Kvale (2008), an interview tries to elicit and interpret central themes in the lives of the subjects by understanding the meanings of what they say. In addition, interviews are useful in obtaining the story behind a participant's experiences and viewpoints of a particular topic and to gather in-depth information (Turner, 2010).

There are three main types of interview. Firstly, the structured interview, in which all the interviewees are asked an identical structured sequence of questions (Lewis-Beck et al., 2004). Secondly, the unstructured interview is an informal type of interview in which the

interviewees are given the opportunity to talk freely, with no pre-determined questions (Klenke, 2008) Thirdly, the semi-structured interview uses a list of questions and themes to be covered during the interview, although the researcher is flexible about the order and the number of questions, depending on the flow of the interview (Rubin and Rubin, 2012).

Semi-structured interviews were employed in this study for the following reasons. Firstly, this type of interviews serves the exploratory nature of this research (Whiting, 2008). It is argued that the semi-structured interview aims to gather systematic information about a set of central topics, while allowing some exploration when new issues or topics emerge (Sivaji and Tzuaan, 2012). Secondly, it encourages the interviewee to produce their own ideas and opinions on the topic of interest, unlike leading the interviewee toward preconceived choices (Zorn, 2008). Thirdly, it is easier for the researcher to translate the research topic into language and terms that the interviewee can discuss and relate to (Klenke, 2008). Fourthly, semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to use both main questions and follow-up questions, which lead to very detailed and comprehensive information on the research topic (Rapley, 2001).

### **3.3.2.1 Development of Interview Questions**

Before conducting interviews, the researcher needed to design an interview schedule, which is a list of questions or topics to be covered (Dawson, 2009). The interview questions for this study were developed over four stages. In the first stage nine initial questions were identified after reviewing the literature and looking at the research aims, objectives and questions. The second stage of discussions between the researcher and the two supervisors led to the modification of some of the questions and the addition of one more. In the third stage, after agreement between the researcher and supervisors, the eleven questions were translated into Arabic for the Saudi participants. In the final stage, after conducting three pilot interviews, some modifications were made to the Arabic version of the questions (Appendix A)

Table 4 provides a guide to the interview question development, providing some insight into the underlying ideas that informed the questions.

Table 4: The Source of Interview Questions

No	Interview Questions	Source of Question
1	From your point of view how would you describe a successful leader?	Questions 1 and 2 were introductory questions about the attributes and the behaviours of successful leadership
2	What type of actions and behaviour do you think a good leader need to exhibit?	
3	It is argued in the leadership literature that leaders should be true to themselves. What do you think this means?	This question addresses the main concepts of authenticity and authentic leadership.
4	From your perspective as a leader, do you think being true to yourself and others is important in leadership? Can you please explain your answer?	This question also originated from the definition of authenticity and its relationship to leadership.
5	What is the role of self-awareness in our behaviours in general?	The dimension of self-awareness is a central aspect of the literature of authenticity and authentic leadership. Questions 5 and 6 address the impact of self-awareness on behaviour and on leadership. Self-awareness is common practice in Saudi leadership culture.
6	In your view, what is the relationship between leaders' self-awareness and their leadership?	
7	What do you consider to be authentic when leading others? Can you give me an example of an authentic leader?	This question relates to one of the research questions about the behaviours of authenticity in leadership from the Saudi perspective.
8	To what extent do you think leader authenticity will affect followers' authenticity?	The source of this question is the studies that focus on authentic followership, such as Leroy et al. (2012) and Gardner et al. (2005).
9	To what extent does our culture affect authenticity in leadership?	Questions 9 and 10 are designed to draw out opinions on how culture affects authenticity in leadership, which is a main focus of the study. Sections 2.4.3 and 2.5.4 discuss this connection in further detail.
10	What aspects of culture influence authenticity in leadership?	

As the previous table explained that the interview schedule began with general questions about leadership and continues with direct questions. Moreover, prompts and probes were also considered in the framing of the questions to encourage richness and depth of response as well as honesty. The prompts allow the interviewer to clarify the questions,

especially if the interviewee seems not to understand, while probes allow the interviewer to ask for explanations, additions and more detail (Cohen et al., 2013) ). As Cohen et al. (2013) mention (2011), it is better to have shorter questions and longer answers from the respondents.

### 3.3.2.2 Pilot Study

**3.3.3** *A significant part of the interview preparation is the implementation of a pilot study, which highlights flaws, limitations and other weaknesses within the interview design and allows the researcher to make revisions prior to the main study (Kvale, 2008). Turner (2010) suggests that pilot interviews should be conducted with similar participants to those of the main study, and so these were conducted with executives and followers from the private sector in Saudi Arabia. Three pilot interviews were conducted with Saudi participants with similar characteristics to the main study participants. As a result of the pilot interviews four questions out of eleven were modified to make them clearer, and some of the Arabic wording was changed to make it less sensitive. The three participants in the pilot interviews were native Arabic speakers who were also fluent in English. They were interviewed in Arabic and after the interviews they checked the Arabic translation with the original interview questions in English. This was very useful and valuable in two ways. The first is that since the Arabic translation of authenticity does not reflect its true meaning, the pilot participants were able to suggest three Arabic words with a similar meaning to authenticity, which were used in the interviews. The second is that it improved the quality of the translation.***Data Analysis**

The purpose of the data analysis process is to give meaning to the data by generating, developing and verifying concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Basically this study seeks to explore how leaders and followers from the private sector in Saudi Arabia understand the concept of authenticity in leadership. The researcher interviewed 36 participants from six organisations within six different industries inside the private sector in Saudi Arabia. This section describes how the 36 interviews were analysed by firstly clarifying the data analysis approach and then data analysis steps are explained.

### 3.3.3.1 Data Analysis Approach

The data generated from the interviews has been analysed thematically and inductively. Thematic analysis is defined as *“a method for identifying, analysing and reporting themes and patterns within data”* (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.79) and it helps the researcher to focus on finding and describing explicit and implicit ideas in the data (Guest et al., 2012). It has also been suggested that thematic analysis provides pure qualitative, rich and detailed insight from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Additionally, thematic analysis is flexible and allows the researchers to get close to their data and develop a deeper appreciation of the content (Alhojailan, 2012).

In thematic analysis, themes and patterns can be identified in one of two ways, deductive or inductive. Deductive, or theoretical, thematic analysis uses existing theory and tends to identify pre-existing coding themes (Flick, 2013). In the inductive approach, on the other hand, patterns and themes are discovered and strongly linked to the data itself (Patton, 2002). Therefore, the process of coding by inductive analysis is not to try to fit data into a pre-existing coding framework, but to allow the themes to be data-driven (Leavy, 2014). Inductive thematic analysis has been employed in this study for different reasons. Firstly, it serves the exploratory nature and the main aim of this study, which is to explore the concept of authenticity in leadership in Saudi culture. According to Alhojailan (2012), the most appropriate approach with which to analyse an exploratory study that seeks to discover interpretations is thematic analysis. Secondly, it has been asserted that the most common method of analysing exploratory qualitative research is inductive thematic analysis (Flick, 2013). Thirdly, one of the research objectives is to develop and build an authenticity in leadership model based on Saudi culture. As Harding (2013) states, this objective can be achieved by using inductive thematic analysis, as it is useful in building theory and generating hypotheses for further study. Fourthly, thematic analysis is a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed account of data (Clarke and Braun, 2017)

### 3.3.3.2 Data Analysis Steps

Fundamentally, the analysis of qualitative data is dependent upon its interpretation (Alhojailan, 2012). The data analysis was conducted in several stages (Figure 8) and is discussed below. These stages are adopted from Braun and Clarke’s model of thematic

analysis (2006), which was chosen due to its simplicity, clarity and popularity. Before discussing the stages of the data analysis, an explanation of a software that used for the analysis is described first.

### **Using MAXQDA Software**

This study used computer-assisted qualitative data Analysis software (CAQDA) to analyse the 36 interviews. Firstly, the researcher decided to use NVivo software which is the most popular CAQDA software. However, because NVivo does not support Arabic language data, which is the language of this research data the researcher used MAXQDA software instead which is similar to NVivo as well as combatable with Arabic Language. There are various benefits for using MAXQDA or any CAQDA software. Firstly, Software tools for qualitative data and text analysis allow for easy sorting, structuring, and analysing of large amounts of text or other data. Secondly, it facilitates the management of the resulting interpretations and evaluations. Thirdly, CAQDA software helps the researcher to easily access and store large amounts of data (Rademaker 2012). Finally, its believed using CAQDA software produce more trustworthy' studies because it helps the researcher to make visible of their methodological processes (Ryan, 2009). In addition, using CAQDA as one of the strategies to increase the trustworthiness of qualitative research as it uses part of an explicit analytical process through a transparent audit trail for external review (White et al., 2012). The following are the steps of the thematic analysis that were conducted in this study.



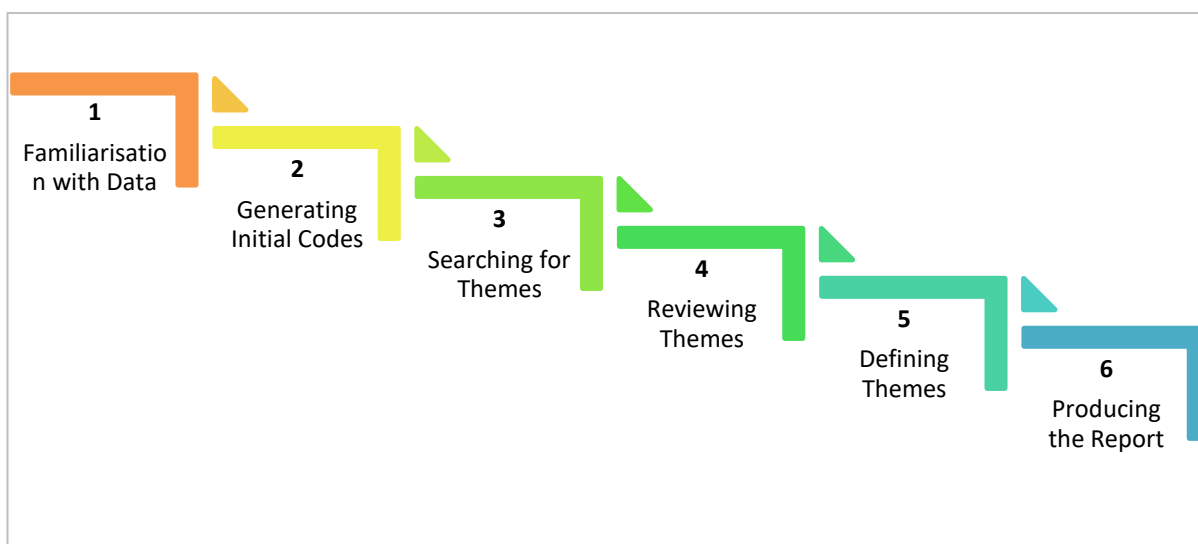


Figure 8: Stages of Thematic Analysis adopted from Braun and Clark (2006)

### 1. Familiarisation with the Data

In this step transcription of the data was followed by close reading and familiarisation with. The interview transcriptions were done by an independent external transcriber data, as this process is very time-consuming. The researcher then listened to the interviews, double-checked the transcriptions and made any necessary changes to the transcripts. Following this, the researcher uploaded the 36 interviews in MAXQDA and read the written data to develop a more thorough understanding of it (appendix B).

### 2. Generating Initial Codes

After the 36 interviews were organised in MAXQDA by participants' code, organisations number and sectors. The production of the initial codes alongside the interview transcripts started. The initial coding was performed electronically in MAXQDA by highlighting key parts of the transcripts and making notes (see appendix B). The main purpose of coding in thematic analysis is to make connections between different parts of the data. Additionally, coding helps the researcher to review the data by identifying the most significant pieces of information communicated by the data (Leavy, 2014). The first cycle and level of coding ended after generated initial codes in all 36 interviews.

### 3. Searching for Themes

## Chapter 3

In this stage, the codes were sorted into potential themes. A theme can be defined as a coherent and meaningful pattern in the data that is relevant to the research question (Braun and Clark, 2006). The process of a theme search is similar to that of code identification in that they both look for commonality in the data. Reflections are then made on the relationships between codes, themes, and different levels of themes. In practice, the researcher set out all of the codes in MAXDA, which was then combined into categories that was the second level of coding (Appendix B). Next, a mind map was drawn to represent visually the interrelationships between the codes and categorise. From these categories seven initial themes emerged. These are: the influence of culture on authenticity in leadership, the behaviours and practices of authenticity in leadership, the attributes of leaders' authenticity, the positive impact of authentic leadership, the negative impact of authentic leadership, authenticity in followership and the concept of authenticity in leadership.

### **4. Reviewing Themes**

After the initial seven themes were produced, they were then checked in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2)(Braun and Clarke, 2006). The review resulted in some changes to the themes. Firstly, the influence of culture on authenticity in leadership theme was divided into two separate themes: the influence of national culture on authenticity in leadership and the influence of organisational culture on authenticity in leadership. It was decided to treat these two aspects as separate themes as they are distinguished clearly in the participants' discussions. Secondly, the behaviours and attributes themes were combined into one, since attributes are represented by behaviours. Thirdly, the theme of the concept of authenticity in leadership was changed to the source of authenticity because all the codes in this theme were specifically about the source of authenticity. Finally, the themes of positive and negative impact were combined into one theme covering both kinds of impact. This was because only few codes related to negative impact and so did not warrant a separate theme. Thus these changes resulted in the following six themes of

- i. the influence of national culture on authenticity in leadership;
- ii. behaviours and practices of authenticity in leadership;

- iii. the influence of organisational culture on authenticity in leadership and
- iv. authenticity in followership
- v. the source of authenticity and
- vi. the impact of authenticity in leadership

## **5. Defining Themes**

In this stage each theme was defined and refined by analysing the data within the themes. This involved identifying the essence of what each theme is about and determining what aspect of the data is captured by each theme (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Themes were defined clearly after looking carefully to the related categories and codes (see appendix B). Each theme was defined based on the research participants' views.

## **6. Producing the Report**

The last phase of data analysis began once the themes had been developed, refined and defined. This involved describing the significant elements of the data in terms of the six themes. Each theme was described and illustrated by original quotes from the participants as evidence for the ideas and concepts within the theme (see appendix B). The results are presented in Chapter 4.

### **3.4 Trustworthiness of Qualitative Research**

Assessing and establishing the trustworthiness in qualitative research is essential; however, there is no general agreement on which criteria should be used (Flick, 2009). In order to test rigour, qualitative studies often use the positivist criteria of internal validity, generalisability, reliability, and objectivity (Lincoln and Guba, 1986). Some authors argue that qualitative research should be assessed by the same criteria as quantitative research (Johnson and Duberley, 2000). Others, such as Tracy (2010), Agar (1986), Krefting (1991) and Lincoln and Guba, (1986), assert that this would be inappropriate, since the criteria are imported from the positivist paradigm, which itself utilises techniques from natural sciences. Also, positivist criteria are not in harmony with the research philosophies of qualitative studies. One of the most common ways of judging validity in qualitative studies is suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), who proposed four tools for assessing trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Table 5

shows the quantitative criteria for assessing quality in research and its equivalent in qualitative research. To ensure the trustworthiness of this study the four tools of Guba and Lincoln were adopted. Each tool is explained first then discussed in relation to how it was applied in this study.

Table 5: Quantitative and Qualitative Criteria of Assessing Quality in Research

Construct	Quantitative Criteria of Assessing Rigour	Qualitative Criteria of Assessing Rigour
Truth Value	Internal Validity	Credibility
Consistency	Reliability	Dependability
Applicability	External validity / Generalisability	Transferability
Neutrality	Objectivity	Confirmability

### 3.4.1 *Credibility*

Credibility deals with the question of how congruent the findings are with reality. It focuses on whether the researcher has established confidence in the truth of the findings for the participants and the context in which the study was undertaken (Krefting, 1991). One of the key criteria used by positivist researchers is that of internal validity, whereby they seek to ensure that the study measures or tests what is actually intended. The qualitative equivalent concept is credibility. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that ensuring credibility is one of most important factors in establishing trustworthiness. Various techniques can be carried out to ensure credibility, such as triangulation, member check, peer debriefing and extreme cases.

In this study three methods were used to enhance the quality of the research. **Peer debriefing**, the first technique, is defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as *“a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytical sessions and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind”* (p.308). This study applied peer debriefing through discussion of the findings with supervisors and other PhD students. Furthermore, the research results

were presented to Southampton Business School PhD Student Conference in 2016. As well as presented in the 3rd International Conference on Business, Economics, Management and Marketing that held in Oxford in March 2017. The second method is **triangulation**. Denzin (1978) identifies four types of triangulation, one of which is data triangulation. This involves the use of a wide range of informants, for example, individual viewpoints and experiences can be verified against others and, ultimately, a rich picture of the attitudes, needs or behaviour of those under scrutiny may be constructed based on the contributions of a range of people (Flick, 2009). This study applied this type of triangulation by collecting data through interviews not only with leaders but also with followers of these leaders, and both were asked the same questions to gain different views of the research topic.

The third method of **member checking** tests data, analytic categories, interpretations and conclusions with members of those groups from who the data were originally obtained (Flick, 2009). Member checking was carried out by sending the interview transcript to the research participants. In addition, the participants were offered the chance to receive a copy of the results and findings of the completed research.

#### **3.4.2      *Transferability***

Transferability is similar to the generalisability in quantitative research, which refers to the application of research findings in other contexts (Shenton, 2004). Although transferability is difficult to obtain in qualitative researches, the findings of this study can be valuable for GCC cultures as they share the same cultural values and beliefs of Saudi culture. According to Hofstede (2013), who studied his cultural dimension model in GCC culture and proved the cultural similarities between all GCC countries.

#### **3.4.3      *Confirmability and Dependability***

The term confirmability refers to objectivity in research while dependability refers to “*the stability (reliability) of data over time and over conditions*” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985 p. 539). It means that if the study can be replicated with the same samples in the context, it achieves the same results.

Dependability can be accomplished when the characteristics of data demonstrate confidence. Thus, the researcher has done his best to ensure that this study’s findings

represent the ideas of the participants, rather than the researcher's. To ensure confirmability this study has adopted three techniques. Firstly, this study conducted systemic inductive data analysis that adopted from (Braun and Clark, 2006) six steps model of thematic analysis. Secondly, MAXQDA software has been used in this study when analysing the interview data. The software analysis is a useful tool for data retention, retrieval and future audit checks so its increase the level of trustworthiness of the study. Thirdly, the researcher supervisor discussion, feedback and comments that ensure a rigorous process in all the research process specifically data collection and analysis.

### 3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues relate directly to the integrity of the research (Silverman, 2010). Ethics refers to the appropriateness of researcher behaviour in relation to the study participants and the researchers (Black, 1999). An ethical approach also means to follow the code of conduct for acceptable professional practice (Cohen et al., 2011; Kumar, 1999). The ethical considerations in qualitative research are more complex than in quantitative research as the former involves more human interaction (Mertens, 2014). In accessing the opinions and perceptions of others via interviews, the ethical issues and implications need to be considered (Cohen et al., 2011; Rabionet, 2009). Ethics are dealt with in this study in a sequential way. In the beginning the research proposal, data collection plan and risk assessment form were submitted and approved by the University Ethics Committee (ERGO) (Appendix A). Within the social sciences, Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) examined general ethical theories such as Flinder (1992), Sieber (1992) and House (1990) and propose eleven ethical issues which should be addressed in order to encompass all of the processes of qualitative research. The first is *worthiness*: is the research worth doing and does it contribute to the relevant body of knowledge? This study has several significant contributions that are discussed in-depth in the Conclusion in Section 5.2. The second is competence, which means that the researcher should have the ability to carry out good quality research. Each step of this research process has been taken after wider reading of the available literature relating to each research stage. In addition, the project supervisors are experienced researchers and experts in the area of this study. The researcher himself has

undertaken necessary training during the course of his PhD programme. The third factor is informed consent, which means fully informing participants about the nature of the study and its goals, and assuring them of their rights throughout the research project. The procedures which were followed are set out below, being adapted from Rubin and Rubin (2012) and Rose (1994).

Table 6: Procedures of Ethical Considerations in the Interviews

No.	Procedure
1	Informing participants of the purpose of the interview and the voluntary nature of participation in this research
2	Clarifying the topic under discussion
3	Informing participants of the approximate length of the interview.
4	Seeking participants' permission to record the interview
5	Assurance of confidentiality
6	Informing participants that they can seek clarification of the questions.
7	Informing participants that they can decline to answer a question.
8	Assuring participants that there will be opportunity during the interview to ask questions.
9	Informing participants that the research results will be provided at the end of the study

The fourth factor to consider concerns benefits, costs and reciprocity, i.e. how much participants are expected to invest in terms of time, energy and financial resources. The participants took part in a voluntary capacity and were informed of the time and duration of the interview. In addition, the researcher explained that their perspectives and opinions would contribute to the development of theory in authenticity in leadership. The fifth consideration is whether participants may be hurt or be at risk in any way. This was dealt with by submitting a risk assessment for approval by the University of Southampton Ethics Committee. Furthermore, as this study is designed to

explore perceptions and viewpoints, some of the interview questions were modified to avoid any sensitive issues. In addition, the participants were free to decline answering any question if they felt uncomfortable. The sixth point is honesty and trust, which refers to the need for a trusting relationship between the researcher and participants. In accordance with the study theme of authenticity, the researcher made sure to follow through with promises, such as making the interview transcripts available. The seventh factor is privacy, confidentiality and anonymity, which were dealt with by various approaches such as printed forms for informed consent, as well as a written guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity. The researcher had sole access to the recorded data, raw data and analysis, which was stored on a university laptop and secured with a username and password.

As the interviews were transcribed by an external person, the names of participants and their organisations were not made available to the transcriber, and this detail of confidentiality was explained to the participants. Issues of intervention and advocacy are the eighth consideration, and concern what happens if the researcher sees harmful or illegal behaviour during a study. As this study was purely gathering opinions and perceptions, this was unlikely to arise. The ninth point is research integrity and quality, referring to the validity and trustworthiness of the study, which is dealt with in Section 3.4 by assessing the research in terms of the four dimensions of credibility, confirmability, dependability and transferability (Miles and Huberman, 2014; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The tenth, ownership of data, i.e. confidentiality of the data and who can access it, is dealt with above under privacy, confidentiality and anonymity. The final consideration is the use and misuse of results, that is, whether the researcher uses the findings appropriately. To make sure that the findings represent the participants' views, three methods were used to assess the credibility of this study, as described in Section 3.4.

To conclude, it is worth mentioning in relation to ethical considerations that the researcher is considered an insider. The term 'insider' means that the researcher is or was a member of the community or society where the research was conducted (Unluer, 2012; Brannick and Coghlan 2007). As an insider, the researcher can engage with the research context and interact with participants to explore the inner thoughts,



perceptions and attitudes (Merton, 1973). In this study, the researcher is a Saudi national who has adopted and understands the cultural norms of Saudi Arabia. Moreover, the researcher has worked in some of the private sector organisations from which the research participants were recruited in this study. Being an insider is thus helpful in gathering the data (Morse 1998).

### **3.6 Conclusion**

To summarise, this chapter has briefly discussed the main philosophical paradigms in social science and the adopted paradigm for this study, which is social constructivism. The research design has also been explained, including the sampling, data collection method and data analysis. Lastly, the method of determining the trustworthiness of the research was given. The next chapter presents the findings of this research and develops a discussion of the finding in the extant of literature.

## Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter is an analytical narrative that illustrates the story of the research data. The process of data analysis attempts to answer the main research question, which is how Saudi leaders and followers perceive authenticity in leadership. The analysis of 36 interviews resulted in six themes as the mind map shows in Figure 9. These themes are the influence of national culture on authenticity in leadership; the perception of authenticity in leadership; the influence of organisational culture on authenticity in leadership, authenticity in followership, the source of authenticity and the impact of authenticity in leadership. The emergence of six themes, as described below, is based on the perceptions of the participants rather than actual behaviours.

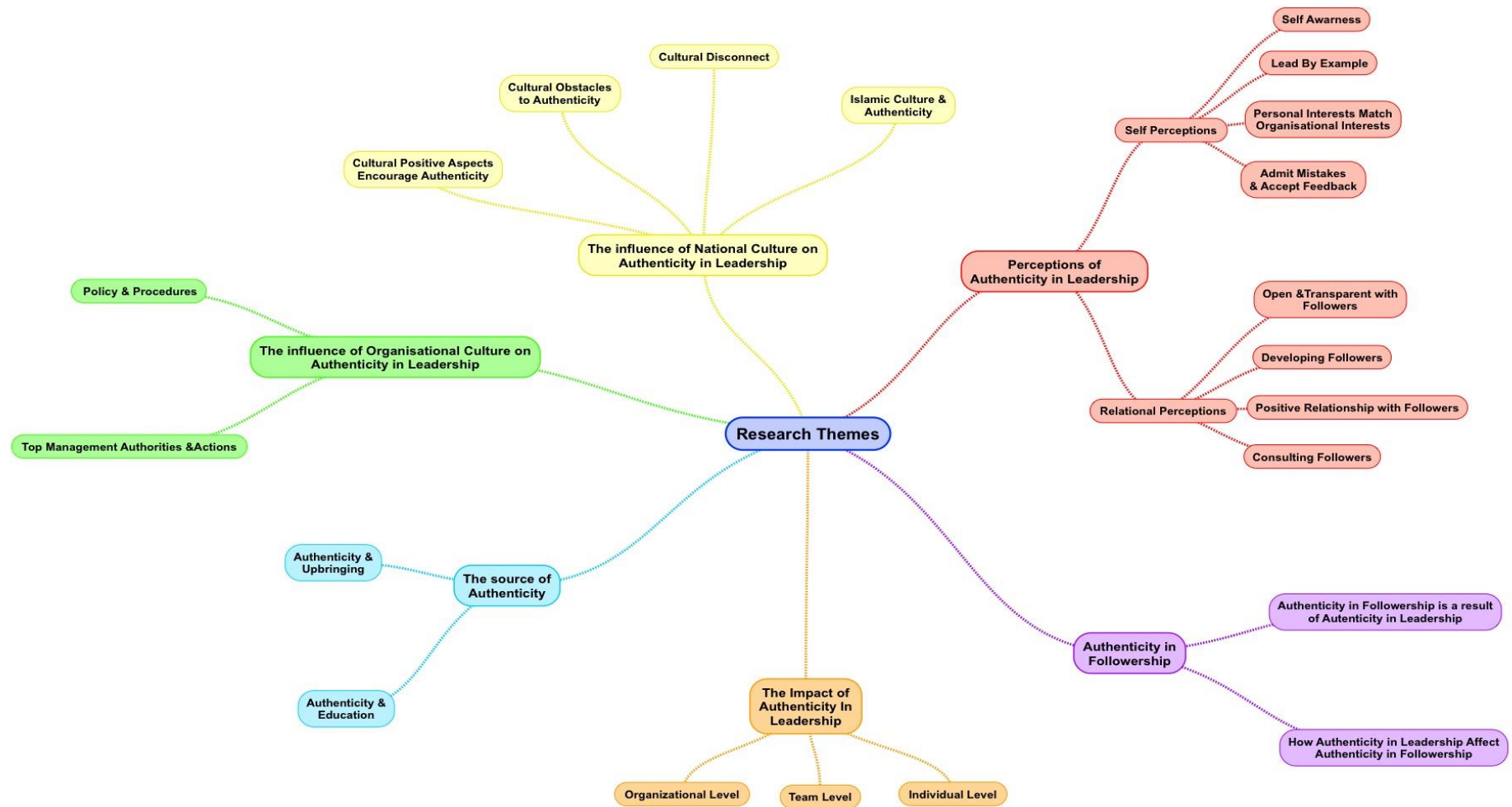
The following Table 7 shows biographical information about the 36 participants which include participants industries, codes, years of experience, age, level of education and job titles.

Table 7: biographical information of The Research Participants

Sectors	Organisation Number	Participant Code	Years of Experience	Age	Level of Education	Job Title
Motors	1	MOTOR1L	15	41-50	PhD	Executive General Manager
		MOTOR1F	7	31-40	Master	Legal Adviser
	2	MOTOR2L	22	51-60	Bachelor	VP of HR and Admin
		MOTOR2F	13	31-40	Bachelor	HR Manager
	3	MOTOR3L	21	41-50	Master	Executive Manager
		MOTOR3FMOTOR3F	8	31-40	Bachelor	Safety & Security Manager
Petrochemical	4	PETROCHEMICAL4L	32	51-60	Bachelor	CEO
		PETROCHEMICAL4F	9	31-40	Master	HR Manager
	5	PETROCHEMICAL5L	15	31-40	Master	Project Engineering Section Head
		PETROCHEMICAL5F	28	51-60	Bachelor	Construction Affairs Consultant
	6	PETROCHEMICAL6L	30	51-60	PhD	Senior VP of Mining & Renewable Energy
		PETROCHEMICAL6F	16	41-50	Master	Head of Projects
Food	7	FOOD7L	12	31-40	Bachelor	General Manager
		FOOD7F	6	31-40	Master	HR Supervisor
	8	FOOD8L	13	41-50	PhD	CEO
		FOOD8F	10	31-40	Bachelor	IT Analyst
	9	FOOD9L	14	31-40	Master	HR vice President
		FOOD9F	7	31-40	Bachelor	HR Supervisor
Telecommunications	10	TELECOMUNICATION10L	22	41-50	Master	CEO
		TELECOMUNICATION10F	17	41-50	PhD	GM
	11	TELECOMUNICATION11L	17	41-50	Bachelor	Marketing Manager
		TELECOMUNICATION11F	9	31-40	Bachelor	Marketing Manager Deputy
	12	TELECOMUNICATION12L	34	51-60	Bachelor	General Manager of Purchasing
		TELECOMUNICATION12F	9	31-40	Master	Department Leader
Private Education	13	EDUCATION13L	24	41- 50	Master	CEO
		EDUCATION13F	19	41- 50	PhD	GM
	14	EDUCATION14L	17	31-40	Bachelor	CEO
		EDUCATION14F	6	31-40	Bachelor	Students Activities Manager
	15	EDUCATION15L	25	51-60	Bachelor	GM
		EDUCATION15F	16	41- 50	Bachelor	Secondary School Principle
Construction	16	CONSTRUCTION16L	21	41- 50	Master	CEO
		CONSTRUCTION16F	13	31-40	Master	Distribution Logistics Manager
	17	CONSTRUCTION17L	29	51-60	Bachelor	CEO
		CONSTRUCTION17F	11	31-40	Bachelor	IT Manager
	18	CONSTRUCTION18L	24	41- 50	Master	GM
		CONSTRUCTION18F	11	31-40	Bachelor	Production Manager



Figure 9: Research Themes



## 4.2 The Influence of National Culture on Authenticity in Leadership

### 4.2.1 Theme Introduction

Culture is a key concept in this research and so a large amount of material in the interview transcripts relates to Saudi Arabian culture and its impact on authenticity in leadership. The study participants openly shared their views about the way in which Saudi culture affects their authenticity and discussed how Islamic values influence Saudi perceptions of authenticity. This theme of the influence of national culture on authenticity in leadership is divided into four subthemes as Figure 10 shows: the impact of Islamic culture on authenticity, cultural disconnect, the cultural obstacles to authenticity in leadership and positive cultural aspects and authenticity. In each subtheme findings and discussions are integrated for the purpose of interpretation and to explain the significance of the findings in light of the literature.



Figure 10: Subthemes of the Influence of National Culture on Authenticity in Leadership

### 4.2.2 The Impact of Islamic Culture on Authenticity

As the study participants are Saudi Arabian and their religion is Islam, their interview responses contained a variety of references to Islamic culture, such as verses from the Holy Quran and the Sayings of the Prophet Mohammad, which is the second main source of Islam after the Quran. Some of the crucial findings of this study relate to the Islamic perception of authenticity, as a number of participants expressed views revealing this. For instance, participant Motor1L quoted a verse from Quran:

*“O you who believe! Be afraid of Allah, and be with those who are true” (Chapter 9, verse 119).*

Furthermore, participant Petrochemical4I asserted that truthfulness is one of the main Islamic values, saying,

*“Being truthful and honest are basic characteristics of a Muslim”.*

Another two verses of Quran encouraging authentic behaviour were quoted by participant Telecommunication10I:

*“O you who believe! Why do you say what you do not do? It is most hateful to God that you say what you do not do” (Chapter 61, Verses 2-4).*

Moreover, Construction18F claims that acting upon Islamic values leads to authenticity:

*“I would expect that if we actually live the Islamic teaching in our lives, at home with our children and friends, it will result in distinctive personalities and leaders who are honest and credible”.*

Motor2F believes that our authenticity is derived directly from Islam,

*“Regarding truthfulness, of course our religion guides us in everything, so we should follow this guidance”.*

According to Rafiki and Abdulwahab (2014), religion is one of the most influential social institutions and is significantly linked to attitudes, values and behaviours. Based on the previous quotes, the participants generally believe that Islam encourages people to be truthful and honest and that by acting upon Islamic teaching and values, people will be authentic in their actions. Thus, Islam promotes and inspires authentic behaviours and the authenticity of Muslims is directly influenced by their religion. The participants also explain what authenticity mean in the context of Islam. For example, Motor1L said clearly,

*“Basically, our religion encourages people to be true to themselves and others”.*

The same concept was mentioned by Education13L by using other words:

*“Being true starts by being honest with oneself and then with others”.*

Similarly, Construction17F described what is meant by being true to oneself and to others,

*“In Islam we start with the self (i.e. being true) and acting honestly, which leads to being transparent with your team at work”.*

These findings highlight that the concept of authenticity not only means being true to the self but also to other people. In contrast, the literature defines authenticity principally as being true to the self (Boyzer et al., 2014). Gregoire et al. (2014) states that the central focus of authenticity is the self, while for Iszatt-White and Saunders (2014) authenticity is a measure of how true you are to yourself in spite of external pressure from others. Kokkories and Kuhen (2014) find that the majority of current literature defines authenticity from the intrapersonal perspective as a self-construct. They assert that this is because the western concept of authenticity is a product of western cultures, which perceive authenticity from an individualist perspective. This view differs from the Islamic perspective of authenticity that emerges from this study’s findings, which defines it as being true both to the self and to others. However, yet another view of authenticity is described by Kokkories and Kuhen (2014) in their research on authenticity in Germany and China. They show that in collectivist cultures such as China, authenticity is attached mainly to social and interpersonal relationships. According to Robinson et al. (2012), the concept of authenticity has a strong relationship to the individualist and collectivist dimension of culture. People in collectivist cultures possess interdependent views of the self-based on social duties and harmonious group relationships (Triandis, 1995). Consequently, they may feel more authentic when adapting to social norms and values (Slabu et al., 2014). In contrast, westerners feel more authentic when resisting



social values because they have an independent view of the self as being distinct from others (Robinson et al., 2012).

This study has found that truth and honesty in Islam include truthful intention and behaviours towards your own self as a Muslim as well as to all people, including non-Muslims. For example, both EDUCATION13F and MOTOR1F believe that being a true person starts from one's intention, they quoted the Prophet Mohammad:

*“Actions are judged by motives (niyyah), so each man will have what he intended”.*

The same concept of intention and faithfulness to God was mentioned by MOTOR3L,

*“Honesty and truthfulness starts by being faithful to Allah”.*

This leads us to the concept of *niyyah*, which is the Arabic word for intention. To understand authenticity from the Islamic perspective the role of *niyyah* and being faithful to God must be taken into account, as it signifies being real, true and genuine. The concept of *niyyah* in Islamic literature indicates the inner purpose of each deed and it is considered to be one of the major concepts in Islam (Rafiki et al., 2014). Accordingly, authenticity in Islamic culture begins with the self as having a truthful and clear intention towards everything. The concept of *niyyah* is an intrapersonal and individualistic issue that occurs in the self independently of others, so being authentic from the Islamic perspective includes expressing *niyyah* and being faithful to Allah by being true to the self and others. In other words, you are authentic because you genuinely believe in authenticity. The individualist side to Islamic culture also contains the concept of accountability, which means that Islam holds every individual to be responsible and accountable for his or her actions (Musah, 2011). The participants discussed the idea of accountability as a sign of authenticity. For example, participant EDUCATION13F believes that,

*“An important part of our life as Muslims is accountability to Allah  
...we have to be conscious of Allah in all aspects of our life... every*

*Muslim is responsible and accountable for every action including behaviour and speech”.*

Participant PETROCHEMICAL4L believes that the issue of lack of accountability is one of the reasons for inauthenticity,

*“Some people are untrue and dishonest in our culture because they have less accountability and less responsibility ...if every one of us is accountable our society will be much better”.*

TELECOMUNICATION11L defined the true leader as a self-assessor,

*"My understanding of a true leader is one who is self-accounting".*

Likewise, participant CONSTRUCTION17F quoted the Prophet Mohammad,

*"All of you are accountable and each of you is responsible for his flock".*

Values of accountability and responsibility lead individuals to do the right thing from their perspective. This matches one of the western definitions of authenticity, which is that authentic individuals are those who follow their own beliefs and values (Beddoes-Jones, 2013). Another definition is provided by Kernis and Goldman (2006), who view authenticity as concerning individual emotions, thoughts, and behaviours that reflect the self. The self in Islamic culture is rooted in the two concepts of *niyyah* and accountability and both of these shapes the individualist self-concept of authenticity in Islam. As an authentic Muslim one should not only have the right *niyyah* but also be accountable. At the same time, an authentic person is also an integral part of a group, such as the family, an organisation, society or the whole Islamic nation, and respects the group by acting ethically. This represents the collectivist aspect of authenticity from the Islamic point of view. Participants describe the collectivistic side of authenticity. For example; FOOD7L made a substantial point about manners in Muslim behaviour by saying,

*"Islam promotes ethicality...all of our behaviour is linked with religion, which distinguishes us as we behave with manners to be rewarded by Allah".*

Participant CONSTRUCTION18L stated the ethics and values of true leaders,

*"True and wise leaders have the values of honesty, love for others and relationship".*

Morality and ethics were cited by FOOD8F:

*"The field of leadership needs people of conscience, with a high ethical and moral sense of responsibility".*

MOTOR1L also expressed the same idea about ethicality in Islamic culture,

*"We believe that being honest, treating others as you like to be treated, and being trustworthy in your work are all part of the ethical code of Islam".*

MOTOR1F supported this opinion and cited an example from the Quran about the Prophet Mohammad's ethical behaviour:

*"And by the Mercy of Allah, you dealt with them gently. And had you been severe and harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about you; so pass over (their faults), and ask (Allah's) forgiveness for them; and consult them in their affairs" (Chapter 3, verse 159).*

Islam is a way of life and ethics are therefore applicable to every aspect of Muslims' life including administration. This means that the practice of Islam is not restricted to the Mosque or the home but permeates every aspect of Muslim life, and that by following Islamic values in business and work, Muslims will be rewarded. The previous quotes inspire Muslims to be integral and ethical with others who are family, friends and society and these are important

and influential factors in the meaning of authenticity in Islamic culture. At the same time, individuals are responsible and accountable for their own actions. Hence, authenticity in Islamic culture is derived from both intrapersonal perspectives as expressed by the individual's choices that come from true *niyyah* and from accountability, and also from interpersonal perspectives such as the need to treat others ethically. Based on the previous discussion it can be argued that the Islamic perception of authenticity lies in between the perspectives of western and eastern cultures, as shown in Figure 11 below:

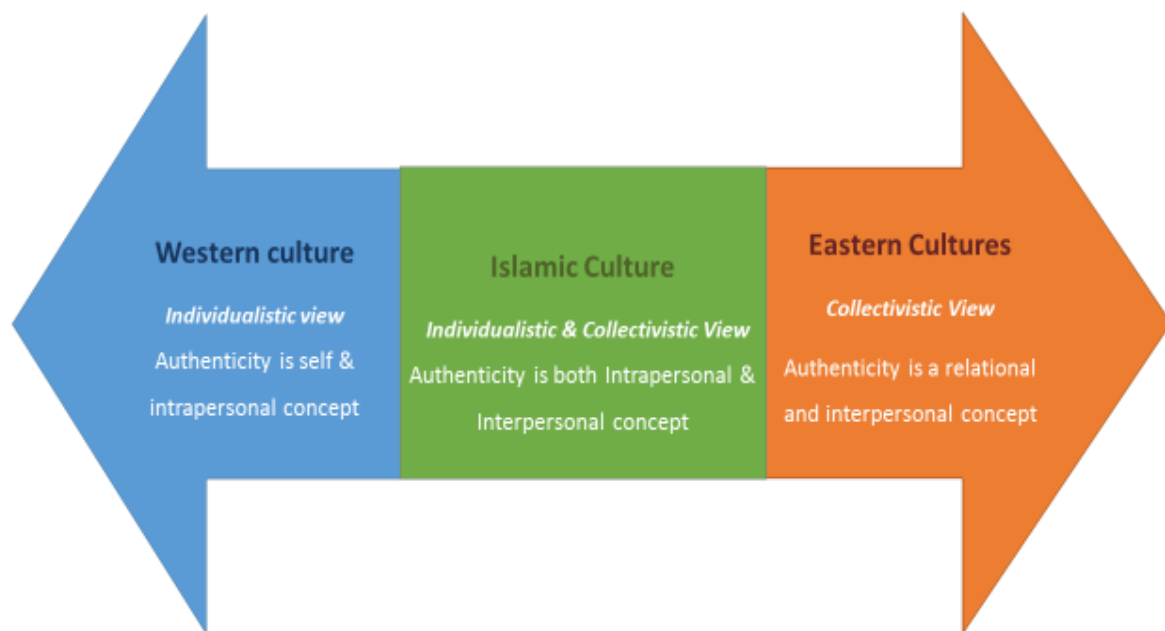


Figure 11: Islamic View of Authenticity in Comparison with Western and Eastern Cultures

Figure 11 illustrates clearly how the perception of authenticity from the viewpoint of Islamic culture differs from both the western and eastern cultures perspectives. The finding of this study that Islamic culture combines both the individualist and collectivist perspectives is in agreement with Musah (2011), who studied the Islamic perspective of individualism and collectivism in comparison with western culture:

*“Individualism and collectivism from the Islamic viewpoint are not two opposite concepts but are two intertwined precepts*

*complementing and enhancing each other. Individualism relatively deals with early formation of effective, committed, accountable and responsible individuals. Thus, it embeds and inculcates sense of accountability into individuals. The role of collectivism is, therefore, continuity in shaping effective, innovative and contributive personalities in the society” (p.69).*

One of the most striking results of this study is the Islamic perception of authenticity. So far, however, there are no studies demonstrating the connection of authenticity with religious beliefs, including Islamic beliefs, and so further research is highly recommended. In addition, studying how different cultures perceive authenticity is suggested, since, as Kokkories and Kuhen (2014) assert, very little research has addressed authenticity outside western interpretations.

#### **4.2.3 Cultural Disconnect**

Although the Islamic perception of authenticity, which is a balance between individual and social perspectives, is revealed by the Saudi participants, they also pointed out that much of the current behaviour of both leaders and followers does not follow the essence of Islam. For example, EDUCATION13L stated that,

*“In our culture there is a problem with our honesty and we see conflict happening between words and deeds”.*

The same idea was mentioned by CONSTRUCTION16L,

*“We memorise the Islamic teaching but our actions and behaviour are different to that”.*

MOTOR3F agreed that there are differences between beliefs and practices by saying,

*“In the cultural heritage and religious context, we are supposed to be honest and transparent. But the reality, as I have seen it, unfortunately contradicts this completely”.*

Another follower participant, EDUCATION14F, stated the same dilemma and also sought solutions from research,

*“It is unacceptable that this gap exists. I know beautiful words, but not how they fit into our practices. Hopefully research will bridge this gap so that nice spiritual words are transformed into actions and behaviour”.*

From these quotes we understand there is a conflict between Islamic values and principles on the one hand, and the daily activities of people on the other. Even though Saudi Arabians try to follow the Islamic view, some of their current practices and behaviours do not match the Islamic values of being true to the self and to others. Some of the research participants believe that some Saudi businesses are clearly not practicing the reality of Islam regarding authenticity. Participant MOTOR1L defined this problem as a cultural disconnect between what we should do and what we actually do, and explained what he meant by this:

*“If you ask anyone here (i.e. in his organisation) about Islamic values such as being credible and trustworthy, he will give you a nice speech about these values. However, it may be that this same person behaves dishonestly, lying and wasting time at work in the absence of the manager...Unfortunately this type of behaviour shows a cultural disconnect from beliefs”.*

The cultural disconnect here is defined as the contradiction between Islamic values and the daily actions of Saudi citizens. This unexpected finding of inconsistency between what people believe and how they behave in the context of Saudi society leads us to the concept of cognitive dissonance, which is not mentioned in the research literature on authenticity. Cognitive dissonance is a concept in psychology which describes a situation where an

individual's beliefs do not match up with their behaviours (McKimmie, 2015). According to Hinojosa et al. (2016), individuals who act in a way that is contradictory to an attitude or belief they hold will experience cognitive dissonance. One of the participants, TELECOMUNICATION12L, quoted a verse of the Quran which deals with cognitive dissonance,

*“You who believe! Why do you say what you do not do? Most hateful is it in the sight of Allah that you say what you do not do” (Chapter 61, verses 2-3).*

The previous verse is a question from Allah to Muslims, asking why there is a difference between what they say and what they do. This issue is stated clearly in the Quran and is intended to encourage Muslims to maintain consistency of speech and actions. The basic question here asks what the relationship is between the cultural disconnect in Saudi culture and authenticity in leadership. When cognitive dissonance, or cultural disconnect, as this research participant named it, occurs, unethical behaviour and inauthentic practices result despite beliefs and values to the contrary. This research shows that some of the behaviour encountered in the workplace run counter to principles of Islamic authenticity, such as leaders who promise promotion to followers, knowing full well that this will not happen. For instance, participant TELECOMUNICATION12F shared a story about his leader,

*“An honest leader should clarify to his followers the policy and regulations of promotion. As a leader I shouldn't promise something I can't deliver I have to be very transparent about it. We know that only one or two from our department will be promoted, so why did he promise all of us promotion? This type of behaviour is unethical and represents a weakness in the leader — he just wants to influence our behaviour by promising promotion since he doesn't have the charisma of true leader”.*

Cultural disconnect was emphasised by a participant who commented on the disparity between Islamic values and the observable administrative and financial corruption in Saudi Arabia. EDUCATION13L asked,

*“If we are true Muslims and follow Islamic values, how can we explain administrative and financial corruption?”*

The literature of cognitive dissonance shows that people who experience dissonance will feel in an unpleasant state until the mismatch is resolved (Hinojosa et al., 2016). This is reflected in the participants referring to cultural disconnect in negative terms such as *unfortunately, unethical, shouldn't exist, not acceptable, and so forth*.

Another issue raised here is whether leaders exhibiting behaviours of cultural disconnect are consistent with this. In other words do they act contrary to Islamic values in all situations or only occasionally? In order to understand this issue we can explore the current debate about whether authenticity is a state or a trait. According to most of the current literature, authenticity is seen as a trait. Consequently, research participants in the literature of authenticity report how they generally behave, think and feel regarding authenticity (Wood et al., 2008; Kernis & Goldman, 2006).

Traits and states are further distinguishable with respect to: (a) their duration (states are shorter-lived); (b) the degree to which they are continuous in nature (a given episode of a state manifests relatively continuously, whereas traits are less uniform across time); and (c) the extent to which they are abstract entities and, thus, necessitate inference rather than direct experience to discern (traits are more abstract than states) (Fridhandler, 1986).

The following Table 8 shows six pairs of leaders and their followers' perspectives about cultural disconnect. Each pair is from one of the different sectors used in the study.

Table 8 Cultural Disconnect Quotes

<b>MOTO R1L</b>	<i>The cultural disconnect exists and is observable in beliefs and actions.</i>	<b>MOTO R1F</b>	<i>Leaders should be true and ethical and the Prophet Mohammad should be the role model for leaders.</i>
<b>PETRO CHEMI CAL5L</b>	<i>Basically our culture is excellent, however some of the leaders' practices shouldn't exist.</i>	<b>PETRO CHEMI CAL5F</b>	<i>In our large organisation there are few leaders who are true and transparent.</i>



<b>FOOD7 L</b>	<i>There is the contention that sometimes the environment does not support being credible and transparent.</i>	<b>FOOD 7F</b>	<i>Our culture doesn't help us to be true.</i>
<b>TELEC OMUN ICATIO N10L</b>	<i>Quite frankly we are only Muslims by the name. Islam means as Prophet Mohammad says: "The Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hand the people are safe, and the believer is the one people trust with their lives and wealth."</i>	<b>TELEC OMU NICATI ON10F</b>	This participant didn't mention the concept of cultural disconnect.
<b>EDUCA TION1 3L</b>	<i>We are as a Muslim community which has principles and values... It seems that we have defects in our practice, and these are not always small.</i>	<b>EDUC ATION 13F</b>	<i>In our society there is a problem with corruption...financial corruption influences being truthful.</i>
<b>CONST RUCTI ON18L</b>	<i>Indeed, there is a great paradox and contradiction between who we are and the Islamic message we carry.</i>	<b>CONS TRUCT ION18 L</b>	<i>I think if we practice the Islamic religion truthfully we will have distinctive leaders.</i>

The above table demonstrates that the concept of cultural disconnect between Islamic values and current practices is endorsed by leaders and followers from all six sectors represented in this study. It is important to clarify here that the leaders and followers participating in the research did not rate and assess each other. Based on this table we can compare how leaders and the followers see this issue. The table gives examples of how some of them view the same concept whether it is identified as such or not. Not all of the participants referred to cultural disconnect as a concept as such, but they expressed the idea indirectly. Sector B is the only sector in which the concept of cultural disconnect is mentioned by all leaders and followers in all three organisations of this sector. Sector C cited the idea of cultural disconnect the least, with only two out six participants.

To conclude the subtheme of cultural disconnect between Islamic values and behaviours, three points can be made. Firstly, participants believe that cultural disconnect exists in Saudi society and is the reason for some of the inauthentic and unethical practices in business, such as administrative and financial corruption. Secondly, this example highlights not only the

significance of studying authenticity in leadership in Saudi Arabia, but also that this research is timely and touches on current issues in the country. Thirdly, as the current literature is lacking in studies that relate cognitive dissonance and authentic leadership or authenticity in leadership, further study with more focus on how cognitive dissonance influence authenticity is suggested.

### **4.2.4 Cultural Obstacles to Authenticity**

Although most of the participants feel that Islamic culture generally encourages people to be true and genuine with themselves and others, they also claim that Saudi culture presents certain problems for the practice of authenticity. This subtheme tries to explain current behaviours in Saudi culture that negatively affect authenticity in the context of leadership. In other words what are the obstacles in Saudi society that influence the authenticity of both leaders and followers? Three obstacles emerge from the interview data: *wasta*, *almujamalah* and a hierarchical culture.

The first obstacle to authenticity in the Saudi context is *wasta*, which is an Arabic word meaning the use of personal connections and influence to get things done. This can include, for instance, being given a post or promotion not because of competence but through a personal relationship with the decision maker. The term *nepotism* is the nearest translation of *wasta*. The data show that *wasta* is very common in Saudi society. For example, TELECOMUNICATION12F highlighted the popularity of *wasta* in Saudi Arabia, saying,

*“Unfortunately leaders in our culture are selected because they are from specific tribes or specific regions...in my organisation executives are from the central region and they are hired based on their social relationships...so even though the leader, who was hired based on wasta, is competent and credible, you will not get the ideal leader”.*

FOOD8L agreed about the existence of *wasta* in Saudi culture:

*“Wasta and nepotism exist in Saudi society and other cultures...if an unqualified person is hired because of wasta, that means his team*

*will be inefficient. Problems always result from appointing the wrong person by wasta”.*

Another participant, PETROCHEMICAL5L, pointed out that *wasta* should not exist in Saudi culture since it is against Islamic values,

*“Wasta is not supposed to exist in our Arabic and Islamic culture... wasta usually means that I favour a less qualified person over a more qualified person out of consideration for a relative or friend”.*

This problem is one of the current issues in the Saudi culture, which directly influences the trustworthiness of leaders and followers. On the whole, the interviewees believe that leaders and followers who use *wasta* in their work are deemed to be less authentic and create an unhealthy work environment. FOOD7L argued:

*“We cannot deny that wasta exists in our culture.... the problem is that some people consider it to be a good thing and a way to help people. But wasta is always a negative practice and it’s against Islamic teaching”.*

The concept of *wasta* can be explained and linked to different studies of cultural dimensions. For instance, Hall (1977) discusses the high and low contexts of culture. Hall classifies an Arab culture such as in Saudi Arabia, as a high context / low trust culture. Being a high context culture means that people rely on their personal relationships in seeking information, making decisions and in striking business deals (Peter, 2008). In low trust cultures, people trust their personal relationships and relatives more in business (Cardon, 2008). It can be argued that relying strongly on personal relationship in business leads to the practice of *wasta*. In *wasta*, people use personal connections and influence to get things done. This explanation of why *wasta* is practiced in Saudi or Arab cultures is in agreement with the study participants’ views, for example:

*“One of the reasons for inefficiency in the Arab world is that loyalty comes first before competency”.*

This highlights that *wasta* is used by leaders in order to gain loyal followers. Thus, it is to be expected in a high context, low trust culture, since those who employ their friends and relatives in business also expect their loyalty. Another participant, EDUCATION14F, cited another reason for the prevalence of *wasta* in Saudi Arabia,

*“Part of wasta and favouritism comes from a close person to me so, I accept that and this will weaken my credibility because I have to accept something that should not be done”*

Therefore, based on the previous reason it can be argued that *wasta* is practiced in Saudi not only because it is a high context, low trust culture, but also because it is a collectivist culture. In collectivist or embedded cultures, as Hofstede (1980), GLOBE research by House et al. (2006) and Schwartz (1992) have stated, group interests generally take precedence over individual interests. Thus, because group interests matter more than individual interests, people use *wasta* to help others. *Wasta* in Saudi Arabia and *guanxi* in China are similar concepts that can be found in such collectivist and high context societies. According to Weir (2012), *wasta* is central to leadership in Arab culture, just as *guanxi* has positive implications for networking and negative for corruption. However, in spite of its negative impact, it creates opportunities for others. Weir (2012) believes that *wasta* is expected to continue in the context of business and leadership in these cultures. This study concentrates more on the negative impact of *wasta* since its findings show that *wasta* negatively affects the perception of authenticity in leadership. The research participants focus on the impact of *wasta* on authenticity in leadership. For instance, TELECOMUNICATION12F commented that,

*“In our company most of the executives are hired via wasta and they from specific tribes... this practice negatively affects the credibility of our company, specifically the senior management”.*

The previous quote highlights that using *wasta* affect leaders' trustworthiness and credibility and touches on the effect on the work environment. PETROCHEMICAL4F also pointed out:

*“Some ethical practices among employees affect the work environment, making it unhealthy... I mean by unhealthy that some managers and leaders are not supposed to be in their positions (i.e. they were hired via wasta) and this affects their credibility”.*

Similarly, MOTOR3F mentioned the impact of *wasta* on the person and the organisation,

*“Favouritism and wasta create a vicious circle and if you get something from it in one way, you lose out in others and the organisation is the most affected”.*

*Wasta* not only affects the authenticity of leaders, but also influences the authenticity of followers. Two examples from the participants can be cited here,

CONSTRUCTION18F explain how some followers were forced by their leaders to use *wasta*:

*“In government organisations there are sometimes interventions (i.e. from leaders) to help a relative or someone from their tribe”.*

Additionally, both participants from *organisation 1* are of the opinion that those who have a personal and social relationship with the leader receive more attention and are awarded more privileges, such as promotion, without necessarily deserving it. For instance MOTOR2F said,

*“Some leaders only work with one follower with and forget about the others”.*

To conclude, the results of this study found that *wasta* is popular in Saudi Arabia, but that it is an unethical practice that affects perceived authenticity in leadership. This finding is in agreement with a recent report by Nazaha, which is the Saudi government anti-corruption commission that stated, *wasta* is the most frequent form of corruption, constituting 63% of occurrences of corruption in the public service sector (Nazaha, 2015). Thus, *wasta* not only works against authenticity, but is also the main cause of corruption in Saudi Arabia.

The second cultural challenge to authenticity is *almujamalah*, or flattery; that is, pleasing others by giving compliments which one knows to be untrue. For example, leaders will praise a follower's performance, even though in reality it is weak. For instance, MOTOR3L stated that,

*"In our culture you understand that you can't share everything inside you with others — there are certain things you keep hidden using almujaamah".*

FOOD7L commented on *almujamalah*,

*"I think almujaamah is a very influential factor in our culture... either someone uses almujaamah to praise you during feedback and then you struggle because you don't know your weaknesses, or on the other hand they can be very harsh and tough with you".*

Interestingly, MOTOR3F believes that *almujamalah* has very significant impact on business,

*"Flattery (i.e. almujaamah) is a very important subject as it can cause the loss of many rights as well as encourage poor management".*

Other participants discussed the reasons for *almujamalah* in Saudi culture, for instance FOOD9L claimed that avoiding confrontation is the main reason for its use:

*"Our culture does not help you at all because we dislike confrontation, we are afraid to displease others".*

TELECOMUNICATION12L explained *almujamalah* thus,

*"Arabic people and Saudis can sometimes perceive feedback and criticism of their performance at work as a personal insult....They are very sensitive to comments about their work and so leaders are*

*unwilling to be transparent and they avoid being clear with their followers”.*

There are several possible explanations from cultural dimension studies as to why *almujamalah* exists in Saudi culture. The cultural model of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) discusses the dimension of ‘Neutral versus Affective’, which refers to how people deal with their emotions. They designate Arab countries, such as Saudi Arabia, as ‘affective’ cultures, which means that people like to express their emotions even in formal contexts such as the workplace (Morden, 1999). This explanation of the cause of *almujamalah* matches the participants’ view that leaders use *almujamalah* because they do not want to harm their followers’ feelings. Therefore, they use it to maintain good relationships with followers by keeping them contented though unaware of their actual performance measurements. Additionally, another dimension of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) can be linked to *almujamalah*, which is ‘Specific versus Diffuse’. This concerns the extent to which people separate their different roles in life. Middle Eastern societies are understood as diffuse cultures, meaning that different roles are commonly integrated. For example, people may enjoy good relationships with work colleagues outside of work time. This may be another reason why some leaders in Saudi use *almujamalah*, as it is possible that their followers may also be their friends. It can also be linked to *wasta*, because when leaders hire friends or relatives’ they find it much harder to critique their performances honestly, and revert to the use of *almujamalah*. Another possible explanation for this is the GLOBE study of House et al. (2004) dimension of assertiveness. Assertiveness is the degree to which people are assertive and aggressive in relationships with others (Bhagat and Steers, 2009). In the Arab world people demonstrate low assertiveness, as categorised by GLOBE. This means that Saudi people tend to have more sympathy for the low performer and value cooperation and warm relationships. In this way being less assertive allows leaders to avoid confronting their followers about their weak performance and to respond with *almujamalah* instead. However, FOOD7L believes that leaders who avoid confronting weak performers make the problem worse,

*“The leader who is not clear and transparent about employee performances makes the problem worse because the followers’ mistakes become bigger and bigger”.*

Likewise EDUCATION13L argued that there is no contradiction between being honest about followers’ performance and being kind to them,

*“A leader can be honest and transparent with others about their performance while at the same time considering their feelings”.*

To conclude, *almujamalah* is one of the challenges in Saudi culture that directly affect the practice of authenticity of leadership. For instance, FOOD7L explained the relationship between *almujamalah* and *authenticity in leadership*,

*“I think that in our culture almujaalah has a high impact on truthfulness of leaders because leaders are embarrassed to give direct feedback to employees...We have two types of leaders, one is harsh in criticising others while the other is embarrassed to face his employees”.*

The third cultural obstacle to authenticity in leadership mentioned by the research participants is the hierarchical nature of Saudi Arabian culture. This results in the inequalities of relationships which arise from power, wealth and role. In practice this means people are dealt with according to their social position or organisational level. This cultural issue is mentioned mostly by follower participants and only one leader who stated it who is TELECOMUNICATION12L reported that,

*“To be honest, our culture is unfortunately built on hierarchical levels, and in both the public and private sectors leaders must be from a certain social level and class”.*

Furthermore, FOOD7F discussed this type of discrimination,



*“There are some managers who give bonuses to employees who do not deserve them, simply because of their relationship with the manager. On the other hand, there are workaholic employees in low or middle level positions of the organisation whose managers undervalue them”.*

Another participant EDUCATION14F mentioned the relationship between authenticity in leadership and the hierarchical culture,

*“Despite that I don’t have scientific studies and evidence I feel that the hierarchical systems in public organisations kills the level of honesty and credibility”.*

The findings of the current study are consistent with the literature on cultural dimensions in classifying Saudi as a hierarchical culture. For instance, Schwartz (1992), in his model of culture, identified societies in the Middle East region as hierarchical cultures. The significant question here is how authenticity is affected by hierarchal culture. Hierarchical culture is defined by Schwartz as demonstrating inequality between people and their roles, with power, welfare and responsibilities varying widely according to the class system. This inequality is shown by the research participants’ examples of how people have been hired in leadership positions because of their social level. Dealing with people differently according to their social or welfare or power level creates a falsity in relationships. In such cultures as Saudi Arabia, those who have relationships and connections with different organisations use them for *wasta*, and they have more power than others. Additionally, it is believed that in hierarchical cultures people obtain power based on their social positions (Terlutter et al., 2006). As a result of both *wasta* and inequality in the Saudi context, members of society are not equal in terms of power, leading us to discuss the dimension of power distance and its link to authenticity. Robinson et al. (2012) believe that there is a conceptual link between the dimension of power distance and authenticity. High power distance, as Saudi is categorized, means unequal power distribution and a tendency for individuals to accept their place in the hierarchical order. Consequently, higher power distance reduces the level of authentic self-expression of people

who are at a lower hierarchical level. Two quotes from the research link power distance and hierarchical culture that leads to inauthentic behaviour. For example FOOD8F stated that,

*“Senior level employees will disrespect mid-level employees, and mid-level employees will disrespect low level employee and so on”.*

Additionally, TELECOMUNICATION11F explained that appointing leaders because of seniority can cause power distance and inauthentic behaviour,

*“Managers who aren’t competent become managers because of their seniority, especially in government sectors. These managers do not have leadership skills, and they don’t communicate well with employees. They deal with other staff with sense of superiority”.*

#### **4.2.5 Positive Cultural Aspects and Authenticity**

Despite obstacles such as cultural disconnect and other barriers, there are many positive aspects of Saudi culture that promote authenticity in leadership. This subtheme examines the research participants’ ideas about how Saudi culture encourages authenticity in leadership. A chief feature of Saudi society which contributes to authenticity is the widespread adherence to Islamic values. The relationship between Islamic ethics and authenticity was pointed out by participant MOTOR3F,

*“I think that in our culture many people have firm Islamic values, and can understand their real religious meaning. This enables them to be honest and transparent and to behave with good manners”.*

A leader participant, PETROCHEMICAL5L, asserted that Saudi culture provides an excellent base for authenticity as it is based on Islamic principles, and that the practice of *wasta* is contrary to Islamic values,

*“The foundation of our culture is excellent, and all of us agree that wasta shouldn’t be a part of Islamic culture. Wasta is a kind of*

*nepotism, which often means that someone less efficient takes over a role instead of a more competent, qualified person. However, something positive in Islamic culture is intercession: “of good intercede intercession not his share of bad ones and intercede intercession not have ensured them” (Quran, Chapter 4 Verse 85).*

Additionally, PETROCHEMICAL5L highlighted that Muslims have a strong sense of accountability to God and that the Muslim belief in the afterlife encourages people to do the right thing,

*“The benefit comes from the power of the idea in the heart of the person. I mean the ideas of the afterlife, and reward and punishment, and bliss, as well as accountability. This makes you think a thousand times before settling on a course of action, and I think this is the case for every Muslim”.*

TELECOMUNICATION11L asserted that most people in Saudi culture are credible and honest,

*“I think seventy percent of people in our culture are credible; because how they live stems from the teachings of our Islamic religion. I see leaders as credible people”.*

CONSTRUCTION17L stated that being honest is one of the key Islamic values,

*“I think this means that if we look at aspects that are concerned with Islamic and religious heritage, all of this stimulates values of transparency and honesty”.*

All the previous ideas support the view that Islamic culture in Saudi Arabia promotes and enhances the practice of authenticity in leadership. Participants were strongly of the opinion that most people in Saudi Arabia are credible, trustworthy and honest, arguing that this is because honesty and transparency are integral to basic Islamic values and principles.

The concept of *wasta* is discussed in Section 4.1.4 as a negative cultural practice that forms an obstacle to authenticity in Saudi culture. One of the participants asserted that *wasta* is not a part of Islamic culture as it implies acting in a way that ignores the rights of others. Additionally, he made the point that there is a positive and ethical substitute for *wasta*, which is *shafaa* in Arabic, and means good intercession. For example, helping a qualified and competent person to find a job in an organisation without causing harm or taking away the rights of others. Good *shafaa* is encouraged and endorsed in Islamic culture as well as being cited in the Quran. One possible explanation for the spread of the negative practice of *wasta* in Saudi culture is that it has been wrongly interpreted as *shafaa*, which is clearly a positive practice and different to *wasta*. This finding has important implications for organisational leaders, and Nazaha, which is the Saudi government body for anti-corruption, is currently raising awareness of the differences between *wasta* and *shafaa*. This is very important with regard to practices of authenticity, because according to Nazaha (2015), *wasta* is the most frequent form of corruption.

The research participants also identified other features of Saudi culture that support authenticity. For example, the growing population of young Saudis who use social media networks to communicate is encouraging greater honesty and transparency. PETROCHEMICAL5F said,

*"In my view, there has been an improvement from the first, largely because of changes in the way information is communicated, and by virtue of changes in young people's ideas and ways of working now. There is more need for credibility than ever before, and leaders are forced to embody qualities of honesty and open communication in order to be successful in their work".*

Similarly, MOTOR3L gave positive examples of current changes in the way the government is communicating with the public,

*"In fact, a lot of people in leadership in our country find that the Internet has made the difference more than anything, and it brings*

*people closer. I mean, look at the new ministries now: the Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Press, they are all using websites and social networks and are creating the kind of immediate communication people expect now".*

FOOD9L mentioned another feature which is that young people today have more courage to confront their leaders than in the past,

*"In our culture, employees now no longer fear their leaders or managers or any other employees. Every employee can communicate transparently with the management, talk to the president, speak with the director, and have their say".*

Although Saudi Arabia was categorised as a high power-distance culture by Hofstede (2013), recent changes have meant that even young Saudis can confront the leaders in their organisation. It can be seen that the younger population are moving more and more towards adopting western cultural values due to globalisation. They are engaging more in social communication with western cultures through social media networks. It is believed that cultures change through regular contact with other cultures (O'Neil, 2006) but these changes in the behaviour of the younger Saudi population need to be measured in order to find out how much they are adopting the values of western cultures. Thus, future research on this subject is recommended.

#### **4.2.6 Theme Conclusion**

To summarize, this study has identified three main findings regarding the impact of national culture on the perception of authenticity. Firstly, Islamic culture in general promotes and encourages authenticity. Secondly, there is evidence of a "cultural disconnect" between Islamic values and people's daily actions that affect the concept of authenticity in the Saudi context. Thirdly, the results of this study have shown that there exist three cultural obstacles to authenticity in Saudi culture: *wasta*, *almujamalah* and the hierarchical society.

The comparison of these three main findings with the literature has resulted in the following conclusions. Firstly, in reviewing the current literature on authenticity, no data was found on the association between religious values and beliefs and authenticity in leadership, specifically Islamic culture and authenticity. Therefore, one of the contributions to the body of knowledge this study makes is in discussing the role of religion, specifically Islam, in perceptions of authenticity. One unanticipated finding is that the Islamic perception of authenticity combines and balances the individualist and the collectivist view of authenticity which is distinctive and differs from the literature. Additionally, there is a cognitive dissonance between current practices in Saudi Arabia regarding authenticity and Islamic values, which highlights the need for further study of the relationship between cognitive dissonance and authenticity. Furthermore, the literature on cultural differences explains why cultural practices exist in the Saudi context, such as *wasta* and *almujamalah*, which work against Islamic values and negatively affect authenticity in leadership and followership.

### **4.3 The Perception of Authenticity in Leadership**

#### **4.3.1 Theme Introduction**

One of the main features of the interview responses is the description of perception of authenticity in leadership. This theme concerns on the particular leaders' understanding of authenticity and the characteristics which make them authentic. These perceptions can be divided into two subthemes of self-perceptions and relational perceptions as Figure 12 illustrates. The findings relating to each of the perceptions are set out below and are discussed with reference to the literature.

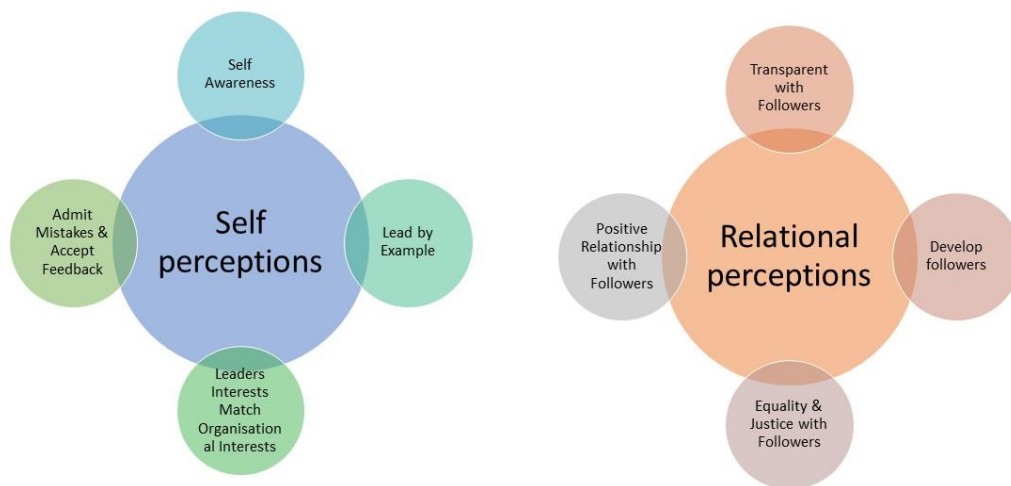


Figure 12 Perceptions of Authenticity in leadership

### 4.3.2 *Self- Perceptions of Authenticity in Leadership*

Self-behaviour refers to how the leader perceive in relation to his own authenticity. It represents authenticity perceptions that leaders practise independently. The analysis of the interviews revealed four types of self-perceptions of authenticity in leadership, which are discussed below.

#### 4.3.2.1 **Self Awareness**

The research findings indicate that true and genuine leaders are aware of their own capabilities, strengths and weaknesses. The interview data revealed that the research participants believe there is a direct relationship between leader self-awareness and authenticity in leadership. For instance, participant MOTOR3L stated,

*"Being true to the self starts first and foremost with the leader being aware of his own behaviour... and knowing exactly what his actual abilities are"*

Participant PETROCHEMICAL5L described how self-awareness helped him to be honest with his followers,

*"I have certain weaknesses on the engineering and technical side ...how does knowing that influence me? When I talk to engineers in my company I tell them I am not very knowledgeable in this area and that I need their help...this makes my relationship with my team better and more comfortable because I am honest with them".*

Furthermore, MOTOR1L highlighted that self-awareness strengthens true leaders,

*"Being honest with oneself come from self-awareness...This grows with experience and makes the person strong from the inside and aware of his limits".*

Participant CONSTRUCTION18L went further by saying self-awareness is a condition of leadership,

*"The leader wouldn't be a leader if he didn't know himself and know his qualities. A leader must be fully aware of his personality and his attributes, and must know in which situations to use them".*

The findings of the current study are consistent with the literature of authenticity and authentic leadership, which consider self-awareness to be one of the basic components of authenticity. Kernis and Goldman (2006), in their four components of authenticity, name self-awareness as the first component and define it as increasing knowledge of one's emotions, motives, desires and values. Additionally, Walumbwa et al. (2008) include self-awareness in their definition of authentic leadership:

*"We define authentic leadership as a pattern of leader behaviour that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development" (p. 94).*



In defining self-awareness and authenticity a number of similarities and differences can be noted between the literature and the findings of this study. They both consider self-awareness as part of the concept of authenticity. However, the study participants' definitions of self-awareness are generally limited to strengths and weaknesses — as is evident from the interviews — while definitions in the literature of authenticity and authentic leadership include emotions, motives, desires, identity and values (Kernis and Goldman, 2006; Gardner et al., 2005). Consequently, literature of authenticity and authentic leadership consider self-awareness as a critical component while on our research data we do not know how important self-awareness is in the participants perception of authenticity.

Table 9 below illustrates how pairs of leaders and followers from all sectors view self-awareness.

Table 9 Self Awareness Quotes

MOTOR1L	<i>The leader who is self-aware can build on his strengths...I use my strengths for my company's benefit.</i>	MOTOR1F	<i>I can see that when the leader is self-aware, his understanding of his personality influences him to choose the leadership style that best represents him.</i>
PETROCHEMIC AL4L	<i>It will help me to utilise my strengths and give all the necessary support and adding values to organisation.</i>	PETROCHEMIC AL4F	<i>If a leader has no knowledge of his strengths and weaknesses he will fail a lot...I think this is something very important, that he should at least know his weaknesses.</i>
FOOD9L	<i>Self-awareness helps you to understand your actions and reactions. There is no one who doesn't have strengths and weaknesses, and, if you don't know your personality, you will have many shortcomings.</i>	FOOD9F	<i>As a follower, I would say that if you notice strength in the leader, this encourages you to learn from him.</i>
TELECOM UNICATIO	<i>If I know my strengths and my weaknesses it is easier to control my behaviour</i>	TELECOM UNICATIO	<i>The leader of the team is a model for others; as a leader you must highlight</i>

			<i>what you know and communicate your abilities.</i>
EDEUCATION14L	<i>Of course, the more he knows himself, the more his influence on others is different and stronger without a doubt. By the way, I want to say something that is the most prominent of the leaders who were placed in positions and did not play the role of the leader that I say before Shui.</i>	EDUCATION14F	<i>Self-awareness helps you to master the right action at the right time in the right circumstance with the right person.</i>
CONSTRUCTION17L	<i>Having such a clear picture of himself can help him more if he uses points of strength, moving and pushing everyone around him to achieve the goals he wants to reach or the organization wants to reach them.</i>	CONSTRUCTION17F	<i>I have to be aware of my own limitations and weaknesses, and work on these first, because they affect my team. I need to pay more attention to my own methods and habits and then then the team will develop of itself. If I do not become aware of my own shortcomings, how can I address the weaknesses in the team which I am responsible for as a leader?</i>

The above opinions in Table 9 discussed the benefits of leader self-awareness which reflect the majority of participants' viewpoints about self-awareness. Only a few directly linked leader self-awareness with authenticity and their views are quoted earlier in this section. Some of the points above deal with the impact of self-awareness on the organisation, (MOTOR1L, PETROCHEMICAL4L and Petrochemical4F), while MOTOR1F and FOOD9L talk about how self-awareness strengthens the leader himself. Interestingly, FOOD9F states that he is inspired to learn from his leader, and this practice of developing followers is specifically one of the behaviours of authenticity in leadership which is explored within this theme (see Section 4.3.2.2). The only quotation from Table 2 that directly links to leader authenticity is that cited by MOTOR1F, who argues that self-awareness helps the leader to adopt a leadership style that represents his true personality. This idea is similar to the literature of authentic leadership, which holds that self-awareness is the first step towards authenticity.

#### 4.3.2.2 Lead by Example

Many participants state that a true leader shows exemplary behaviours. They believe that an honest leader acts in positive ways and is thus considered as a role model for followers. For instance, participant TELECOMUNICATION12F stated,

*“I understand the concept of being honest in leadership to be about the leader as a role model and as an example based on how he acts at work”.*

In addition, participant FOOD7L described true leaders as displaying exemplary behaviour,

*“A true and genuine leader is a role model...he is the first person to apply the rules and regulations in the organisation, even those rules which work against him...the credibility of leadership occurs when followers feel they are equal with their leaders...leaders have more responsibility to apply the regulations”.*

CONSTRUCTION17F went further by saying that a leader fundamentally influences followers by being a role model,

*“The foundation of leadership is to lead by example at all times...I shouldn’t say one thing and then do the opposite”.*

It is clear from these quotations that Saudis perceive that being a role model is one of the main distinguishing features of true leaders. Role model or exemplary leadership means that followers are encouraged to act in ways that are influenced by the positive behaviours they see in their leaders. These results corroborate the findings of a key study in authentic leadership, that of Gardner et al. (2005). They found that positive modelling is mediated by the words and deeds of leaders with high levels of self-awareness. The difference between the present study’s findings and those of Gardner et al. (2005) is that we show here that role modelling is a key behaviour and practice that distinguishes authenticity in leadership. According to Gardner et al., the basic practices of the authentic leader are self-awareness

and self-regulation, with positive modelling occurring as a result of these characteristics. Thus, they view authentic leadership as the outcome of self-awareness and self-regulation. However, the present findings suggest exemplary leadership as an input of authenticity in leadership processes. Gardner et al. (2005) discuss the occurrence of positive modelling through high self-awareness, which is similar to only one of the study participants, TELECOMUNICATION12L, who viewed exemplary leadership as the result of the leader's self-awareness:

*"A self-aware leader sets an example by his behaviour, since he has learned to control his actions".*

In addition to self-awareness, Gardner et al. also propose that self-regulation is a cause of positive modelling by leaders.

Participant MOTOR1L, who differentiates between two types of leadership authenticity, stated that,

*"There are two type of authenticity, behavioural authenticity and belief authenticity... being a role model is part of behavioural authenticity... a true leader leads his followers effectively by being a role model to them".*

The two types of authenticity, behavioural and cognitive/belief are connected to a recent study in authentic leadership by Beddoes-Jones (2013), who developed a four-factor model. Beddoes-Jones identified two authentic leadership behavioural practices of self-regulation and moral action, and two cognitive practices of self-awareness and moral virtue. Both the findings of this study and the four-factor model are similar in that they separate descriptions of leadership authenticity into two categories of cognitive/belief processes and behavioural practices. It can be observed that the cognitive/belief processes provide the motive and cause of the behavioural practices of authenticity in leadership. If exemplary leadership is considered as the behavioural part of authenticity, as this study suggests, what then are the cognitive and belief pre-requisites to this? We can answer this by examining the literature of

authentic leadership. Gardner et al. (2005), as we have seen, assert that positive modelling of exemplary leadership occurs as result of both self-awareness and self-regulation.

The research participants are clear that leading by example is a key characteristic of a genuine and honest leader. FOOD8L discussed why true leaders are role models,

*“A genuine leader is one who sets a good example; if he does things well and to a high standard, then others will follow him”.*

In addition, TELECOMUNICATION10L believes that true leadership involves being a role model,

*“My interpretation of being true is to be a role model”.*

EDUCATION14F gave an example of the relationship between exemplary leadership and authenticity,

*“If I were a leader in the organisation I would think it wrong to criticise the punctuality of employees if I always arrived late. This is part of being honest and credible”.*

Likewise, CONSTRUCTION16F linked true leadership to providing a good example,

*“If an individual wants to be honest with himself and others, he must be a role model”.*

A possible explanation of why the participants pay a lot of attention to exemplary leadership and authenticity may relate to the cultural dimension of power distance. Power distance is defined as the extent to which one accepts that power in institutions and organisations is distributed unequally (Hofstede, 2011). According to Bhagat and Steers (2009), high power distance societies believe that people in positions of authority should have considerable power compared to their subordinates. Additionally, people do not question leaders even if they do something wrong (O'Donnell and Boyle, 2008). Thus, although the leader in high power distance cultures has more authority and power, he is a role model in his behaviour and so is admired and perceived as an honest and genuine leader.

Table 10 below shows pairs of leaders and their followers' from all the six sectors perspectives on exemplary leadership and authenticity.

Table 10 Lead by Example Quotes

MOTOR3L	<i>If the leader does not set an example to others by demonstrating organisational values or even human and religious values, and also by his everyday actions, I am sure he will be just an image of leader.</i>	MOTOR3F	<i>There are certain characteristics of successful leadership. People can accept when their leader is angry or reacts strongly... but the team can't accept a dishonest leader because they can't trust him.</i>
PETROCHEMICAL5L	<i>I am referring to the power of example. In order to spread credibility I must be honest myself first and foremost.</i>	PETROCHEMICAL5F	<i>If he is honest with himself and with me then I will put in the effort and get the job done on time. If I can connect with the team and with the leader, I consider him to be a sincere leader.</i>
FOOD7L	<i>A leader can be a role model for others. One of the most beautiful things is when a particular regulation is applied in the company and the leader follows it along with the other employees. He doesn't set himself apart.</i>	FOOD7F	<i>Being sincere with himself in his own life means that if we look at it from a social point of view, if he deals with what he is in his own house, and deals with his friends, meaning internal and external dealing is clear, he is himself going to be open minded to others.</i>
TELECOMMUNICATION12L	<i>The exemplary and true leader transforms his qualities to his team, like being assertive, punctual etc.</i>	TELECOMMUNICATION12F	<i>As a leader you must be honest with yourself as you ask others to carry out instructions. You mean you are asking me for achievement. You need to be honest with yourself in your own achievements. You ask me for discipline, so you must be disciplined too. You demand honesty. You must be honest.</i>
EDUCATION15L	<i>Any values and ideas you promote, you also have to practice and not do the opposite ...you have to be a clear example of them.</i>	EDUCATION15F	<i>Another important attribute of leadership ...he sets a good example for them.</i>
CONSTRUCTION16L	<i>Truthfulness in action is that words match deeds.</i>	CONSTRUCTION16F	<i>An individual who wants to be honest with himself and others must be a role model.</i>

Table 10 shows perspectives of leaders and their followers of how leading by example is perceived by them as a practice of leaders' authenticity. Both leader and follower from

organisation 3 mentioned the negative impact on a leader's credibility if he does not set an example in his behaviours by acting against his organisation values. The follower participant highlight that followers will lose trust in their leader because his authenticity. The impact of authentic or inauthentic behaviours by the leaders on the organisation or the followers is discussed further in other theme in section 4.7. While the other quotes in Table 10 express the significance of setting a good example by the leader. They argued that authenticity is reflected in his behaviours by being an example. Participant CONSTRUCTION16L defined authenticity as the compatibility between words and deeds which mean in the context of leadership, it is a leader's commitment to his words, promises, organisational regulations...etc. When the leader is not committed to the organisational values a conflict of interests is occur between the leader personal interests and the organisational interests this issue lead us to the next practice.

#### **4.3.2.3 Leaders Interests Match Organisational Interests**

The third perception of self-authenticity is that the leader's goals and mission at work should be congruent with those of the organisation. This means that true leaders should not pursue personal interests and agendas that are against their organisation's values and mission. The research participants take the view that leader authenticity is where interests align with the good of the organisation. For instance, interviewee PETROCHEMICAL4F explained this idea by stating that,

*"A leader who is true to himself and others should always match his actions to the requirements of the leadership position".*

Likewise, FOOD8L expressed the same concept and considers it as sign of transparent leadership,

*"Separating organisational issues from personal life issues give an impression of transparency to employees".*

Additionally, FOOD9F considered this idea from the Islamic perspective,

*"From the Islamic perspective if the leader only cares about his personal gains and interests in the work context, he is not being true to himself and others".*

MOTOR3F admitted that leaders can tend to focus on their own personal interest but that they should avoid acting on this,

*"A leader should clearly get rid of ideas of personal gain which are at the expense of work interests".*

This perception is significant as it touches on the essence of authentic leadership as well as the reason for its development. According to Northouse (2012), authentic leadership emerged to fulfil the demand for trustworthy leadership after the rise in corporate scandals and the threat of terrorism. Authentic leadership developed in answer to the need for responsible and accountable leaders with high standards of integrity (Wong and Cummings, 2009). The participants of this study agreed that an honest leader should not have a hidden agenda, as MOTOR1L states,

*"A genuine leader is one who has no hidden agendas"*

TELECOMUNICATION12L was unequivocal about leaders and hidden agendas,

*"A leader must be transparent with everyone and specifically with employees who work with him, and he must have no hidden agenda ...when the leader has a hidden agenda he can't be considered a leader".*

Fundamentally, leaders with hidden agendas are dishonest and are likely to be masking unethical behaviour within the organisation. An interesting example of a leader with a hidden agenda against his organisation's interests was provided by interviewee TELECOMUNICATION12L:



*“In my organisation, one of the leaders who worked very hard was promoted and awarded a higher grade and salary. However, his performance decreased dramatically because he was no longer performing well for the company but was acting only out of self-interest and a desire for further promotion... this type of behaviour negatively affected the company and the management now considers carefully before promoting employees, so promotion is taking longer. As a follower of this leader I questioned his credibility and authenticity”.*

This example shows how unethical conduct by an individual leader affected a whole company of over 4,000 employees. The impact of authenticity in Saudi Arabian leadership on the organisational level is discussed in section 4.7. Interestingly, in the data collected, this type of behaviour is cited by five followers and just one leader. More followers recognise this type of leader behaviour than the leaders themselves, which indicates that the leader’s self-awareness plays a significant role in leader authenticity. A follower participant, EDUCATION13F, points out how leaders who think about personal gains affect their followers,

*“If the followers and people around the leader feel that he is working only for his personal benefit, then this affects his credibility”.*

Table 11 below shows six pairs of leaders and followers’ views on conflict of interest and its link to perceived authenticity in leadership.

Table 11 Leaders Interests Match Organisational Interests Quotes

MOTOR3L	<i>I am convinced internally that this thing is based on the real interest of the facility in which I am located or the team I lead, I think this is a true leader.</i>	MOTOR3F	<i>But because he has many interests and have issues behind the scenes, and the word what he sees only after calculating many functions means what I think this is untrue person.</i>
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PETROCHEMICAL5L	<i>I deal honestly with people and work neither for my own personal gain nor for theirs, but for our organisation's benefit.</i>	PETROCHEMICAL5F	<i>An honest leader should dedicate all his working hours to the needs of the organisation.</i>
FOOD9L	<i>The leader must be honest with himself and sincere in the goals he sets, so that the goals are not harmful. They should be useful both to the company he is in or to the group with him.</i>	FOOD9F	<i>From an Islamic perspective the leader should not serve his personal interests. He should be honest with himself and with others.</i>
TELECOMMUNICATION10L	<i>Sometimes the organisation makes a decision that is against my followers. In this case I have to justify the organisation's perspective even though the followers are against this.</i>	TELECOMMUNICATION10F	<i>For a leader, the meaning of being true to the self is that his loyalty and interests should be towards the position he holds and the place he works for.</i>
EDUCATION13L	<i>Always, the interests of the organisation come first.</i>	EDUCATION14F	<i>If the followers and people around the leader feel that he is working only for his personal benefit, then this affects his credibility.</i>
CONSTRUCTION16L	<i>A leader should always speak for the organisation's interests and reflect what the organisation needs.</i>	CONSTRUCTION16F	This participant did not talk about this behaviour

The previous table indicates the views of leaders and followers about leaders working for the organisation's interests. Participant PETROCHEMICAL5L explained his intention to deal with people at work solely for the organisation's benefit. His follower, PETROCHEMICAL5F, also believes that an authentic leader should use his working hours for the sake of the organisation. Participant TELECOMMUNICATION10F also holds that a true leader shows loyalty to his position and the organisation. What stands out is TELECOMMUNICATION10L's view of how the leader reacts when the organisation makes a decision which has a negative impact on employees. That is, to what extent the leader should defend the organisation's decision? The standard for authentic and genuine leadership is to follow one's ethics, values and beliefs, thus if an organisation makes an unethical decision whether against employees or the community, an authentic leader ought to intervene. This also relates to how the decisions of senior management are taken to represent the attitudes of the organisation. Unethical

decisions reflect badly on the organisation and therefore senior management and executives play a vital role in establishing a culture of ethicality and authenticity or the opposite. This issue is discussed in further depth in Section 4.4, which deals with the influence of organisational culture on authenticity in leadership.

#### 4.3.2.4 Admit Mistakes and Accept Feedback

The fourth self-perception of leader authenticity is admitting mistakes and accepting feedback. This behaviour represents leader humility and willingness to admit mistakes when a wrong decision has been made, as well as listening to and accepting followers' feedback. It might be expected that only follower participants would identify this characteristic of authenticity in leadership; however, both leaders and followers participants suggested this perception as a sign of authenticity. For instance, the follower participant FOOD7F, stated clearly that,

*"A trustworthy leader acknowledges his mistakes and says to his followers, 'I made a mistake'. It is very important that he does not attribute his mistakes to his followers.... when a leader admits his mistakes at work, it positively influences his followers' productivity...I have seen it increase employees' productivity".*

TELECOMUNICATION11L also contributed that,

*"A true leader admits that he is wrong, and would never blame someone else for something that he has done wrong".*

These quotations show that the participants believe that true and genuine leaders should be humble enough to admit their mistakes and accept feedback from their followers; in beginning to explain this viewpoint, we can refer to the cultural dimension of power distance. Arab cultures are high power distance societies in which followers expect to be told what to do (Hofstede, 2011); thus, leaders in high power distance cultures such as Saudi Arabia are not expected to admit and acknowledge their mistakes, since high power distance implies

unequal power distribution and a tendency for individuals to accept their place in the hierarchical order. However, despite these expectations, the research participants clearly felt that a genuine and honest leader who admits mistakes and accepts feedback is practising authenticity in leadership, even though this behaviour is not the cultural norm in Saudi Arabia.

According to Robinson et al. (2012), the power distance dimension is clearly linked to authenticity. They found a relationship between power distance and authenticity in their study of the US, the UK and Russia. They found that the UK and the US scored very low on power distance but high on authenticity, whereas Russia was high in terms of power distance and low on authenticity. This suggests that if a culture has high power distance, it is likely to be low in authenticity; however, more studies need to be undertaken to clarify the association between power distance and authenticity.

Some research participants mentioned the positive impact of admitting mistakes and accepting feedback by leaders. For example, FOOD7F cited that:

*“If a leader does something wrong, he should admit to it because otherwise this dishonesty will be reflected in the attitude of the team around him”.*

TELECOMUNICATION10L claimed that in order to learn and develop the leader has to listen to others feedbacks’

*“As a leader, in order to develop myself I have to listen to criticism ...in this way, I can get feedback that will help me to change the negative things about work”*

Moreover, FOOD8L pointed out the significance of accepting feedback from followers,

*“There is a need to have a friendly atmosphere with employees who provide the leader feedback and opinions.... this type of transparency may look like criticism but at the end it will benefit the leader and the organisation”*

MOTOR1L recounted a story of him when he admitted his weakness and asked his followers for feedback:

*“I was appointed to lead the operations department where highly experienced and qualified employees worked. I knew they had much greater technical knowledge than me, and so the first thing I did was to tell them honestly that they were all much more knowledgeable than me, and that I was happy to learn from each one of them. When I did that, they opened up and shared their tacit knowledge”.*

The previous quotes do not only point out that admitting mistakes and accepting feedback is perceived sign of leader authenticity but also, it has positive impacts on followers. This perception of admitting mistakes and accepting feedback from followers is not mentioned in the literature of authentic leadership which indicate the concept of authenticity is perceived differently across cultures.

Table 12 indicate how this practice is observed by participants of six organisations from all the industries of Saudi Private Sector.

Table 12 Admit Mistakes and Accept Feedback Quotes

MOTOR2L	<i>I mentioned at the beginning of my speech that I have to have some humility on the basis of what is in the transcendent look.</i>	MOTOR2F	<i>I can feel it in the president who is the owner of the company. We never feel he puts himself above us but instead we feel that he is a colleague.</i>
PETROCHEMICAL4L	<i>In my opinion leadership is a two-way communication and there should be continual feedback between the leader and followers</i>	PETROCHEMICAL4F	<i>Between us and our leader there was openness and communication...every one of us was able to say anything to him without hesitation or fear, and the leader accepted that.</i>

FOOD7L	<i>From the beginning, I told them, I will wait for constructive criticism about everything I do</i>	FOOD7F	<i>A true leader admits his weaknesses in a particular area. He recognises his shortcomings, and is able to guide other people. He is the person who we look up to, and this is, of course, the greatest proof that he is true to himself.</i>
TELECOMUNICATION11L	<i>An honest and true leader holds himself accountable. If I make a mistake I can say: I made a mistake.</i>	TELECOMUNICATION11F	<i>If the staff believe that their leader is wrong and are willing to explain this to him, he should be able to listen and acknowledge their viewpoint.</i>
EDEUCATION14L	<i>The best thing is to have an honest leader who admit mistakes.... who is transparent and has the ability to accept feedback and be fair with others.</i>	EDEUCATION14F	<i>The more leader is open and transparent about his mistakes, the more he is honest and truthful.</i>
CONSTRUCTION16L	<i>The meaning of being true to the self is that if I personally have made a decision and then I realise that this decision is wrong, I shouldn't be reluctant to gather my team and tell them this. If we can look at it honestly together then we can agree on what needs to be done to put things right.</i>	CONSTRUCTION16F	<i>An honest person is one who asks people around him for advice and accepts their guidance.</i>

In the above table, both participants of organisation no.4, agree that feedback should be a two ways communication between the leader and followers. Whereas the leader and his follower from sector E and organisation no.14 think that admitting mistakes and accepting feedback are symbols of honest and true leaders. The participants of organisation no.16 describe authenticity in leadership as being humble to admit mistakes and ask his followers feedback.

### 4.3.3 Relational Perceptions of Authenticity in Leadership

Relational perceptions focus on the interaction between the leader and his followers. Four different perceptions of authenticity in leadership have been identified in the context of Saudi Arabia, as shown in Figure 12.

#### 4.3.3.1 Transparent with Followers

The first relational perceptions of authenticity in leadership is a transparent relationship with followers, which means maintaining an open, trusting and honest relationship. This is the only perception endorsed by all 36 participants, who cite this trait as a distinguishing feature of authenticity in leaders. The participants gave various examples of transparent relationships between transparent leaders and their followers. One the areas that participants stated as significant for the leader to clarify and share first are goals and his work style. For instance, EDUCATION13L and EDUCATION13F said,

*“The first thing a genuine leader should consider in his relationship with followers is to clarify how he intends to work with his employees and lead them, as well as what he expects from his followers”.*

This identification of performance objectives is also mentioned by MOTOR1F, who stated that,

*“To be transparent and true from the start, the leader should identify clearly the goals he requires his followers to achieve”*

PETROCHEMICAL4L assumed transparent leader should determine performance objectives at the beginning of the year,

*"a leader who is transparent, clear and honest in the beginning of the year determines what is required to achieve and the objectives for each follower"*

CONSTRUCTION17L asserted that true leader believe in the goals and vision they set,

*" I think setting strategies and drawing plans if the leader is not convinced himself what he drew, and what can be achieved and what can be done and motivate the team...he is not true with himself"*

Nonetheless it is obvious for the leader to set goals and identify performance objectives for followers to achieve, however, research participants believe a leader who is transparent about work objectives and follower performance is one of the key perceptions of authenticity in leadership. Furthermore, participants mentioned other dimensions of relational and work related transparency. For instance, PETROCHEMICAL4L assumed honest leader should be transparent with followers in relational and work issues,

*"The leader should be very open and very transparent also; he should express his feeling and give feedback to his subordinates and people who deal with".*

MOTOR3F went further and believe that leader should be transparent in all situations,

*"Leader have to be credible and transparent with people even in things that negative and uncomfortable or possible things that harm followers ... because they prefer to know the truth rather than lied to them"*

TELECOMUNICATION10L described the first thing to do to be a true leader,

*"Of course the first thing is honesty, I mean, if I have disagreement with one of the employees I have to ask him to meet, even if it meant advice or admonishment I have to it shows him my point of view"*

CONSTRUCTION17F true leader who are willing to be transparent by listening to anyone,



*"People who have credibility who are work open door policy, so if there is an executive or a CEO who send a message or email to everyone that to all employees my office is open to anyone for example, sits with me to discuss specific thing"*

All participants emphasised that a transparent relationship between the leader and his followers is a key aspect of authentic leadership. These findings are in agreement with the literature of authentic leadership. Relational transparency is perceived as one of the components of authentic leadership in different models (Walumbwa et al., 2008; Gardner et al., 2005; Luthans and Avolio, 2003). These models view relational transparency as leaders expressing their true emotions and feelings to followers, while the research participants in the current study see relational transparency from the employees' point of view. They understand that true leaders are those who are transparent, open, and clear about follower performance work objectives, difficult situations and giving feedback. An example of this is cited by interviewee MOTOR1L, who believes that giving feedback about followers' performance is a sign of transparency:

*"In our culture, some leaders avoid tackling followers about weaknesses in their performance in case the employees take critical feedback too personally or in case it damages a strong friendship with the leader...Authentic leaders must have the courage to talk to employees about mistakes or issues with performance, and by doing this they will gain more respect and trust from followers".*

Relational transparency is not only mentioned in the authentic leadership literature but is also identified as a key component of authenticity in general, as mentioned in Kernis and Goldman's model (2006). Kernis and Goldman call this relational orientation and define it as being open, honest and truthful in relation to others. They claim that relational transparency of the authentic person shows the real and true personality, as opposed to a fake one. Some participants felt that honest leaders should be truthful and realistic about career paths and promotion for their followers. For example MOTOR1F mentioned a story of when he asked his leader for a promotion,

*"I told him based on my performance I deserve a promotion and he replied you don't deserve that because .... And I asked him more than once and his reply was the same ...then he told me now you deserve it because you worked hard and develop yourself ...he was transparent with me even I was promoted after a year and half I still like him because he was honest and clear with me"*

TELECOMUNICATION12F stated the impact when the leader isn't transparent about promotion,

*"One of the main things a true and honest leader should be transparent and clear about with followers is the regulation of job promotion ... I have noticed unethical behaviour by leaders who promised promotion to followers as a reward for hard work, but by the end of the year they could not keep their promises for different reasons .... This type of behaviour strongly affects the credibility of the leader and has a negative impact on followers' performance"*

An interesting point is highlighted by Eagly (2005), who distinguishes between leaders' behaviour and followers' attitudes toward leaders' values and behaviour. He asserts that the literature of authentic leadership assumes that followers normally accept the leader's values. Thus followers may dislike or be against a leader's behaviour such as his transparency. This issue was reported by the participants despite all of them expressing the importance of a transparent relationship between leaders and followers. For example, participant FOOD7L said that,

*"I believe as a leader that being transparent with followers is not always a positive thing. For instance, if I have follower whose performance is weak, I should not necessarily be clear and transparent about this but should encourage and motivate him to perform better...Sometimes informing the follower about failings will*

*negatively affect his spirit so it's not always wise to be transparent...  
hiding information sometimes is good thing".*

There are cultural aspects at work here, such as *almujamallah*. This is explained in Section 4.2.2 as one of the obstacles and challenges to authenticity in Saudi culture. *Almujamallah* is pleasing others by giving untrue compliments, such as when a leader praises a follower's weak performance. The quotation above therefore highlights a very important question, which is to what extent a leader should be authentic? In other words, is authenticity a self-concept or a group concept? The example above shows that there may be times when a leader needs to consider a follower's feeling and emotions. In particular, participants pointed out that in Saudi culture negative feedback is sometimes interpreted as a personal insult. For instance participants TELECOMUNICATION12L said,

*"Arabic people can sometimes perceive feedback and criticism of  
their performance at work to be a personal insult....They are very  
sensitive to comments about their work and so leaders are unwilling  
to be transparent and they avoid being clear with their followers".*

This leads us to the discussion of leader authenticity not only being a matter for leaders but followers as well. The authentic behaviour of leaders should take into account both their own and others' values. This is similar to the Islamic perception of authenticity, which is discussed in Section 4.2.1, from both the self and relational perspectives. Authenticity in Islamic culture is derived from intrapersonal perspectives, as expressed by the individual's choices that come from true intention and from accountability, and also from interpersonal perspectives such as the need to respect others. Respecting others does not mean being fake or the practice of *almujamallah*, but neither does it mean being harsh for the sake of authenticity. It is achieved instead by balancing truth and transparency with others in a kind and considerate way.

The impact of leaders' transparency or lack of clarity will be discussed in detail in another theme. Fundamentally, the relationship of transparency with followers was recognized by all participants of this study as a core practice of authenticity in leadership and most of them also went so far as to define authenticity as entailing transparency with others. The following

Table 13 shows additional views of six participants from different sectors and organisations about the perceived link between transparency and authenticity in leadership.

Table 13 Transparent with Followers Quotes

MOTOR2L	<i>By credibility in leadership, I mean the continuous communication between the leader and his followers, and the transparent exchange of experiences and opinions</i>	MOTOR2F	<i>Asking followers about something that is not clear is also to deal with them openly.</i>
PETROCHEMICAL4L	<i>The leader should be very open and very transparent also. He should express his feelings and give feedback to his subordinates and people who he deals with. He should do this without any hesitation because his feedback is very important</i>	PETROCHEMICAL4F	<i>A transparent leader tells you your mistakes to your face - he is honest when he needs to tell you about improving your work, but he also acknowledges your accomplishments.</i>
FOOD8L	<i>The leader is transparent about what is going on in the company ...he is open and give people chance to speak and express their feeling</i>	FOOD8F	<i>The leader should be clear and transparent about the organisation's decisions and regulations.</i>
TELECOMUNICATI ON11L	<i>The leader is open about any decisions that employees do not like, and is honest with them about difficult decisions such as redundancy.</i>	TELECOMUNICATI ON11F	<i>The leader is open and transparent with employees and appreciates their work... he speaks about the positives and negatives.</i>
EDEUCATION15L	<i>I chose the goals that I can implement, I take into consideration the abilities of the people who are present together. If people promise something, for example, I will come to them and promise to give them something that is encouraging to them or an incentive for them, I have to be honest with them.</i>	EDEUCATION15F	<i>Transparency in leadership means the leader do not hide things from his followers, he more honest with them, in gentle and wise way.</i>

CONSTRUCTION 17L	<i>It is very important to use clarity and transparency with the team... since they have to be convinced in order to achieve the organisational vision.</i>	CONSTRUCTION 17F	<i>We deal with the team with transparency and expect the same from them.</i>
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The leader and follower participants in organisation no.8 agree that an honest leader should be transparent about organisational issues to his follower. Likewise, both participants of organisation no.11 confer that another element of transparency which is the leader should be honest and transparent to his follower in all cases even in negative and difficult situations such as firing someone while the leader and his follower from sector G focus on team transparency between the leader and all team members. The previous quotes show how each pair of participants understands transparency from different angle which indicates transparency between leader and followers is significant issue and can be conceptualised in various ways.

#### 4.3.3.2 Developing Followers

Participants identified developing followers as one of the significant roles of leaders' authenticity. They mean true leaders who care about their followers' development, share their experiences and mentor and coach them. An example of this is mentioned by TELECOMUNICATION12F,

*"I think one of the signs of a successful true leader is that when the leader is absent, another leader emerges from his team...this true leader develops his followers to be leaders".*

MOTOR1L also agreed that developing followers is a key role of genuine leaders and he then explained a method for developing leadership capacity in followers thus:

*"There are different qualities of true leaders, and followers' development is a significant one ...leaders can develop followers by*

*giving challenging assignments to them and allowing them to gain new skills from this exercise”.*

Participant TELECOMUNICATION12L also believed that true leaders should be mentors to their followers and added that,

*“I remember a senior executive in my company who always shared his knowledge and experience, and from whom I learnt a lot of wisdom...He also used to suggest books for me to read; part of a genuine leader”*

CONSTRUCTION16F explained that part of authenticity in leaders is caring of followers learning and development,

*“They can develop employees around them, do not think only for themselves, I mean some people focus on themselves, and some thanks to God, who cares about all the people around them, they give a word of advice, They ask how I can assist you? What do you need? they help others so, they are influential and successful leaders is sharing experience of life”.*

The previous quotations are from both leaders and followers, and show that follower development is seen as one of the perception of authenticity in leadership in Saudi Arabia. This perception can be a link to other traits that are identified in this study. True leaders develop their followers by demonstrating positive and ethical behaviours that followers can act upon. Staff development can be linked to the literature of authentic leadership development; for example, Gardner et al. (2005), in their self-based model of authentic leader and follower development, point out that the development of followers occurs as result of authentic leadership development. They argue that self-awareness and self-regulation in authentic leaders affect follower development through positive modelling. This means that the authentic leader develops his followers by becoming a role model. Gardner et al. also believe that exemplary leadership not only develops followers in general but also develops

follower authenticity. The present study is consistent with Gardner et al. (2005) in this regard; however, the findings here reveal more about how followers are developed, showing that follower development can include activities such as challenging assignments, mentoring and coaching, and giving feedback about performance. FOOD7L highlighted that,

*"Honest and transparent leaders not only give feedback to their followers but are also responsible for helping their followers to address and overcome any weaknesses"*

PETROCHEMICAL4L also mentioned coaching as one of the methods to develop followers,

*"He coach and educate his people to achieve their goals"*

While Gardner et al. (2005) mentioned only one way to develop followers, i.e. by exemplary leadership. In the current study exemplary leadership is viewed by the participants as one of the self-behaviours of leadership authenticity (Section 4.3.2.2)

Other viewpoints from participants about developing followers and authenticity in leadership are the next Table 14.

Table 14 Developing Followers Quotes

MOTOR2L	<i>I have to be close to employees and do my best to improve them... Because in the end they will be promoted and one day may have my position.</i>	MOTOR2F	<i>Because he was really honest. I mean the leader - the first thing he did was to develop you for your personal benefit as well as for the organisation.</i>
PETROCHEMICAL6L	<i>Giving the opportunity for followers to learn from new experiences by doing new projects.</i>	PETROCHEMICAL6F	<i>When a new leader is appointed his followers look forward to learning new skills. They always ask: what will he do for us?</i>
FOOD9L	<i>At the end every team member is expected to be leader in the future and it is necessary to adopt certain skills and behaviours not just to practise them. It's also very</i>	FOOD9F	<i>He transfers experiences to people, and creates followers who are ready to take on a position of leadership. I think he is a distinctive as a leader for developing leadership skills in his followers.</i>

	<i>necessary to give them guidance, clarification and training.</i>		
TELECOMMUNICATION11L	<i>One of the signs of true leader is self-development and continued learning. He should have new ideas to develop the work and his team.</i>	TELECOMMUNICATION11F	This participant did not mention this idea
EDUCATION15L	<i>An honest leader develops his followers by being a role model for them and demonstrating his values in his actions.</i>	EDUCATION15F	<i>The benefit of having transparent team is that you learn from them and they learn from you.</i>
CONSTRUCTION17L	<i>I ask how I can get to know the group around me, and discover their strengths and develop them.</i>	CONSTRUCTION17F	<i>He cares about my development ...It helps me realise what I need to achieve my goals...in my view, the leader who gives me confidence ...I consider him credible and honest.</i>

The followers' participants in Table 14 express their personal experience of how their leaders develop them. All of them agree that because their leaders concentrate on their development so, they perceive their leaders as true, honest and successful. On the other hand, leaders' participants view the same behaviours from their perspectives. For example, MOTOR2L explain how he is developing his followers by being close and prepare them to be in his position. The same idea of growing future leaders responsibility of truthful leader is also, stated by FOOD9L. Identifying and increasing followers' strengths is the way that participant CONSTRUCTION17L aims to develop his participants. To conclude, it can be seen from both perspectives of leaders and followers that the leaders can develop their followers in different ways and this is a sign of their authenticity.

#### 4.3.3.3 Positive Relationship with Followers

Participants considered that a positive relationship between leader and followers is an indication of authenticity in leadership. A positive relationship includes close relationship as well as frequent communication based on respect and trust. EDUCATION13F claimed that there is a relationship between authenticity and the leader's relationship with followers, saying:



*"A true and real leader creates a positive environment for the team, and so there will be high credibility, a good teamwork spirit, and higher achievements in terms of goals and creativity. Conversely, when the leader is not genuine, this will have a negative effect on the relationship between him and his team members".*

Another participant FOOD7F supported this view and felt that if a follower has a good relationship with the leader, it signifies true leadership:

*"A senior executive in my company who is a true and genuine leader always keeps his office door open and you can talk to him any time...he has a good relationship with everyone and employees consider him as their close friend, so they consult him with their issues and problems...he gives you all of his attention and listens to you honestly".*

MOTOR3L explained how he tries to maintain a good relationship with his followers:

*"As a leader I call one of my employees every couple of days and ask his opinion about the business. I also ask how he is doing and about his family. I try to have a close relationship with employees by breaking the ice ... this is important for effective communication".*

On the other hand, TELECOMUNICATION10F recounted a story about an inauthentic leader, who only cared about work and ignored his followers' feelings,

*"I was asked to do a presentation for my manager and so I did it and sent it to him. He didn't know I'd finished the presentation and he called and asked where I was. I told him that I was in hospital because I was ill. He demanded to know if I had finished the presentation because it was very important. He didn't ask about my health — he only cared about his presentation".*

The results of this study show that a strong and positive relationship between leaders and followers is perceived to be part of authenticity in leadership. Despite the similarities between this perception and the perception of transparent relationships in Section 4.3.3.1, participants could and did distinguish between them. As stated in Section 4.3.3.1, being a transparent leader in Saudi culture is not always a positive experience, as some followers are sensitive to criticism about their performance and consider it as a personal insult. On the other hand, participants perceive that a strong relationship between leaders and followers indicates good, positive, close communication between them. Some of the participants went so far as to say that a true leader should consider his followers as friends, as MOTOR1F said clearly:

*"Genuine and honest leaders should consider their followers as friends and address their needs, unless these work against the goals of the organisation".*

CONSTRUCTION17L also commented on the friendship between leaders and followers:

*"The relationship between the leader and his team is crucial ....it must be a human relationship based on love and friendship".*

The literature of cultural dimensions explains this relationship; for example, one of the cultural dimensions identified by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) is 'Specific versus Diffuse'. This dimension concerns the extent to which people separate their different roles in life. Middle Eastern societies are understood to be diffuse cultures, meaning that different roles are commonly integrated. For example, people may enjoy good relationships with work colleagues, which is why for some leaders in Saudi Arabia it is possible for their followers to be their friends. As well as believing a strong relationship between a leader and a follower to be a sign of authentic leadership, the participants also identified *wasta* and *almujamallah* (see Section 4.2.2) as obstacles and challenges to authenticity in the Saudi context. Both *wasta* and *almujamallah* can exist when a leader has a very close relationship with his followers, especially if they are his friends outside the workplace. Participant MOTOR1F in the

previous quotation identified a significant feature of the strong relationship without *wasta* and *almujamallah* by the phrase:

*"...unless these work against the goals of the organisation"*

The same idea of addressing and fulfilling followers' needs is also cited by other participants; for example, PETROCHEMICAL6L expressed how true leaders feel:

*"I think I actually have to be close to the people I am trying to serve,  
and talk to them".*

TELECOMUNICATION11L described what he needs to do to be a true and honest leader,

*"The first way in which I can be a true leader is to do for others what  
I would wish for myself".*

TELECOMUNICATION12F defined a true leader as someone who was on the side of his followers:

*"It was clear that he was always on the side of the employees, and  
he was often opposed to decisions of the senior management ...he  
was listening to us and learning about the stresses we faced".*

The implication of this in practice is that organisations should clearly enforce regulations against *wasta*, *almujamallah* and other unethical practices. This issue will be discussed in a separate theme about the impact of authenticity and inauthenticity in leadership at the organisational level.

Part of the positive relationship between genuine leaders and followers is consultation with followers in decision-making, as the participants stated. For example, MOTOR1F asserts that sharing the decision-making between the leader and his follower is not common practice and it is only true leaders who do this:

*“Leaders who consult their followers in the decision-making process are very rare, since most leaders make decisions based on their own personal views, even though they have to work with their team members and other colleagues”.*

For FOOD8L, the linked between involving followers in decision-making is sign of transparent leadership:

*“Regular meetings between the leader and the team and sharing decision-making give the leader a high level of transparency”.*

CONSTRUCTION16F described a true leader as someone who works with him,

*“Unusually, he consults us about work issues; if we all decide on something together then we are all responsible for the impact of those decisions... he asks us what we think, and we work as a team and achieve more”.*

Fundamentally, the research participants believe that consulting followers in decision-making is one of the perceptions of authenticity in leadership. This finding agrees with the literature on authentic leadership in the dimension of balanced processing, which is a feature of different models such as in Avolio et al. (2009); Walumbwa et al. (2008), and Gardner et al. (2005). Balanced processing means that leaders objectively analyse all relevant data and explore other people’s opinions before making a decision (Walumbwa et al., 2008). The findings of the current study regarding leaders consulting followers in decision-making are similar to the concept of balanced processing in authentic leadership literature. Nevertheless, there are two significant differences between them. The concept of balanced processing is more than just considering the opinions of others and includes analysing other information objectively to help the leader make the right decision. Secondly, this study regards the practice of consulting followers as part of the positive relationship between leader and follower, whereas the relational dimension in the literature is given different names, such as relational *orientation*, as in Kernis and Goldman’s model of multicomponent of authenticity

(2006), and *relational transparency*, as in the authentic leadership models of Avolio et al. (2009); Walumbwa et al. (2008), and Gardner et al. (2005).

Table 15 below shows the views of three pairs of participants from different industries about the relationship between a leader and his followers.

Table 15 Positive Relationships with Followers Quotes

MOTOR2L	<i>The leader's truthfulness is expressed when he is close to his followers and shares the decision-making with them.</i>	MOTOR2F	<i>A leader is always close to followers and this is important for the work so that followers can learn from their leader.</i>
PETROCHEMICAL6L	<i>One of the things I try to instil in my team is family spirit... so when one of the team achieves something we all celebrate and enjoy our relationship, and this make the team feel we are united as a group. I think this relates to transparency.</i>	PETROCHEMICAL6F	<i>He shared information with us as a team, which gave us a lot of job satisfaction. Also, I remember we used to go on team trips to the beach.</i>
FOOD8L	<i>Regular meetings between the leader and the team and sharing decision-making give the leader a high level of transparency.</i>	FOOD8F	<i>In order to achieve the principle of credibility and transparency I expect we need to be preoccupied with the subject of building a positive relationship and continuous direct communication through e-mails. We need to focus on the impact of our work and so strong and effective communication is needed.</i>
TELECOMMUNICATION11L	<i>I can see something more, that is, thinking of how would you like to have things organised if you were on your own.</i>	TELECOMMUNICATION11F	<div> <div>اشرح</div> <div>So I'm sure you have to be honest with the employee. Sometimes it is necessary to make a decision by imagining that you are in the position of the employee and put yourself in the place of the employee.</div> </div>
EDEUCATION15L	<i>Having a good relationship with people you work with, based on love and respect, has a big impact on them.</i>	EDEUCATION15F	<i>Team members know that an honest leader is one who shares his feelings with them and understands their needs, but also has no bad feelings towards them.</i>
CONSTRUCTION16L	<i>The relationship between the leader and his followers should have clarity and transparency. The</i>	CONSTRUCTION16F	<i>His communication was good About me Contact, Check, Ish news? What is the subject? Need</i>

	<i>nature of work is 100% governed by these standards. Driving any leadership? The type of organisation has the role of a military organization organized organization organization of financial organization profitability. Charity. The organization differs when the important time is the organization?</i>		<i>something? What are you doing? I mean, there were needs to take into account was good communication in .. With people, was sharing his group decision-making was not unique,</i>
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In the above table, participant MOTOR2L expresses an important view by linking the leader's honesty to his close relationship with his followers. Both participants MOTOR2F and EDUCATION15L mentioned the impact of having good, close relationships between the leader and his followers, both in general and in terms of learning at work. Interestingly, PETROCHEMICAL6L stated his way of developing a positive relationship with followers, and his follower PETROCHEMICAL6F mentioned the same idea and agreed on the positive influence of his leader.

#### **4.3.3.4 Justice and Fairness to Followers**

One of the key relational perception of authenticity in leadership stated by the research participants in describing honest leaders is that they deal with followers with a high level of objectivity, justice and fairness. This perception of authenticity in leadership is mentioned by various participants, for instance MOTOR1F explained the relationship between treating followers fairly and authenticity in leadership,

*“He deals with all employees equally and treats them all the same.  
This is reflected by positive feelings in the team .... The leader's values are reflected in his actions so, if he is honest, clear and transparent, then these values are transformed to actions”.*

Another participant, PETROCHEMICAL4F, also links authenticity in leadership with justice when he described a true leader,

*“He is honest with himself... and gives each person his rights”.*

In addition, MOTOR2L cited an example of how unjust behaviour by a leader in his organisation affect.

*“When we had the annual performance appraisal here (i.e. in his organisation), there was unfortunately no transparent relationship between the leader and the rest of the team. Consequently, some followers received low appraisal scores and others got high scores depending on whether the leader was a friend of theirs or not”*

Similarly, FOOD7L highlighted a very important cause of injustice in the assessment of followers' performance, i.e. prejudgement based on false first impression about a follower:

*“I learned from performance management that I should judge someone only through real situations and behaviours...we as humans always form initial impressions about people, yet after getting to know them we can discover that our first impressions were based on our emotional reactions and not on how those people really are”.*

EDUCATION14L described a leader who was honest and fair when evaluating followers' performances,

*“He is honest in assessing others without using almujamalh or being tough”.*

The previous views of participants indicate that being just and fair is perceived to be a key feature of authenticity in leadership. This finding can be related to two dimensions described

in the authentic leadership literature, which are internalised moral perspective and balanced processing (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Walumbwa et al. (2008) describe internalised moral perspective as the consistency between beliefs and actions such that decisions are made based on core beliefs. They describe balanced processing as considering different points of view before coming to conclusions. The results of this study differ from these two dimensions by specifying the behaviours of fairness and justice, which are not stated clearly in the literature. The second difference is that the literature on authentic leadership discusses internalised moral perspective and balanced processing as causes of fairness and justice, while our study discusses the behaviours of fairness and justice directly, without referring to its causes.

The research participants also cited different examples of just and unjust behaviours by leaders. For instance, MOTOR3L gave different examples of the unjust behaviours of some leaders:

*“It is good to avoid injustice, however small such as in simple things like making sure you listen to everyone, and getting to know people better so that you are not holding onto false ideas about them. Taking these issues seriously creates greater credibility with people”.*

FOOD8L described one the most cited examples of leaders’ injustice in performance assessments which directly affects followers financially.

*“Honest and credible leaders are fair to others in matters of promotion and reward, and so on... I have seen some executives, such as the CEO, who have refused to give the annual salary increment to employees because the company was facing difficult conditions”.*

On the other hand, EDUCATION14F asserted a positive example of a just leader:



*“He was very honest, clear and transparent with everyone, and he wasn’t unfair to people... everyone used to say he was a genuine person. This doesn’t mean he never made any mistakes in his job, but he achieved a high level of humanitarian behaviour at work”.*

Table 16 below shows the perspectives of three leaders and three followers regarding justice and equality in authentic leadership.

Table 16 Justice and Fairness to Followers Quotes

<b>MOTOR3L</b>	<i>There was a situation in which I felt that I was treated unequally, so I mentioned it to my manager who told me he would look into it. I then forgot all about it, but he came back to me and told me that he had figured out a way to solve it.</i>	<b>MOTOR3F</b>	<i>The leader is quiet and treats everyone equally. In this way the organisation benefits from increased credibility and equality.</i>
<b>PETROCHEMICAL4L</b>	This perception was not mentioned	<b>PETROCHEMICAL4F</b>	<i>His honesty appeared when our work was sent to the top management. He wouldn’t take the credit of this work for himself but instead he asked each of us to present our work personally to the senior managers.</i>

<b>FOOD7L</b>	<i>Employees have convinced me, and I've also learned from performance management, that I can judge people only on the basis of real situations.</i>	<b>FOOD7F</b>	This participant did not mention this point.
<b>TELECOMUNICATION10L</b>	<i>The leader has to deal with all staff equally, and not show favouritism to anyone.</i>	<b>TELECOMUNICATION10F</b>	<i>One of the negatives habits of some leaders is that they give creative and interesting work more to some employees while ignoring others... they should distribute the workload equally and encourage good work from everyone.</i>
<b>EDEUCATION13L</b>	<i>Sometimes when the work environment is corrupt, then others will start behaving in a similar fashion and say that they too have the right to steal and the right to hire relatives.</i>	<b>EDEUCATION13F</b>	<i>One of the things the credible leader should focus on at the beginning of his leadership work is equality and not discriminating between people.</i>

CONSTRUCTION17L	This participant did not mention this.	CONSTRUCTION17F	<i>I can say from the morale of the team that we have a successful leader. I think we are reassured because everyone is treated fairly by him.</i>
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#### 4.3.4 Theme Conclusion

To summarise, this study identifies eight distinct perceptions of authenticity in leadership that are represented by four self-perceptions and four relational perceptions. From these eight perceptions, this study has defined authenticity in leadership from the Saudi perspective as follows.

*“Authenticity in leadership is a self and relational construct that embraces a pattern of leader behaviours consisting of self-awareness and being an exemplary leader who acts in the interests of his organisation and shows a humble attitude as well as being transparent and just with followers, taking care of their development and building a positive relationship with them”*

To conclude this theme, there are two key points which can be drawn from the integrated findings and discussion of this theme. The first is that the two subthemes are distinct in that the number of self-perceptions is similar to the number of relational perceptions of authenticity in leadership. This indicates that Saudi leaders and followers perceive authenticity in leadership from both a self and relational perspective. This perception is similar to the Islamic perception of authenticity, which is being true and honest to oneself and others, which is discussed in Section 4.2.1. Despite the Saudi research participants stating that there is a cultural disconnect between Islamic values and the practices of business, as

mentioned in Section 4.2.3, they perceive authenticity in leadership as both an intrapersonal and interpersonal construct. The Saudi and Islamic view of authenticity makes several contributions to the current literature. First, it provides an alternative to the western view of authenticity and authentic leadership which is predominant in the literature. Second, it contributes to the literature of cross-cultural leadership as it links cultural dimensions with the concept of authenticity; according to Robinson et al. (2012), the concept of authenticity is strongly related to the individualist and collectivist dimensions of culture. Third, it highlights the influence of religious beliefs and values on the perception of authenticity, which is lacking in the current literature.

The second comment is that the eight perceptions which represent the Saudi understanding of authenticity in leadership are unique and different to the = dimensions of discussed in the authentic leadership literature. These perceptions share some similarities with the current western view of authentic leadership, but are perceived differently. For example, the perception of being a role model is viewed by the research participants as key aspect and input of authenticity in leadership, while it is viewed as the outcome of self-awareness and self-regulation in authentic leadership, as stated by Gardner et al. (2005). Another example of how the findings of this study are perceived differently to the literature of authentic leadership is that fairness and justice are mentioned clearly in the research findings, while the literature discusses the causes that lead to these two behaviours within the dimensions of balanced processing and internalised moral perspective (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Therefore, the eight perceptions identified by this study are distinct and unique, and represent the Saudi perspective of authenticity in leadership.

## **4.4 The Influence of Organisational Culture on Authenticity in Leadership**

### **4.4.1 Theme Introduction**

One of the research aims of this study was to look at the influence of culture at the national level, as mentioned in Section 2.2.2. Interestingly, the study participants also identified the influence of organisational culture on leader and followers authenticity. Two subthemes of

top management action and organisational policies and procedures emerged during the interviews.

#### **4.4.2 Top Management Actions**

The research participants perceived that the actions and behaviours of executives and top management are key factors in shaping organisational culture with regard to authenticity in leadership. The positive and negative behaviours of leaders at the top management level not only directly affect their followers but also shape the general work environment and organisational culture. FOOD8L supported this idea by saying that,

*"I think the best companies always hire executives and leaders who have a good track record, and they always prove their credibility and leadership capability... their actions not only affect their followers but also influence the whole organisation".*

EDUCATION13L pointed out that the reverse can hold true, whereby leaders are influenced by negative organisational ethics,

*"Sometimes a person goes to another organisation that does not have principles and values, and so he will adopt the same negative ethics of this organisation. I believe that leadership is affected by organisational principles and values".*

PETROCHEMICAL6L emphasised the vital role of senior executives in the practices of authenticity and transparency, since transparency is highly dependent on the degree of information sharing by management:

*"Transparency and clarity are really based on how much information or facts the senior management give you".*

PETROCHEMICAL4F also highlighted that the level of authority given to leaders could also affect their authenticity,

*"The powers granted to individual leaders might affect their credibility".*

FOOD7L pointed out that if we want to create an organisational culture based on authenticity, it should first be practised by the top management in order for it to filter down to other organisational levels.

*"How do we create transparency and credibility? It doesn't come from the bottom up, meaning that we can't look for it in younger staff; it should start with the top management, who then become role models. For example, in the government sector, it means that ministers should be credible and transparent, and this will be reflected in the ministry's behaviour".*

According to the research participants, both the positive and negative behaviours of leaders and executives in top management affect the authenticity of the employees and shape the organisational culture. In general, the results did not show any differences between leaders and followers in this regard, which is in line with the findings of Schein (2010), who argued that culture in general is created by shared experience in organisations, and that the leader initiates this process by acting according to their beliefs and values. Additionally, Schein (2010) argued that if companies trace the origins of their current culture, they find that many of their beliefs and values come from previous leaders. Similarly, from the previous comments, we can see that participants are describing the critical role of senior executives in influencing individuals' authenticity in their organisation. If we link these results with the literature of cultural dimensions, significant factors emerge to show that the organisational impact of leaders' actions is much higher in Saudi culture than in the western context. Firstly, there is the dimension of power distance, since Saudi and Arab cultures are categorised as high power distances societies (Hofstede, 2011; House et al., 2006). High power distance suggests that leaders make decisions simply because they are the leaders who have the power, authority and status (Goolaup and Ismayilov, 2012). Thus, unethical decisions and behaviours made by leaders in high power distance cultures remain unquestioned and

unchallenged by their followers. Furthermore, these unethical actions become the norm and may be adopted by other employees, as participant EDUCATION13L stated,

*“Because there is financial and administrative corruption from the top management, other employees are bound to be influenced. These irresponsible behaviours can also become rights, and the leaders tell us by their actions that we have the right to steal, or that they have the right to use wasta and hire relatives”.*

This quote indicates how the authenticity and ethicality of followers can be affected by leaders in the top management.

Another participant explained that in his experience, the reason for the lack of authenticity in his organisation was due to the lack of communication between employees and top management,

*“There are no channels of communication for leaders to be able to hear from staff, such as a suggestion box. Senior management keep themselves too far away from the rest of the company's employees”.*

The second factor of organisational culture that can affect both leaders' and followers' authenticity is organisational policies and regulations, which are discussed in the next section.

#### **4.4.3 Organisational Policies and Procedures**

One of the most interesting findings of this study is the way in which organisational systems, policies, and regulations influence the authenticity of both leaders and followers. The study participants point out that the practice of authenticity in leadership is influenced positively or negatively by their organisational regulations and policies. For instance, MOTOR3F reported the absence of any transparency policy at his organisation,

*“One administrative problem I have noticed is that there is no policy on transparency in the organisation. This means that some leaders are honest and transparent, while others behave like secret service*

*officers. There should be a general policy to maintain transparency in the organisation, but even if we had one, I think there would be a lot of exceptions in how it was applied".*

PETROCHEMICAL4F agreed with this idea and also described how the lack of regulations on organisational transparency affected the work environment,

*"Lack of clear policy and procedures in the organisational environment means everything is based on ambiguity. The important thing is to have a policy regarding transparency at work".*

FOOD9L felt that another of the causes of inauthentic behaviour in leaders is the lack of clear regulation and guidance on performance appraisals,

*"The absence of organisational regulations on performance appraisal make some leaders use almujaamah to avoid confronting under-performing employees".*

Another participant, PETROCHEMICAL6F, also mentioned the impact of the absence of policies and regulations at work,

*"One of the reasons for inauthentic practices is the lack of governance and accountability in the organisation, which leads to corruption".*

FOOD8L pointed out that lack of authenticity could also arise when financial transactions are not carried out in a transparent way,

*"I believe that one of the reasons for lack of credibility is the absence of transparency in financial transactions, and that should be very clear to the company".*



CONSTRUCTION16L asserted that authenticity in organisations depends on regulations and instructions,

*“The level of transparency in any company can be clearly linked to transparency regulations and clear instructions”.*

PETROCHEMICAL4F cited an example of how the absence of recruitment regulations in his organisation had led to the appointment of unqualified staff to senior management posts,

*“In our organisation there are some top managers who shouldn’t be in their positions. The laws and regulations in place in the company shouldn’t allow incompetent people to be employed in sensitive roles, as this affects our credibility”.*

It is clear from the foregoing that a direct relationship is perceived between organisational regulations and the authenticity of employee. The research participants believe that a lack or absence of clear regulations and standards can lead to inauthentic practices, such as *almujamlah* and other forms of corruption. The influences of organisational culture on authenticity found by this study are consistent with existing research on leader authenticity, such as Avolio and Gardner (2005) and Gardner et al., (2005). Both studies discuss the role of organisational context and climate on authentic leadership, and Avolio and Gardner argue that organisational context moderates authentic leadership behaviours and suggest that organisations should provide open access to information, resources, and equal opportunity for all employees. This is similar to the research findings regarding transparency and availability of information. Our interview data here concentrates more on the establishment of policies to regulate information and resource sharing. One of the participants, MOTOR3F, felt that the issue is not so much the absence of regulations and policies but their correct application, and mentioned that in Saudi society,

*“There is no consistent enforcement of laws and policies. An obvious example in our society is reckless driving and speeding on the roads*

— *where are the police? ...there is a saying that unattended money teaches you thievery*".

The significant viewpoint here is that if the leader or follower is honest and authentic, the existing work climate and organisational context should not be able to change this. In other words, authenticity should be an attribute of the person, independently of the organisation. However, we can ask, to what extent does organisational culture affect individuals' authenticity? To answer this question, two essential factors must be considered. The first is the perception of authenticity. If it is viewed as only a self and intrapersonal concept, as in western cultures, an individual's authenticity should not be dramatically affected by external forces, whether organisational or human. This view is supported in the literature; for example, Robinson et al. (2012) argued that authentic individuals in western cultures resist social values and external pressure because they view the self as independent and distinct from others. On the other hand, authenticity can be perceived differently, as this study found, where it is not only a self-concept but also a relational and interpersonal construct. As stated in Section 4.2, from the Islamic perspective authenticity is both a self and relational concept therefore, others, including people and contexts, can influence the practice of authenticity. With reference to the previous question, the impact of organisational culture on individuals' authenticity would be expected to be greater if the Islamic perspective is adopted, while less influence is expected if the western perception of authenticity is assumed. The second factor affecting views of organisational influence on authenticity is whether authenticity is perceived as a stable and steady attribute of individual personality or whether it is seen as changeable and situational based on an individual's state and circumstances. Despite the fact that much of the authentic leadership literature views authenticity as a constant trait, recent studies now tend to define it as a state-dependent phenomenon (Slabu et al., 2014). If authenticity is defined as a stable trait, it is less likely to be influenced by organisational culture than if it is defined as a context-dependent attribute. To conclude, it can be argued that authenticity is a universal phenomenon but one which is contingent upon cultural norms (Slabu et al., 2014)

#### **4.4.4 Theme Conclusion**

To conclude this theme of the impact of organisational culture on leaders' and followers' authenticity, two points can be asserted. The first is that although some studies, such as Avolio and Gardner (2005) and Gardner et al. (2005), mention the impact of organisational culture on authentic leadership, they fail to explain adequately how organisational culture moderates this authenticity. The findings of the current study show how two organisational factors, top management actions and organisational policies and regulations, moderate leader and follower authenticity. Therefore, the current findings contribute important information to a growing body of knowledge of how some aspects of organisational culture influence authenticity in leadership and followership. The second point is that attempts to measure the extent to which organisational culture impacts authenticity must ultimately depend on how authenticity is perceived and defined. Thus, from the Islamic and Saudi perception of authenticity as both a self and relational construct, organisational culture is found to have a greater influence, compared to when a western cultural perception of authenticity as a self and intrapersonal concept is used.

### **4.5 Authenticity in Followership**

#### **4.5.1 Theme Introduction**

One of the remarkable findings of this study is the relationship between authenticity in leadership and authenticity in followership. This theme focuses on how the authenticity of leaders influences that of followers.

The study participants, both leaders and followers, commented on the relationship between leader and follower authenticity. We found that for the most part, authenticity in followership is a positive consequence of authenticity in leadership, and that leaders who demonstrate authenticity inspire their followers to be authentic. For instance, PETROCHEMICAL4L pointed out there are clear associations between leaders' and followers' authenticity,

*“Of course, if credibility and clarity are strong in the leader, this will certainly be stimulated in the team, but if credibility is not clear or if*

*the team questions the credibility of their leader, this will affect their performance”.*

MOTOR1F described his experience as a follower and how his authenticity was influenced by his leader,

*“I believe there is a direct relationship. I remember my manager, who was French and a Christian, behaved with clarity, transparency and sincerity. We subconsciously absorbed these values and they influenced our actions and behaviour”.*

Another participant, FOOD8L, agreed that a follower’s honesty is deeply influenced by the leader’s behaviour, and he highlighted that leader inauthenticity also has an effect on followers and the organisation,

*“Certainly I believe that the leader directly affects his followers in terms of honesty, because the leader who goes against his beliefs and does not apply what he says to others — his promises, his directives — if they contradict his actions, then others will be convinced that he is weak; and this is a big problem. When the leader is honest, this is reflected in his followers’ credibility and clarity, and produces a positive atmosphere in the workplace”.*

PETROCHEMICAL4F emphasised that even if followers do not behave with authenticity, this can be changed for the better by working with an open and honest leader,

*“As a leader, if you are adopting certain values and are trying to actually grow them in followers, it's like planting the seed of the fruit... I expect that if the whole team were dishonest and in came a new honest leader, in a month or two to three months there would be signs that team was changing and becoming more like the leader. There is the saying that if you live with folk for forty days you will*

*become like them. I think that leaders send a subconscious message to employees in the way that they behave, and if the leader is sincere then he can alter the thinking of his followers”.*

FOOD7F mentioned an interesting point, which is that honesty and truthfulness cannot be acted, they have to be genuine, and so when the leader really is sincere then this will be reflected in his behaviours, which in turn have an effect on followers’ authenticity,

*“No one can act being honest. If the person in front of you is honest, believe me, even if he has barriers to being transparent, subconsciously after a period you will see the followers gradually taking on the leader’s right approach”.*

PETROCHEMICAL5F asserts that a true and genuine leader not only influences his followers at work but also affects everyone around him in life,

*“Of course, a truthful leader certainly influences others, not only in the area of work, but also in family and social life. An honest man with credibility and transparency will successfully influence everyone he comes into contact with”.*

TELECOMUNICATION10F stated that followers’ authenticity is influenced gradually over time by the leader’s authenticity,

*“In my opinion, followers will be influenced positively by the leader’s truthfulness and in time they will start to show the same attributes”.*

An interesting idea was mentioned by EDUCATION14F, who remarked that the leader’s authenticity is in some way contagious to the people around him,

*“The true leader become like a mirror, and because mirrors are often the purest thing, his values will naturally be transmitted to those around him and they become like him as they reflect his words and deeds”.*

People are naturally drawn to those who are honest and transparent, and they are influenced by them, as CONSTRUCTION16F commented,

*“The leader’s credibility and transparency affect his followers to a large degree, as people generally like those who are honest and frank and good. If things aren’t going well, the leader feels that he can ask for advice. He is honest with himself and seeks his own development, therefore, I would expect the staff to respond to his honesty”.*

Overall, the observations and opinions of the participants indicate that not only is authenticity in followership highly influenced by leader authenticity, but that followers’ authenticity is a consequence of true leadership. This significant finding has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of authenticity in both leadership and followership and the relationship between them in Saudi culture, and we have been able to draw conclusions from rich data, as the study sample comprised an equal number of leaders and followers. Interestingly, although the foregoing observations are from both leaders and followers, most of the comments above were given by followers. A possible explanation is that as followers they are sharing their experiences of how they are influenced by their leaders’ authenticity. In comparing our findings with those of other authentic leadership studies, several additional points can be made. The first is that although authentic followership is considered to be a significant part of authentic leadership theory, there has been relatively little research on this aspect (Leroy et al., 2012). The literature of authentic leadership concentrates mostly on leader authenticity, whereas less attention is given to followers’ authenticity (Leroy et al., 2012). The second point is that this study produced results which corroborate the findings of others, such as Leroy et al. (2012) and Gardner et al. (2005). Both the current study and Gardner et al. (2005) conclude that authenticity in followership occurs as result of authenticity in leadership. Gardner and colleagues argue in their model that authentic followership happens through positive modelling of authentic leadership. Similarly, one of the participants (FOOD9L) explained that when an true leader become a role model for his followers, they will be highly influenced by him. Positive modelling is also mentioned by

another participant (MOTOR1L), who pointed out that developing authenticity in followership takes time,

*"As you work with the leader you begin to trust him and his opinions. If he treats you with credibility and transparency, this has an impact on how you are with other people. You start adopting new behaviours at work, you learn to be more transparent and open, even if it's already your nature".*

Table 17 below illustrates how six pairs of leaders and followers from all the six sectors view the relationship between leader authenticity and follower authenticity. Each pair is from one of the different sectors used in the study.

Table 17 Authenticity in Followership Quotes

MOTOR3L	<i>If the leader arrives at work on time every day there is no doubt that this is reflected by all the people around him...Whatever values you demonstrate will be reflected by those who are under you.</i>	MOTOR3F	<i>The leader in one way or another will be reflected by his leadership qualities. His character will be reflected by the team that works with him, though, of course, it varies according to people.</i>
PETROCHEMICAL6L	<i>It is a very positive relationship - from my experience I will give you an example. I found that if the leader is not transparent and not very clear, people underneath him avoid being transparent and clear also. They see the leader's behaviours and deal with him in the same way. Maybe he is the kind who perhaps steals his followers' ideas, or takes the credit for his team's efforts. Thus a follower becomes compelled to be non-transparent and non-obvious. Followers don't want to make an effort with a leader like that.</i>	PETROCHEMICAL6F	<i>I think that leader honesty is carried across to his team and other people who work with him, especially if those people don't know him. I believe they will be influenced. The leader also has to have administrative and technical abilities and people should be able to see that the leader has confidence in himself.</i>

FOOD8L	<i>With the team that I worked with and the research I read, I realise that clarity generates trust, and trust is the most important thing in the relationship between the leader and the team members. I mean that if you're not clear, a team member may feel that you have lied and they won't trust you.</i>	FOOD8F	<i>I try to be clear with my colleagues. Any lack of clarity and lack of transparency of the leader is reflected in the staff and followers.</i>
TELECOMUNICATION12L	<i>Just as your fingers aren't all the same, so people aren't either, therefore your influence as a leader will vary depending on each person's degree of acceptance. You try to navigate the character of a person but there is a possibility he won't change.</i>	TELECOMUNICATION12F	<i>People are significantly influenced by high standards in their leaders, especially in terms of direct communication. Some leaders are more suited to being managers, not leaders, and they are used to working in an ivory tower. Their only way of communicating with others is through emails and the true character of the leader doesn't come across to the employees. But the leader who mixes with his followers and sits with them in the break and drinks coffee with them, if he's continuously dealing with them, his followers will notice his sincerity and honesty in tackling day to day issues, and this will influence them.</i>
EDEUCATION14L	<i>Followers will deal with their leader according to the personality that he has shown. If you show that you are a transparent person and are honest, they will be honest with you. If you show that you like courtesy and praise and all the things you want in a clear way they will deal with you in the same way.</i>	EDEUCATION14F	<i>Of course, the leader affects the honesty of his followers. If he is honest then the followers reflect it like a mirror.</i>
CONSTRUCTION17L	<i>The impact of the leader's honesty and transparency on the team is based on the organisational culture that the leader has created. Sometimes the leader is honest and transparent but he can't transfer that to his organisation and the</i>	CONSTRUCTION17F	<i>We cannot generalise that all employees adopt the leader's transparency, there will always be the ten or twenty percent of staff who don't change, but we speak for the majority who are happy to work in a</i>



	<i>team will be affected, depending on his ability to influence the organisation.</i>		<i>good atmosphere of clarity and are happy to work for an honest leader.</i>
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The opinions in Table 17 show how authenticity in leadership affects authenticity in followership. Participant PETROCHEMICAL6L and his follower PETROCHEMICAL6F believe that followers' authenticity is directly enhanced by the leader. Both agreed that leaders transfer their values to their followers and act upon them. Similarly, TELECOMUNICATION12F asserted that true and honest leaders have a high influence over their followers and that their authenticity is dependent on that of their leader. Interestingly, CONSTRUCTION17L pointed out that leader authenticity might not influence followers unless authenticity is already a part of the organisational culture, as sometimes the leader is authentic but unable to transmit this successfully to his organisation. TELECOMUNICATION12L and CONSTRUCTION17F highlighted a key idea which is that a leader's influence will vary depending on the receptivity of the followers. They pointed out that followers are all different and that their readiness to adopt authenticity is not the same from one follower to another. Thus, not all followers gain authenticity from their leaders. These two followers not only agreed that follower authenticity is variable but they felt that acceptance of the leader differs from one employee to another as their personalities are not the same. Three other participants similarly mentioned that employees are all different, for example, FOOD9L expressed his view that follower authenticity is instigated by the positive role modelling of the leader,

*"The team I worked with showed me that clarity breeds trust, and trust is the most important thing in a relationship between the leader and the members of the team. This is also what I've read in the research. When you are a role model, to be sure a lot of your behaviour is copied by the team, but in the end, there are different personalities, so some of them will accept that while others may resist change".*

In addition, MOTOR3F asserted that the leader's values and character have an impact on followers, and that they will act like him but to different degrees depending on their personalities,

*“Inevitably, people follow their king’s religion, as the saying goes, and the leader’s character will be reflected by those who are working under him. Of course, this thing varies depending on the people involved”.*

Furthermore, TELECOMUNICATION11F believed that how followers respond to their leader’s authenticity is always going to vary according to personality, and that some followers will never demonstrate authenticity,

*“Not all followers adopt the leader’s clarity and transparency, it depends on each person, for example, if a person who is habitually dishonest works with an honest leader, the leader may reach a stage where he realises that it is impossible to change this employee completely, but that he can reduce the dishonesty in him”.*

Generally, the above five participant views demonstrate a vital point, which is that people are all different, and each person stands for the values they believe in and act upon. To what extent then are followers influenced by their leader’s authenticity? The answer to this question is that the impact of leader authenticity on follower authenticity is dependent on two factors. The first is the follower’s personality, values, ethics and beliefs. The second is the leader and his ability to influence his followers, which involves the leader/follower relationship.

#### **4.5.2 Theme Conclusion**

To sum up, this study has found that authenticity in followership is highly influenced by leader authenticity. Additionally, follower authenticity is a direct result of authenticity in leadership. However, authentic leadership research has so far paid little attention to the importance of authentic followership, and mainly focuses on leader authenticity. Very few studies were found to deal specifically with follower authenticity (Leroy et al., 2012). Therefore, further research is required to investigate the relationship between authenticity in leadership and

followership. In addition, how leaders influence authenticity is also an important issue for future research.

## 4.6 The Source of Authenticity

### 4.6.1 Theme Introduction

One of the most interesting and unpredicted findings of this study relates to the source of authenticity. The Saudi participants gave their views on how authenticity is developed in people. Two sources were identified as key factors affecting the level of authenticity in people. The first is family and upbringing and the second is the desire to learn. Both of these sources are discussed next in connection with the literature on authenticity.

The study participants believed that authenticity is first instilled at a young age by the family's example. They felt that parents, family and upbringing play a vital role in how authenticity develops in the child. For example, TELECOMUNICATION12F asserted that,

*"In my view, I think that your habits depend on how you grow up. If someone does not understand from childhood the importance of honesty, then trying to acquire it later is more difficult".*

MOTOR3L highlighted that family upbringing implants one's values,

*"The acquisition of values actually begins at home when you start learning how to behave. I mean, your initial response to things shows the values that you absorbed in your upbringing".*

PETROCHEMICAL4F pointed out that individual honesty is highly influenced by the family upbringing,

*"One's whole upbringing from a young age instils honesty in a person".*

MOTOR1F stated that one of the reasons for lack of authenticity in an individual could be traced back to upbringing,

*“The individual grows up according to parental values, so the lack of honesty and transparency in an individual is likely to be due to poor behavioural examples given by the whole family. We can see this when we look at someone’s personality, even though they themselves are unaware of it”.*

MOTOR3F mentioned that one’s past family environment affects current behaviours,

*“People are influenced by their childhood environment. The way you behave now has its roots in how your family behaved around you when you were young.”.*

PETROCHEMICAL4L made the very important point that followers come from different backgrounds and so their authenticity depends on their history,

*“Members of this team come from different backgrounds, and were brought up in different environments. Everyone’s value systems are going to be different as a result, and so being honest and transparent depends on the person’s history”.*

EDUCATION13L indicated that even though people change as they grow up, they come back to the values that they were brought up with in their early years,

*“Individuals are brought up with certain values, but even though in adolescence, or post-adolescence, we might deviate from this and try other ways, we tend to return to our family’s values as we mature”.*

CONSTRUCTION16F acknowledged that in our culture we have to change the way we raise our children as we are currently not helping them to be honest and true to themselves,

*I think there is something not right. We say we want our leaders to be honest and have high values, but when we bring up our children we are not giving them the right tools and adequate guidance to reach these same goals and standards.*

CONSTRUCTION18F emphasised that parents always provide a role model for their children, and so whether they are honest or dishonest, their children will grow up to be the same,

*I think there are things that can be done when bringing up children. Young people see parents as role models to follow. If the father is not a good person, maybe he is dishonest and a bit untruthful, he will reflect this to his children. Then we reflect what we see in our parents”.*

Overall, the data shows that authenticity is highly influenced by family upbringing. This finding has implications regarding the concept of authenticity in general and authenticity in leadership. It is in agreement with an authentic leadership study by Gardner et al. (2005), who found that personal history has a significant role to play in the creation of individual authenticity. They claimed that the development of authentic leadership is dependent on the personal history of the leader and the key trigger events in his or her life. They define personal history as the influence of family, role models, early age challenges, education and work experiences. Thus, both Gardner et al. (2005) and the current study highlight the impact of family in determining authenticity in leaders. Further research is needed to determine the extent to which the personal history and family life of leaders affects their authenticity in a professional context.

Another aspect related to this is that perceptions of authenticity in leadership are culture-dependent. This is one of the key premises and findings of this study, in which we found that there are fundamental differences between western and Saudi/Islamic definitions of authenticity. The idea that authenticity is instilled at an early age by family goes hand in hand with the concept of authenticity being based on the cultural values of the parents. Research on culture suggests that the Arabic culture is vastly different from the western in most of the recognised cultural dimensions (Javidan et al., 2006; Schwartz 1992; Trompenaars and

Hampden-Turner 1997; Hofstede, 1980). For example, according to Slabu et al. (2014), individuals in western societies have a relatively independent view of the self, whereas people from collectivist cultures have more of an interdependent view of the self (Triandis, 1995). Consequently, we would expect that the definition of authenticity differs between cultures.

The research participants not only believed family upbringing to be a key source of authenticity but they also identified an interesting second source, which is the desire for learning. Several participants pointed out that the desire to learn and develop oneself has a strong influence on authenticity. For example, MOTOR1F asserted that the impetus to develop and educate oneself is fundamental to the growth of authenticity,

*“I think one of the influential factors on leader honesty and truthfulness is education, and the desire to learn. The difficulties you go through to find the truth, by travelling, reading, listening to idealists and role models, observing yourself, and reviewing and improving yourself...I expect all of this would benefit a leader. Also the desire to develop by accepting criticism and evaluating one’s own behaviour. This would help to make an ideal leader distinct from many of the others”.*

PETROCHEMICAL5L shared his experience of how the desire for development and excellence in his company affected its authenticity,

*“The desire for excellence produces honesty and truthfulness. How do we attain this? We have to evaluate our performance by comparing with others, and based on that we develop how we work. I mean in our company we always look to other companies to establish our standards and measure our performances. I’m constantly trying to develop my strengths and maintain them”.*

TELECOMUNICATION10L emphasised a key idea, which is that anyone can be effective and authentic if they have the intention and desire for development,

*“The first thing is to question yourself and be honest right from the start. I mean, the reality is that all people can be innovative and make changes if they really want to. Anyone who has the intention to develop themselves can change”.*

Further to this, TELECOMUNICACION12F highlighted that the desire to learn new methods of leadership and understanding the positive impact of transparency both influence authenticity,

*“One of the motives for being transparent as a leader is learning modern concepts of leadership and learning from the experience of exemplary leaders who are honest and clear with their followers”.*

Similarly, other participants, such as EDUCATION14L and CONSTRUCTION17F, attributed the lack of authenticity to the absence of awareness and experience of the positive impact of authenticity on work,

*“The lack of credibility can arise because, culturally, people are not used to transparency, and some people prejudge the idea of it without experiencing it” (EDUCATION14L).*

*“I think the reason for dishonesty is the leader’s lack of awareness that he needs to know how things are done, he needs to know how to ask his followers with respect, and be honest about his knowledge. He knows he has to be open and transparent to work well, but unfortunately, I have seen people who have twenty, twenty-five years of experience in management, coming and talking to us very rudely” (CONSTRUCTION17F).*

Thus, we can see from the data that there is a strong link between the desire for learning and the development of authenticity. The literature of authenticity is silent on this point, although there are concepts in current authenticity research which can be linked indirectly with this finding. The desire for learning can be associated with another key component of

authenticity, which is self-awareness. According to Kernis and Goldman (2006), awareness implies developing knowledge of oneself, including all of one's emotions, motives, desires and values. Self-awareness has also been described as knowing one's desires, values and underlying motivations (George, 2003). Other scholars clarify that self-awareness is about leaders knowing what is important for them (May et al., 2003), whether it is values, emotions, goals or motives (Gardner et al., 2005). Therefore, the desire for learning is part of the leader's self-awareness as leaders know this learning is important for their development. Self-awareness also develops the knowledge of how to enhance one's authenticity.

Kernis and Goldman (2006) suggest that self-awareness is also about accepting and trusting oneself, thus generating the confidence in one's ability to deal with various situations in life. This idea seems to be consistent with the views of PETROCHEMICAL4F, as Kernis and Goldman (2006) and PETROCHEMICAL4F link self-confidence with authenticity:

*"In our culture, there are factors which affect our values such as media and education. In my view self-esteem is related to honesty and transparency, as I find that an educated person is more open and honest about themselves than one who is uneducated."*

The idea that people with high self-esteem tend to have higher levels of authenticity is an interesting one. Thus, it may be that those with more education have higher self-esteem and consequently increased authenticity when compared to less educated people. Participant PETROCHEMICAL4F expressed it thus:

*"A person who is well-educated may have more awareness of ethics. This is not a condition of greater awareness, but there is a high possibility that this person will be more aware of his behaviour than one who is less educated and not as aware. Lack of education and self-awareness may lead to the individual covering up weaknesses in the workplace instead of being honest about them".*



Furthermore, other participants emphasised the relationship between authenticity and qualifications or competency. TELECOMUNICACION11F asserted that managers are sometimes promoted to leadership positions without having the competency and capabilities the role demands,

*“Sometimes managers are given roles which require them to be more open and transparent in their communication, but in reality they haven’t got the self-awareness or trust to be able to behave like this”.*

The same idea of lower authenticity in less qualified individuals is also mentioned by FOOD8L, who commented that this is often apparent in family companies where the owner promotes his son to a leadership position, when the son clearly lacks the necessary qualities and competencies to cope with the role successfully,

*In my view, one of the motives affecting credibility often occurs in the family business, when a family member who is not qualified is given a leadership job. If the team rejects the views and opinions of this person it is usually because they are incompetent. If a father wants his son to manage the company, this is fine if he has the tools, but if not, there are going to be big problems for the family business. This is a real issue in our culture”.*

As FOOD8L asserted, appointing an underqualified and inauthentic person to a leadership position not only affects the credibility of the company but also has an effect on the trust of the followers. In contrast, participant MOTOR2F expressed the belief that authenticity is a personal trait that is unrelated to either educational level or competency,

*“From my experience, I knew two leaders who were not highly educated and who only had secondary school education. One of them was strict and was following his instincts about leadership - he was recognised for his credibility although he hadn’t done any formal*

*self-development. I've also known leaders who were well educated and had master's degrees but they were not credible and honest. So, now I would say that honesty and credibility are dependent on personality".*

#### **4.6.2 Theme Conclusion**

To sum up, this study identified two key factors which influence levels of authenticity: family upbringing and individual desire for learning. Additionally, several other ideas emerged in the research data on the relationship between self-esteem and authenticity, and the relationship between competency, education and authenticity. These findings highlight important topics for future research.

To conclude, we can quote PETROCHEMICAL5L, who made a crucial point that authenticity exists in all people in different amounts and ways,

*"Everyone is honest and aware to some degree, but some people demonstrate more openness, transparency and honesty than others".*

This idea that authenticity exists in all people but in different levels is consistent with Gardener et al. (2011), who claimed that complete authenticity is a quality unlikely to be attained fully by any individual, and so it is more realistic to describe an individual as being more, or less, authentic.

### **4.7 The Impact of Authenticity in Leadership**

#### **4.7.1 Theme Introduction**

The participants of this study discussed their perceptions of the impact and the outcomes of authenticity in leadership. The perceived impact of authenticity in leadership can be categorised into three levels; the impact on leaders' level, followers' level and organisational level and in each there are outcomes and effects as Figure 13 shows. Each level is presented

as a subtheme and includes the outcomes, as supported by the research participants' comments and discussed with reference to the literature.

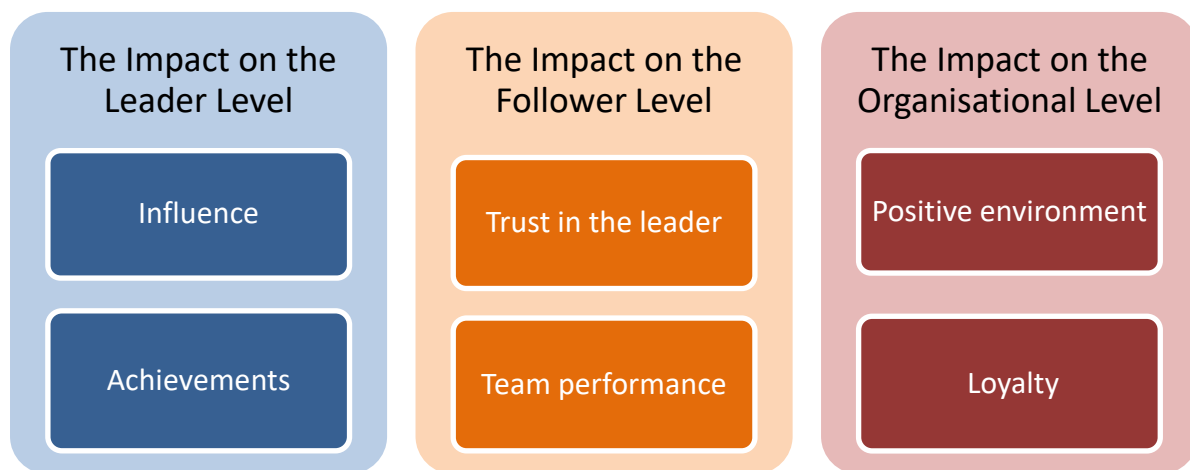


Figure 13: The Impacts of Authenticity in Leadership on Different Levels

#### 4.7.2 *Leader Level*

The participants of this study believe that there are individual benefits to be obtained by the leader as result of his authenticity. Firstly, authenticity in leadership make the leader more comfortable internally, as FOOD7F pointed out:

*“A leader who is honest with his team and other people will be psychologically at ease”.*

Additionally, a leader stands to gain two other benefits as a result of his authenticity: greater influence and higher achievements. These two effects of authenticity in leadership are discussed next.

##### 4.7.2.1 *Influence*

The second impact of authenticity in leadership at the leader level is influence. The research participants believed that the leader increases his influence as a consequence of his authenticity. For instance, MOTOR1L stated clearly that,

*“A leader who is honest with himself and with others increases his influence and is more successful; he is not afraid of anything as he has nothing to lie about and hide”.*

EDUCATION13L explained why followers are influenced more by leader authenticity,

*“When the leaders have principles and values and are explicit, followers are influenced positively and feel secure, as they work in a company that is distinguished by its honest leadership”.*

FOOD8L asserted that being a good role model is a fundamental way for a leader to inspire followers,

*“A leader is honest by being an example, he does everything well and powerfully to a high standard, and thus others follow him. If he asks his followers to do things he isn’t doing himself, he won’t find people to support and follow him”.*

Moreover, CONSTRUCTION16L made the interesting point that authenticity in leadership not only makes the leader more influential but also that followers will accept the leader’s occasional mistakes and be loyal to him,

*“When the leadership style based on transparency people, accept the leader’s mistakes. However, when the leader is a dictator, his followers will say this is your mistake and you are accountable for that... a transparent leader gains his followers’ loyalty and support even in difficult cases, because he will allow them to correct him and the decision-making is shared between them”.*

EDUCATION15F highlighted an important idea that more authenticity equals more influence,

*“The more leaders are open and act with patience, giving followers opportunities, the more they will be influenced by the leader. Honestly, this is experienced everywhere”.*

Thus, we can see that the participants link other things with influence such as success, follower support, loyalty, and acceptance of the leader’s mistakes. The foregoing comments give five reasons why authenticity gives a leader more influence: honesty with himself and with others, having nothing to hide, having principles and values, being an example, and giving opportunities to employees. By looking deeply into these ideas we can understand how authenticity in leadership makes leaders more influential. For example, followers mentioned that the leader should be honest with himself and others; this idea represents the core perception of authenticity in leadership from the Saudi and Islamic perspective which is discussed in Section 4.2. Moreover, they said that a leader should have principles and values and that by behaving ethically, they will influence and inspire their followers. The absence of ethics in other leadership ideas is the main reason for the emergence of authentic leadership. In addition, they stated that followers are more influenced by those leaders who set a good example and who provide a role model for honest and admirable behaviour. This idea corroborates the ideas of Gardner et al. (2005), who suggested that authentic leaders influence the development of followers through the modelling of positive values. It can be seen that these five reasons are similar to the eight perceptions of authenticity in leadership identified by this study and discussed in Section 4.3.

Another fundamental point regarding influence as an outcome of authenticity in leadership is that influence is believed to be the core purpose of leadership. Various scholars define leadership as the ability to influence and inspire people to achieve goals (Northouse, 2012; Saunders and Iszatt-White, 2014; Kaye, 2006). Accordingly, more influence leads to more achievements, as discussed in the next section.

#### **4.7.2.2 Achievements**

Influence is the first outcomes of authenticity in leadership at the leader level. The second positive consequence is higher achievement. EDUCATION15L reported that he was able to achieve his goals more quickly as a result of being authentic with his followers,

*“In fact, I found from experience that being honest and transparent with colleagues led to the quicker achievement of our goals”.*

Further to this, CONSTRUCTION16F remarked that true leadership leads to achievements for both the leader and his team,

*“True and genuine leaders think at a higher level than others, and when they work they put their organisations first, and so they attain their goals. At the same time, they care about people around them and act for the good of society, not just the company. Consequently, they are successful and achieve much more”.*

CONSTRUCTION18L also cited his experience and mentioned that the credit for his achievements was due to his authenticity in leadership,

*“Thankfully because I dealt with them honestly and transparently I achieved more. I thank god my relationships are open and excellent with all the companies I deal with around the world, in China, Switzerland and Dubai”.*

On the other hand, some of the participants focus on the negative impacts of inauthenticity on achievement, such as TELECOMUNICATION12F, who said,

*“Some leaders are not true to their followers, they just make empty promises to persuade and motivate them to perform more and work harder. These leaders only achieve in the short term however, as they lose their credibility and their followers lose performance continuity”.*

These comments demonstrate that a positive consequence of authenticity for the leaders themselves is faster and higher achievement.

CONSTRUCTION18F expected that more would be achieved when the leader is honest with himself and his followers,

*“I think that if the leader is honest with himself and with his team, he should achieve over eighty percent of his goals. By being really honest with yourself and with your team, you can expect a successful life”.*

The finding indicates that the research participants believe authenticity in leadership allows leaders to achieve more, since it results in higher follower performance and productivity. A critical question here is whether leader achievements are measured in terms of accomplishing organisational goals or in terms of followers' performance. The research participants explained what they meant by leader achievement, such as accomplishing goals, being successful, and motivating followers to perform more. In the interviews, the accomplishment and achievement of goals was discussed more than the other consequences of authenticity in leadership. However, this result has not previously been described in the authentic leadership literature.

To conclude, two points can be made about the outcomes of authenticity at the leader level. The first is that authentic leadership is normally perceived as a self- and intrapersonal construct. So far, however, there has been little discussion in the literature about the impact of authentic leadership at the leader level. The only impact that is noted is leader and follower well-being and leadership commitment, as Walumbwa et al. (2008) reported. Most of the current literature restricts discussion of authenticity to its impact at the follower and organisational level. Thus, the current findings add to a growing body of literature on how authenticity in leadership benefits the leaders. The second comment is that there is a logical sequence and relationship between the two outcomes of, influence and achievements. When followers are influenced by the leader and as a result, the team and the leader will enjoy a more productive relationship that leads to more achievements. The leader/follower relationship and its impact on followers will be discussed in the next section.

### **4.7.3 Follower Level**

We now turn to how authenticity in leadership affects the followers. We have established that, from the perspective of the study participants, authenticity in leadership positively encourages authenticity in followership, as discussed in Section 4.2.5. Two other positive impacts are identified here, which are followers' trust in the leader and follower performance. These two outcomes at the follower level are discussed next.

#### **4.7.3.1 Trust in the Leader**

The study has found that one of the positive impacts of authenticity in leadership at the follower level is trust in the leader. The research participants assert that followers trust a leader who is authentic. A follower participant MOTOR1F gave his perspective,

*“Exactly, when you are honest and transparent, I trust you, and then I follow you and believe in you directly. I acknowledge you as a leader and trust that you will help me to complete my career journey and get me to the right place”.*

This shows that followers want to advance their career life with the help of a trustworthy leader. FOOD8L expressed the same idea in different words,

*“In my view, every person you work with, you know if he is honest and transparent so, you deal with him as transparently and honestly. As long as I trust this man I consider him transparent and can believe what he says”,*

Moreover, FOOD9L argued that one of the conditions for leadership to succeed is obtaining followers' trust,

*“In my opinion, he is supposed to be honest with himself and with others, as a leader builds trust between the members and the leader,*



*which is one of the first important things that helps the team to succeed”.*

MOTOR3F pointed out the impact of the loss of trust between the followers and the leader,

*“I know many cases where the leaders weren’t transparent and didn’t trust their followers. This doesn’t create a good impression in the followers and so leaders can’t then expect their employees to make great sacrifices for them at work”.*

CONSTRUCTION16F gave clear advice as to how leaders gain their followers’ trust, by being honest with themselves and with the team,

*“The fact that the leader is honest with himself and with his team means that they will develop confidence in him and co-operate with him.*

Thus, trust and confidence in the leader is one of the key impacts of authenticity in leadership at the followers’ level. This finding is in agreement with a number of studies that found a positive relationship between leader authenticity and follower trust. Wong and Cummings (2009), for example, found that authentic leadership creates conditions of higher trust in leaders.

Gardner et al. (2011) reviewed seven studies in which follower trust was found to be an outcome of authentic leadership (Avolio, Gardner 2005; Chan et al., 2005; Douglas et al., 2005; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans et al., 2005; Gardner et al., 2009; Hannah et al., 2005; Hunt et al., 2008). Additionally, trust is one of the followers’ outcomes in Gardner’s model (Gardner et al., 2005). Gardner’s group asked why followers trust authentic leaders, and discovered that those leaders who clearly demonstrate truthful and moral behavi

our are much more likely to inspire a higher level of trust in their followers. The participants in the current study talk about the causes of trust, and it is evident that honesty and transparency are the most frequently cited reasons.

Another point which is cited by many of the participants is honesty with oneself and others. This represents the Saudi perception of authenticity as discussed in Section 4.2. From a western cultural perspective, followers are found to trust leaders who show self-honesty, while from this study's Saudi/Islamic perspective, followers trust leaders who demonstrate openness and honesty with their followers as well as with themselves. The vital question here is how a follower can trust a leader whose behaviour is unethical because it is dishonest and corrupt (Greenfield and Zander, 2011). Gardner et al. (2005) highlight this issue and state that followers' readiness to trust the leader without questioning can be risky if the leader is inauthentic and intends to behave unethically. This issue can be approached using the Islamic perception of authenticity, which is a self- as well as a relational construct. By considering both the self and others, understanding and practising authenticity may minimise the unethical conduct of leaders. This assumption is built on the Islamic perception of the self in authenticity, which includes truthful intention (*naiah*) and accountability as well as the relational dimension of authenticity. Therefore, taking into account the intention and accountability and relational aspect can produce an ethical leader who is trusted by followers.

### 4.7.3.2 Followers' Performance

The second consequence of authenticity in leadership at the follower level is followers' performance. This outcome is the most frequently cited by the study participants at all three outcome levels. The findings of this study indicate that leader authenticity leads to an increase in followers' performance. As an example, a follower participant MOTOR1F shared his experience of how leader authenticity influenced his performance,

*"His honest, clarity and transparency had an effect on me and kept my achievements at the same high level, and possibly made them even better. I was more than happy to work overtime without rewards".*

Participant PETROCHEMICAL5F had heard some of his colleagues talk about an open and transparent leader who helped his team's performance,

*“Some of my colleagues worked with a leader who had these aspects of credibility and transparency, clarity, etc. and this had a great impact on his team’s achievements because he was sincere in his words”.*

C7 explained why authenticity influences followers’ performance,

*“If someone has an honest leader, believe me, this person will be similar to his leader and the outcomes in the team will be very high when they are transparent and clear with each other. Also, when everyone explains their strengths and weaknesses to each other, their productivity will be very high”.*

FOOD9L expressed his feelings toward inauthenticity in a leader,

*“Of course, as soon as I felt this leader was not honest with me I wanted to avoid dealing with him because my performance was being affected”.*

Participant TELECOMUNICATION10F also mentioned how inauthenticity in leadership impacts follower performance,

*“If employees discover their leader is not honest with them, this affects teamwork and productivity as well as their relationship with the leader himself”*

MOTOR2L believed that leader authenticity helps followers to be more productive,

*“If I am honest and credible, it’s normal to have good relationship with my followers and this clarity enhances working productivity for the whole organisation and we can do what is required of us to the fullest”.*

Both the leader and follower from sector B and organisation 4 believe that true leadership increases followers' performance and productivity.

*"In my view, if the leader is credible and honest, this is clear and strong and of course this will motivate the team. However, if the leader's honesty is unclear or the team questions his credibility, this will affect their performance" (PETROCHEMICAL4L).*

*"I think an honest leader builds good teamwork. Productivity increases, and I am not worried that the leader is trying to hurt me at all" (PETROCHEMICAL4F).*

EDUCATION13F pointed out that if a leader shows contradiction between what he says and what he does, then this inauthentic action will directly affect his followers' performance,

*"If the leader asks those under him to do things which he doesn't do himself, this automatically becomes a problem and results in poor performance, so we need to have a leader who has high credibility".*

The results of this study suggest that authenticity in leadership not only enhances followers' performance but also their productivity. These results corroborate the findings of a great deal of previous research in authentic leadership, which assert that improved follower performance is an outcome of authenticity in leadership. According to Anderson et al. (2016), authentic leadership has been found to be positively related with follower performance in studies such as Wang et al. (2014), Clapp-Smith et al. (2009) Walumbwa et al. (2010) and Gardener et al. (2005). For example, Walumbwa et al. (2010) have found that authentic leadership behaviours are positively associated to supervisor-rated job performance. Additionally, Clapp-Smith et al. (2009) found that authentic leadership correlates to trust and performance. They observed that leaders' authenticity encourages followers to trust them, and this trust has been found to be a mediator of better performance. Although trust in the leader is one of the effects of authenticity in leadership on the followers, as discussed in

Section 4.5.3, the research participants did not include in their discussion the direct relationship between trust and followers' performance.

#### **4.7.4 Organisational Level**

Authenticity in leadership not only has an effect on leaders and followers but it also influences the organisation as a whole. In analysing data from the study participants, two main effects emerged, positive environment and loyalty, which are discussed below.

##### **4.7.4.1 Positive Environment**

One of the benefits of leadership authenticity within organisations is the creation of a positive workplace for employees. The study participants defined a positive work environment as one that is comfortable, harmonious, fair, and in which employees demonstrate a willingness to perform. A follower interviewee from sector C observed,

*“In my view when the leader is credible, transparent and clear, and when these qualities are reflected in the team as well, it builds a positive working atmosphere”.*

Participant TELECOMUNICACION12F talked about unauthentic behaviour in his company and concluded that authenticity in leadership has a positive impact on both followers and the organisation,

*“Transparency and clarity from the leader have a positive effect on the team and the workplace, and after four years all the team have been promoted... our department was the most successful. In other departments leaders were promising their followers promotion without ever carrying it out. Thankfully our leader was much more clear and frank with us”.*

Genuine and honest leadership creates a harmonious work environment in which employees are motivated to learn. Participant EDUCATION14L expressed this by saying,

*“Of course, I see being true to the self as important in leadership. I think it is simpler when we say true leadership always creates a reassuring, educational environment and a harmonious workplace”.*

MOTOR3F, on the other hand, highlighted the negative impact of inauthentic and unethical leadership,

*“If the leader is of a certain character and his leadership style is not compatible with his personality, neither he nor the team are comfortable. Also, you find that the work isn’t done properly and everyone feels stressed and pressured”.*

The findings of this study indicate the positive impact of leadership openness and honesty on the organisational workplace environment. The organisational context not only influences the practice of authenticity in leadership, as mentioned in Section 4.4, but it is also affected by it. In the previous comments, the participants explained what they meant by a positive environment, such as feeling at ease, comfortable, and in harmony with other colleagues at work. These situational conditions can also lead to a positive emotional attachment of employees to their organisation. These unanticipated outcomes relate to the concept of organisational commitment, which is not mentioned in this study’s literature.

Organisational commitment can be defined as an employee’s psychological attachment to the organisation (Faisal and Al-Esmael, 2014). Organisational commitment is a combination of three distinct aspects: employee acceptance and belief in the organisation’s goals and values; employee willingness to work hard for the organisation, and employee desire to be retained by the organisation. (Grusky, 1966). According to Albdour and Altarawneh (2014), individuals who experience high organisational commitment are expected to exhibit much more positive workplace behaviour. A recent study by Gatling et al. (2016) explores the impact of authentic leadership on organisational commitment. Gatling and his colleagues found that authentic leadership is an important driver of employee organisational commitment. However, the Gatling study defines authentic leadership according to the western cultural perspective of authenticity. It would be difficult to claim that the current study found a relationship between

authenticity in leadership in the Saudi context and organisational commitment. However, based on our analysis of the data provided by the study participants, there is what appear to be some association between authenticity in leadership and organisational commitment. Our data included references to related aspects, such as followers' emotional attachment to the organisation leading to feelings of being comfortable and willing to perform. Accordingly, more research on this topic needs to be undertaken before we can clarify the association between the Saudi perception of authenticity in leadership and organisational commitment.

#### 4.7.4.2 Organisational Loyalty

The second impact of authenticity in leadership on the organisational level is followers' loyalty to their organisation. Organisational loyalty could, in fact, be categorised as one of the signs of a positive work environment, as discussed in the previous subtheme; however, it was discussed by the participants as distinct from a positive environment. Data from five out of the six sectors identified organisational loyalty as a separate outcome of authenticity in leadership. For instance, participant MOTOR3F mentioned several benefits that result from being able to trust a true leader, and cited loyalty to the organisation as one of them,

*"Because employees trust their leader, the quality of their work increases. Also, their sincerity and dedication to work improves, so they don't want to leave the organisation out of feelings of loyalty. I know some people in this organisation who have received offers from other companies with a higher salary but they have declined these offers because they are already very happy and satisfied in their organisation".*

TELECOMUNICATION12L told a story about his team and how they became loyal to his organisation,

*"One of the results of transparency in the team was that it started to function like one heart... also, I worked on the incentives for the team, and they developed and improved a lot. I offered them one to one mentoring, and they were keen to put in a lot of effort and were*

*happy to work for long hours. Some of them were even willing to work at the weekend, even until midnight, and they were very loyal to the company and the department”.*

EDUCATION13L asserted that loyalty and commitment is an outcome of the leader’s honesty with himself and others,

*“One of the most important qualities which a leader should possess is honesty with himself and with others, because this trait is based on trust. Trust builds up employees’ loyalty and dedication, because when they trust in a leader, it will be related to the organisation to which he belongs”.*

Interestingly, the previous comments express the view that loyalty is a result of authenticity in leadership, whereas PETROCHEMICAL5L believed that the opposite holds true, that is, inauthenticity is caused by lack of loyalty to the organisation,

*“In my opinion, one of the reasons for lack of honesty and transparency is the lack loyalty to the organisation. I mean if an employee is loyal to the organisation he will be dedicated to it and want it to succeed, but if his loyalty is weak, he doesn't care about whether he is honest and open or not”.*

Loyalty is perceived by other research participants as a positive consequence of leadership authenticity. Although loyalty can be seen as sign of positive environment, and is included in this outcome as above, it was also discussed as a separate issue by participants from five out of the six sectors. They expressed the opinion that loyalty is a direct result of authenticity in leadership at the organisational level. The previous comments include statements and phrases that imply loyalty, such as sincerity, dedication to work, wanting to stay in the organisation, being very happy and contented within the organisation, and willingness to work long hours for no extra pay. It was indicated that some employees were even happy to work late at weekends in order to contribute to the success of the organisation. These



statements relate to organisational citizenship behaviours (OCB), which are not stated with in the literature reviewed by this study. OCB has been defined as employee behaviours that are voluntary and which lie outside of their specified contractual obligations (Valsania, 2012). Additionally, OCB is about work done outside of the job description and behaviours that the employee will not be directly rewarded for (Lee, 2012). In their discussion, the research participants revealed that their perceptions of loyalty included behaviours of the OCB type as outcomes of authenticity in leadership. From the Saudi/Islamic perspective, the data suggests that there a perceived relationship between authenticity in leadership and OCB. Further studies which take these variables into account would provide useful information on this issue. OCB has been studied in conjunction with the western perception of authentic leadership, and according to Banks et al. (2016), authentic leadership is positively related to OCB. They argued that authentic leaders who are more ethical and who make responsible decisions are viewed by their followers more as caring, and that this enhances the positive OCBs of followers (Brown & Treviño, 2006).

#### **4.7.5      *Theme Conclusion***

To summarise, this study identified eight positive consequences of authenticity in leadership. At the leader level, these are influence, and achievement. At the follower level, they are trust in the leader and follower performance. Two impacts were recognised at the organisational level, which are positive environment and organisational loyalty. In conclusion, two essential points that should be highlighted here. The first is that this study found that a substantial impact of leadership authenticity at the follower level is an increase in follower authenticity. As this impact relates directly to the research question it is discussed more deeply as a separate theme in Section 4.4. The second is that all of the impacts stated in this theme are representative only of the study participants' perceptions of the outcomes of authenticity in leadership. Therefore, it is suggested that future research is needed to quantitatively measure these impacts according to the Saudi perception of authenticity in leadership.

### **4.8      Conclusion**

This chapter presents the core findings of this study along with a discussion of these results with reference to the extant literature on authentic leadership. Six distinct themes have

emerged as result of the analysis of 36 interviews with leaders and followers from 18 organisations in six different industries within the Saudi private sector. These themes are, the influence of national culture on authenticity in leadership, the perceptions of authenticity in leadership, the influence of organisational culture on authenticity in leadership, authenticity in followership, the sources of authenticity, and the impact of authenticity in leadership. The study accomplished the following. Firstly, the Islamic and Saudi perception of authenticity in leadership was identified. Secondly, eight distinct perceptions of authenticity in leadership were distinguished. Thirdly, the challenges and obstacles of applying authenticity in leadership in Saudi culture were explored. Fourthly, the influence of organisational culture on authenticity in leadership was determined; fifthly, the relationship between authenticity in followership and leadership were explored, and finally, the potential impact of authentic leadership in Saudi Arabia was considered at leader, follower and organisational levels.

The findings of this study reveal that the perception of leader authenticity in the Saudi context is different to the western cultural viewpoint, on which the current theory of authentic leadership is based. This research suggests that future studies of authenticity in leadership in non-western cultures would include different dimensions, as Figure 14 shows.



Figure 14: Dimensions of Authenticity in Leadership

Figure 14 illustrates the different aspects of authenticity in leadership in non-western cultures as identified by this research. These dimensions include how national culture shapes the perception of authenticity and the cultural aspects that enhance or challenge the practices of authenticity in leadership. Another significant dimension is the influence of organisational culture. Both national and organisational culture may influence the perception and practice of authenticity. One of the key aspects that should be explored is the perceptions and understanding of authenticity of leadership.. Additionally, investigating authenticity in followership and its relationship with leadership is a crucial dimension for exploration. Furthermore, the sources and development of authenticity are another angle to be studied. The final dimension is studying the impact and outcome of authenticity in leadership and followership. Three different levels of impact can be examined, the leader level, follower level and organisational level. By considering all the previous dimensions, a comprehensive study of authenticity in leadership is expected to yield productive findings.



## Chapter 5: Conclusion

### 5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the main conclusions of this study. The chapter begins with a review of the research aims and objectives and how this study answers the questions. Following this discussion is a description of how the research contributes to the current body of knowledge in terms of theoretical, methodological, contextual, and practical contributions. We then explain some of the study's limitations and give suggestions for future research.

#### 5.1.1 *Revisiting The Research Aim, Objectives and Questions*

This section explains how the study answers the research questions. The main research question was *how do Saudi leaders and followers perceive authenticity in leadership?* Thus, this study set out to determine the Saudi perspective of authenticity in leadership, and the research objectives are identified as follows:

- to understand the concept of authenticity in leadership from the Saudi cultural perspective,
- to investigate specifically the influence of Saudi national culture on authenticity in leadership behaviours,
- to explore the relationship between authenticity in leadership and followership in Saudi culture and
- to conceptualise a model of authenticity in leadership based on the findings from Saudi culture.

The following Table 18 lists the research objectives and related research questions, as well as showing which themes answer the research question directly.

Table 18: Research Objectives, Questions and Related Research Finding Themes

## List of References

Research Objectives	Related Research Question	Related Research Finding Theme
<b>RO1:</b> To understand the concept of authenticity in leadership from the Saudi cultural perspective.	<b>RQ1:</b> How do Saudi leaders and followers define authenticity in leadership?	<b>Theme 1:</b> The influence of Saudi national culture on authenticity in leadership <b>Theme 2:</b> The perceptions of authenticity in leadership
	<b>RQ2:</b> What are the leadership behaviours associated with authenticity as perceived by Saudi leaders and followers?	
<b>RO2:</b> To investigate specifically the influence of Saudi national culture on authenticity in leadership behaviours.	<b>RQ3:</b> What is the relationship between the cultural dimensions of Saudi Arabia and authenticity in leadership?	<b>Theme 1:</b> The influence of Saudi national culture on authenticity in leadership <b>Theme 2:</b> The perceptions of authenticity in leadership
<b>RO3:</b> To explore the relationship between authenticity in leadership and authenticity in followership within Saudi culture.	<b>RQ4:</b> To what extent do Saudi leaders influence their followers' authenticity?	<b>Theme2:</b> The perceptions of authenticity in leadership <b>Theme 4:</b> Authenticity in followership
<b>RO4:</b> To conceptualise a model of authenticity in leadership based on the findings from Saudi culture.	All the previous questions RQ1, RQ2, RQ3, RQ4	<b>Theme 1:</b> The influence of Saudi national culture on authenticity in leadership <b>Theme 2:</b> The perceptions of authenticity in leadership <b>Theme3:</b> The influence of organisational culture on authenticity in leadership <b>Theme 4:</b> Authenticity in followership <b>Theme 5:</b> The source of authenticity <b>Theme 6:</b> The impact of authenticity in leadership

To address the above research questions, social constructivism was chosen as the research paradigm of the study, as discussed in Chapter 3, since it helped the researcher to explore the phenomenon of authenticity in leadership and to answer the research questions from the perspective of Saudi leaders and followers. The following are the research questions and an explanation of how this study answered each question.

### 5.1.2 RQ 1.

How do Saudi leaders and followers understand authenticity in leadership?

This has been answered mainly through two themes: the influence of national culture on authenticity in leadership and the perceptions of authenticity in leadership. The most obvious finding to emerge from these two themes is that authenticity in leadership is understood by Saudi leaders and followers as being true and honest with oneself and others. Thus, it is perceived both as a self and relational construct at the same time, which means it is intrapersonal and interpersonal. This significant finding emerged not only from the direct statements of the research participants as discussed in Section 4.2, but also from the eight distinct perceptions of authenticity in leadership identified by this study (see Section 4.3) and which are represented by four self-perceptions and four relational perceptions. From these eight perceptions, this study has defined authenticity in leadership from the Saudi perspective as follows.

*“Authenticity in leadership is a self and relational construct that embraces a pattern of leader behaviours consisting of self-awareness and being an exemplary leader who acts in the interests of his organisation and shows a humble attitude as well as being transparent and just with followers, taking care of their development and building a positive relationship with them”*

This finding suggests that in general, authenticity in leadership from the Saudi perspective is unlike the western view, which mainly encompasses being true only to the self, as described in the majority of authentic leadership literature. According to Grégoire et al. (2014), authenticity is viewed from one perspective as being true to the self and aligning individual actions with personal values. From this perspective the central focus is the self, which is seen as a psychological entity and is distinct from concepts of the mind and soul. Additionally, most of the available studies have addressed and defined authenticity from the intrapersonal perspective and self-perspective (Kokkoris and Kühnen, 2014). This may be because most of these studies were conducted in the west, where the self is viewed from an individualist point of view, while collectivist cultures view the individual self-concept as being embedded in

interpersonal relationships (Slabu et al., 2014). This study discovered that understanding authenticity in leadership as self and relational concept is also derived from the Islamic culture. The findings of this study identified that, in general, Islamic culture can be said to promote and encourage authenticity. Nonetheless, this research has shown that there is evidence of a “cultural disconnect” and a cognitive dissonance between Islamic values and people’s daily actions, which affect the concept of authenticity in the Saudi context. In addition, the results of this investigation indicate that there exist three cultural obstacles to authenticity in Saudi culture: *wasta*, *almujamalah* and the hierarchical society.

### **5.1.3 RQ 2**

What are the leadership behaviours that are associated with the Saudi Arabian perception of authenticity?

As Table 18 shows, this question has been answered directly by the second theme, which is the behaviours and practices of authenticity in leadership (see Section 4.3). The research found eight distinct behaviours that represent the Saudi perspective of authenticity in leadership. Four of these behaviours were categorised as self-behaviours, which refers to the leader behaving and acting in relation to his own authenticity. These behaviours are self-awareness, leading by example, leader interests matching organisational interests, admitting mistakes and accepting feedback. The other four behaviours were categorised as relational behaviours, which focus on the interaction between the leader and his followers, these behaviours are transparency with followers, developing followers, positive relationship with followers and justice and fairness to followers. All of these behaviours were defined first, and then the research participants were asked to give their understanding, descriptions, and experiences of these behaviours. The data was then discussed in the light of the literature of authentic leadership, authenticity, and cultural dimensions, as appropriate. These behaviours expressed the Saudi perception of authenticity in leadership, which is both a self and relational concept. Remarkably, four of the behaviours represent the self-aspect of authenticity in leadership and the other four represent the relational part of the perception of authenticity.



#### 5.1.4 RQ 3

What is the relationship between the cultural dimensions of Saudi Arabia and authenticity in leadership?

There are two themes from the research findings which answer this question: the influence of national culture on authenticity in leadership and the behaviours and practices of authenticity in leadership. Under the first theme, the influence of national culture is divided into four subthemes: the influence of Islamic religion on authenticity, cultural disconnect, cultural obstacles to authenticity and positive cultural aspects encouraging authenticity. The first subtheme was found to be highly related to the cultural dimensions of individualism and collectivism, which are discussed in the literature review (Hofstede, 1980; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997, Steenkamp, 2001; Javidan et al., 2006; Schwartz, 1992). Interestingly, this study found that the Islamic perception of authenticity in leadership includes the cultural aspects of both individualist and collectivist societies. Additionally, the subtheme of cultural obstacles to authenticity discovered three barriers to authenticity in Saudi leadership which are *wasta*, *almujamalh* and hierarchical culture. These three barriers were explained and linked to different cultural dimensions. These were the high and low context dimensions of Hall (1977), Fukuyama's model of trust (1995), Hofstede's collectivism, individualism, and power distance (1980), the specific versus diffuse cultural dimension of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997), the dimension of assertiveness in the GLOBE study (2006) and the dimension of hierarchy versus egalitarianism in hierarchical culture of Schwartz (1992).

The second theme relating to cultural dimensions is that associated with Saudi perception of authenticity is the theme of behaviours and practices of authenticity in leadership. This study identified eight behaviours that were clarified and discussed with reference to the literature. Some of the cultural dimensions were found to be associated with some of the behaviours of authenticity. For example, the self-behaviour of admitting mistakes and accepting feedback was linked with Hofstede's cultural dimension of power distance (1980), which is also used in GLOBE (2006). Furthermore, the relational behaviour of forming positive relationships with followers is linked with the cultural dimension of specific versus diffuse in Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's model of culture (1997).

Overall, the finding of this study have been associated with seven cultural dimensions: individualism versus collectivism, power distance, assertiveness, specific versus diffuse, hierarchy versus egalitarianism, high or low context and high or low trust cultures from eight models of cultural dimensions.

### **5.1.5 RQ 4**

To what extent do Saudi leaders influence their followers' authenticity?

The theme of authenticity in followership answers this question directly. The research participants explained their perspectives of the relationship between follower and leader authenticity, and overall, this study found that the authenticity of followers is highly influenced by leadership practices. Additionally, the research participants went further as they believe followers' authenticity is a direct consequence of leaders' authenticity.

To conclude, it is important to point out that the foregoing explanations of how each research question was answered all contribute to answering the main research question of how Saudi leaders and followers perceive authenticity in leadership.

## **5.2 Research Contributions**

The findings of this study make several contributions to the current literature. These can be categorised into four areas of theoretical, methodological, contextual and practical contributions.

### **5.2.1 Theoretical Contributions**

This research contributes to the body of knowledge from the theoretical perspective in several ways. Firstly, it addresses a significant gap in the literature by enhancing our understanding of authenticity in leadership in a non-western culture. According to Grégoire et al. (2014), existing leadership studies indicate that little is known about how authentic leadership operates and is perceived in non-western cultures, and the current literature of authentic leadership is limited to the western view of authenticity (Li et al., 2014). In contrast, this study has examined authenticity in leadership from the Saudi perspective, which differs

from the western concept. Additionally, we have identified the behaviours and practices of authenticity in leadership which are specifically associated with Saudi perceptions.

Secondly, the findings of this study represent another theoretical contribution which is the impact of religion in general and Islam in particular, on the perception and practice of authenticity in leadership. In reviewing the current literature on authenticity and authentic leadership, no data was found on the association between religious values and beliefs and authenticity in leadership, specifically Islamic culture and authenticity.

Thirdly, this study contributes to cross-cultural leadership theory, as it has explored perceptions of authenticity in leadership within Saudi Arabian culture, and compared these to current western views. Furthermore, this study has linked authenticity in leadership from the Saudi perspective with the literature of cultural dimensions. Only a few studies were noted that associate authenticity with cultural dimensions.

Fourthly, the current findings add substantially to our understanding of the role of organisational culture on authenticity in leadership. Although the current literature of authentic leadership states that organisational context or culture has an impact on authentic leadership and followership, it does not explain how or why this happens. This research has not only identified the influence of organisational culture on authenticity in leadership, but also explains two major factors of organisational culture that specifically affect authenticity, which are senior management actions and organisational policy and procedures.

Fifthly, the present study provides additional evidence with respect to the relationship between authenticity in leadership and authenticity in followership. According to Leroy et al. (2012), the current literature concentrates mainly on leader authenticity in the workplace while offering less recognition to followers.

Sixthly, although authentic leadership research has paid attention to the significance of authentic followership, few studies in the literature focus on it. According to Leroy et al. (2012), the current literature concentrates mainly on leader authenticity in the workplace and gives less attention to followers. This research therefore makes a theoretical contribution by including in its sample an equal number of both leaders and followers. Studying authenticity in leadership from both perspectives is important as both are key to understanding the

concept of leadership (Banks et al., 2016). Leadership and followership are linked, and as dynamic interrelated processes, one cannot be understood without the other (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). In addition, understanding authenticity in leadership from the followers' point of view is crucial, as it was revealed that authenticity is not only viewed as a self-construct but is also a relational concept. Each behaviours of authenticity in leadership that stated was discussed from both leader and follower viewpoints, although some of the behaviours were mentioned mostly by followers.

The final theoretical contribution of this research will serve as a base for future studies of authenticity in leadership in any culture, as it has produced a model that covers six dimensions relating directly to the concept of authenticity in leadership.

### **5.2.2      *Methodological Contribution***

The current study contributes to our knowledge on a methodological level by adopting a social constructionist perspective in order to understand the meaning of authenticity in leadership. This study is one of the few that follow an exploratory qualitative research design to explore the concept of authenticity in leadership from both leaders' and followers' perspectives. According to Beddoes-Jones (2013), the current literature on authentic leadership is composed mainly of quantitative research, and they recommend the application of qualitative methodologies in this area of study. Additionally, Gardner et al. (2011) suggest in their review of authentic leadership studies that qualitative methods should be used to explore authentic leadership, since they too found that most of the available studies are quantitative. Furthermore, both Banks et al. (2016) and Diddams and Chang (2012), point out that the majority of these quantitative studies use the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ), as developed by Walumbwa et al. (2008), which has been criticised for its limitations. According to Banks et al. (2016), the ALQ is based on Kernis and Goldman's (2006), four dimensions of authenticity which are ambiguous and lack clarity. Banks et al. suggest that there is excessive overlap between the dimensions, and ask, for example, how the dimension of relational transparency differs from that of balanced processing. The current study avoids such quantitative limitations and instead explores the concept of authenticity in leadership

using a qualitative design, thus contributing to the methodological diversity of the available research in this field.

### **5.2.3 Contextual Contribution**

On a contextual level this research contributes to the growing body of research on leadership in the Middle East, Arab, Islamic and Saudi contexts. According to Avolio et al. (2009), studying leadership in cultures that are underrepresented in the literature, such as Islamic cultures, is a high priority for research. Additionally, current leadership and cultural research is lacking in studies from Saudi Arabia, (Aseri, 2015; Khan and Varshney, 2013). Furthermore, this research is the first study which has attempted to understand the concept of authenticity in leadership within Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) cultures, specifically in the Saudi context. Also, to the author's knowledge, to date there have been no other studies of authenticity in leadership or authentic leadership in any of the gulf countries and only one study was found that studied authentic leadership (the western perspective of authenticity) in the Middle East.

## **5.3 Practical Contributions**

The findings of this study contribute practically in several ways that can be broadly divided into macro and micro levels. The macro level includes how this study can contribute to general aspects such as policy and higher education, while the practical contributions on the micro level relate specifically to leaders and followers within organizations.

### **5.3.1 Macro-level Contributions**

The research participants agreed that Saudi Arabian leadership is currently suffering from corrupt financial and administrative practices as well as the dubious but culturally 'accepted' practices of *wasta* and *almujamalh* (Section 4.2.1). The study clearly shows that both leaders and followers are wishing for a more honest, authentic approach to leadership, and so the concepts of authentic leadership could usefully be introduced to policy makers such as Nazah (the Saudi government anti-corruption commission) with suggestions for regulatory measures.

Secondly, the findings of this study may be useful in higher education, particularly in university business schools, by adding to the growing body of authentic leadership research. The issues explored here could be a vital part of educational programmes dealing with how the modern business world can espouse social responsibility and develop positive, ethical, value-based leadership practices.

### **5.3.2      *Micro-level Contributions***

The findings of this study also relate directly to organisational leaders and their followers. The first major contribution here is that the six themes identified in this research can be used as the basis of a practical model of authenticity in leadership. This could be used in training and development programmes for executives in Saudi Arabia. It may also be useful to include this material in a book for general readership, which would be launched as the first publication in Arabic on authenticity in leadership.

Secondly, two crucial factors that emerged are that top management actions and organisational policies/regulations are effective ways of increasing authenticity in leadership from the organisational perspective. Business leaders should be made aware of these as they seek to establish an organisational culture based on authenticity.

Thirdly, the eight distinct perceptions of authenticity in leadership could be developed quantitatively into a formal method of assessing authenticity in Saudi leadership; this would be a useful tool for leadership development.

Fourthly, this study has revealed three major cultural challenges to authenticity in leadership that exist specifically in the Saudi context. Making organisational leaders and followers aware of the unacceptability of these practices is a very important way to reduce their negative impact on organisations in this country.

## 5.4 Limitations of the study and directions for future research

Although the findings of this study are encouraging and useful, as with most research it suffers from a number of limitations. First, this study is mainly qualitative, which can raise methodological issues in terms of validity, reliability and generalisability. However, the researcher has attempted to minimise these problems by carrying out the study in a way that trustworthiness and validity are ensured (see Section 3.4). Secondly, qualitative researchers aim to get closer to understanding a certain phenomenon in its own context (Silverman, 2010), but, in so doing, the generalisability of the research findings can be sacrificed. One of the limitations of this research is that the participants of this study are all male; female participants were not recruited due to cultural issues. It is suggested future research should use a sample of both male and female participants. Another limitation of this study is that the participants were drawn from only six industries in the Saudi private sector. Future research could study other industries in the private sector or alternatively the public sector. Public sector research into leadership authenticity would yield interesting results due to the potentially different perceptions of authenticity in a governmental hierarchical context. Also, it's recommended by the participants who appointed some issues relate to the concept of authenticity in the government sector that link with authenticity.

Additionally, this research has raised many questions in need of further investigation. For example, research into whether authenticity is a changing state or a stable trait is highly recommended, as current literature on this issue is lacking both in quantity and in clarity. Furthermore, as this study unexpectedly found a cognitive dissonance in Saudi culture affecting authenticity, exploring the concept of cognitive dissonance and its impact on authenticity in leadership is recommended for further investigation. Moreover, this research identified eight behaviours of authenticity in leadership and these behaviours can be studied quantitatively to create an assessment of these behaviours to measure authenticity in leadership. Likewise, further work needs to be done to establish the validity of the impact of authenticity in leadership, as claimed by the study participants. Further research could explore perceptions of authenticity in leadership in other Arab and Islamic countries and compare the results with this study. Finally, the six themes that emerged in this study can be

used as the basis for a number of cross-cultural studies to explore concepts of authenticity in leadership.

### **5.5 Concluding Remarks**

To conclude, the aim of this thesis was to explore the concept of authenticity in leadership in the cultural context of Saudi Arabia. Reflecting on the process of conducting this research, it is worth mentioning that the entire research journey has been one of learning. From the very basics of learning how to access the most relevant peer-reviewed journals and then critically reviewing this literature, the course of the research was a continual process of learning and development. This involved becoming familiar and comfortable with highly theoretical aspects, such as the applicable philosophical concepts, as well as developing the practical skills of designing and organising the data collection.

In addition to improving skills necessary for conducting social science research, the PhD journey also involved a number of other skills on the personal level, such as time management, problem solving, logical judgment, organising, planning and speed reading.

A variety of challenges faced the researcher at different stages. For example, being abroad and away from family and friends was particularly difficult, and one of the main stumbling blocks was obtaining access to data. As this research concerned leadership, the study sample was made up mainly of executives and senior managers, all of whom have extremely busy lives, and their time constraints meant that it was sometimes difficult to meet and interview them. In addition, the limited time of the data collection period made this challenge harder and the researcher did his best during three months of data collection to interview as many participants as possible from the different organisations and sectors. Another problem facing the researcher was conducting the data analysis, since after attending Nvivo software training it was discovered that the software was not compatible with the Arabic language data in the interview transcripts. Eventually the choice was made to use MAXQDA, which supports Arabic, and much self-learning was necessary in order to learn how to use the software for this data analysis.



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## Appendix A Interview Questions English and Arabic

### Translations

- From your point of view how would you describe a successful leader?  
• من وجهة نظرك ممكن توصف لي القائد الناجح؟
- What type of actions and behaviour do you think a good leader need to exhibit?  
• ماهي السلوكيات والأفعال التي يحتاج القائد الجيد ان يعملها؟
- It is argued in the leadership literature that leaders should be true to themselves. What do you think this mean?  
• يقال في دراسات القيادة أن القادة يجب أن يكونوا صادقين مع أنفسهم . ما هو معنى ذلك من وجهة نظرك؟
- From your perspective as a leader, do you think being true to yourself and others is important in leadership? Can you please explain your answer?  
• من وجهة نظرك هل تتوقع أنه عندما يكون القائد صادقاً مع نفسه ومع الآخرين مهم في القيادة؟ ممكن توضح إجابتك ؟
- What is the role of self-awareness in our behaviours in general?  
• برأيك عندما يكون الشخص واعياً بنفسه من حيث شخصيته مهاراته وقدراته وقيمه كيف يؤثر ذلك على سلوكه بشكل عام؟
- In your view, what is the relationship between leaders' self-awareness and their leadership?  
• ماهي العلاقة بين وعي القائد بنفسه وبين أسلوبه في القيادة؟
- What do you consider to be authentic when leading others? Can you give me an example of an authentic leader?  
• حتى يكون هناك مصداقية وشفافية في القيادة ما هو المفترض من القائد فعله في قيادته للآخرين؟ ممكن تعطيني مثال لقائد عملت معه يتصف بالمصداقية والشفافية في قيادته؟
- To what extent do you think leader authenticity will affect followers' authenticity?  
• إلى درجة ترى أن المصداقية في القائد تؤثر على مصداقية فيمن يتبعه ويعملون معه؟
- To what extent does our culture affect authenticity in leadership?  
• إلى درجة مدى ترى بأن ثقافتنا في السعودية وعاداتنا تؤثر على المصداقية في القيادة ؟
- What aspects of culture influence authenticity in leadership?  
• ماهي الأسباب المرتبطة ببيئتنا وثقافتنا التي تساهم في زيادة أو نقصان المصداقية في الق

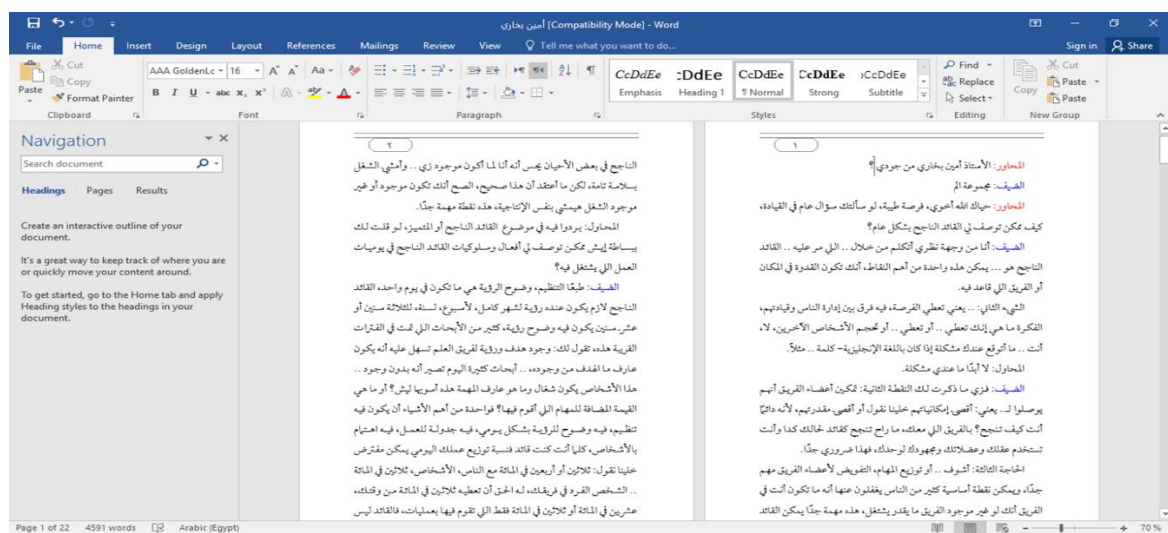


## Appendix B Data Analysis Steps

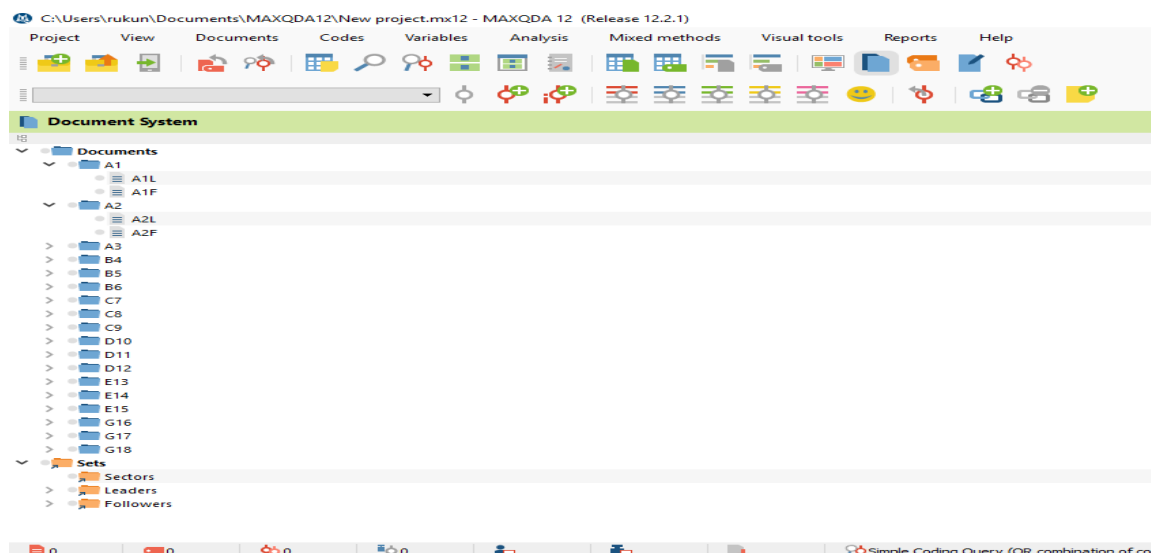
The following are the six steps of Braun and Clarke's (2006) model of thematic analysis steps that were conducted in this study by MAXQDA software

### 1. Familiarisation with the Data

In this step transcription of the data (as the next picture shows which an example of one interview is) was as followed by close reading and familiarisation with.

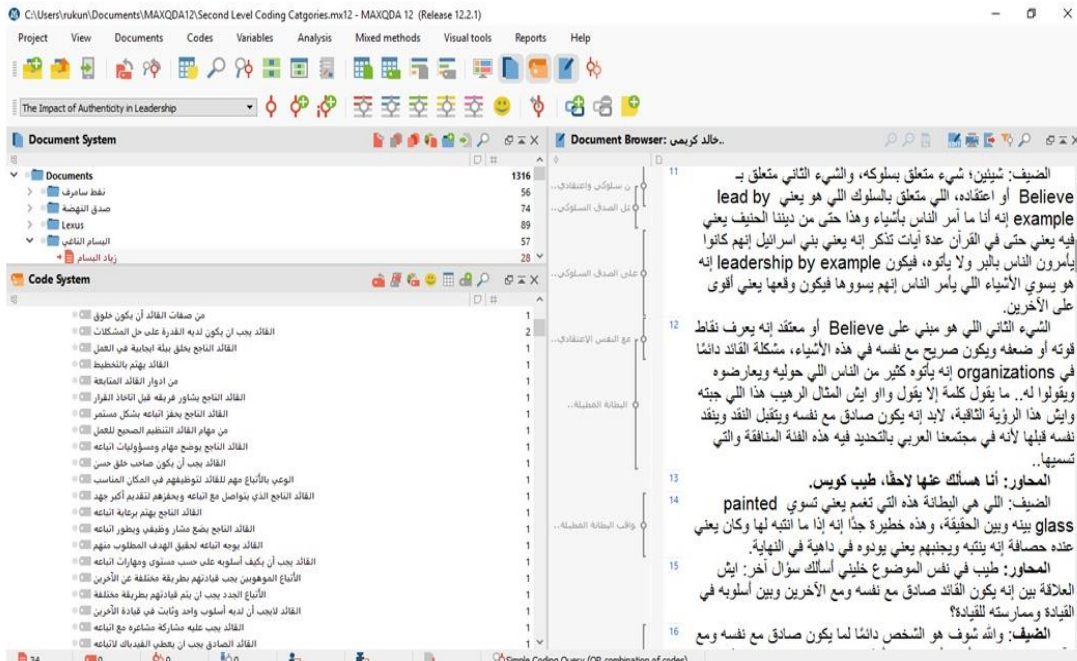


- Additionally, all the 36 interviews document were uploaded and organised in MAXQDA as the next picture illustrates



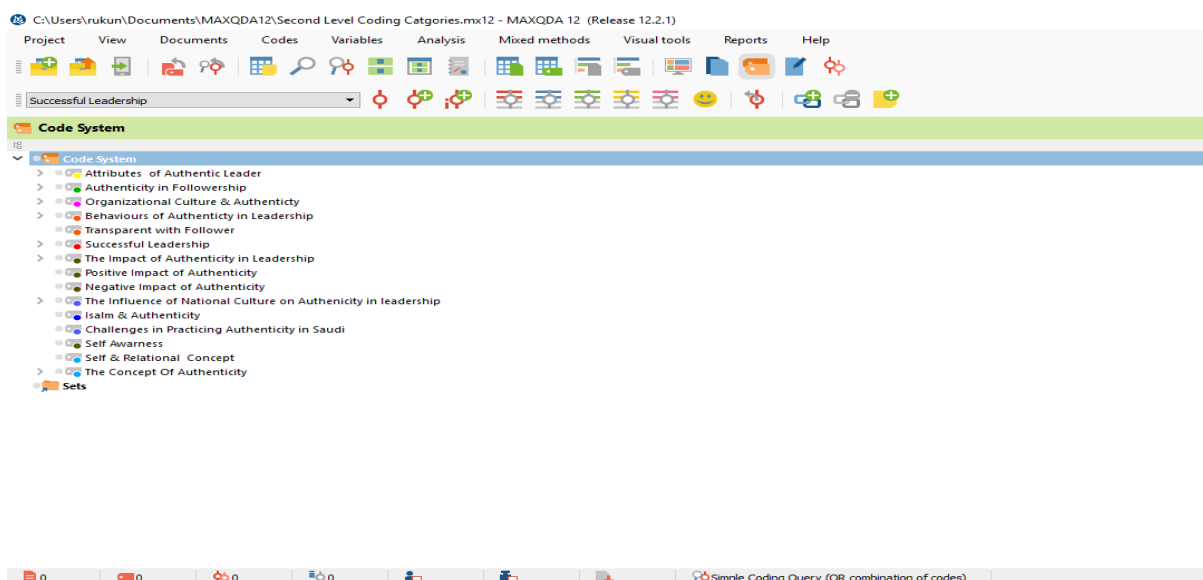
## 2. Generating Initial Codes

- The next picture shows how initial codes were produced in MAXQDA and this an example for one participant's transcript and this were conducted in all 36 interviews



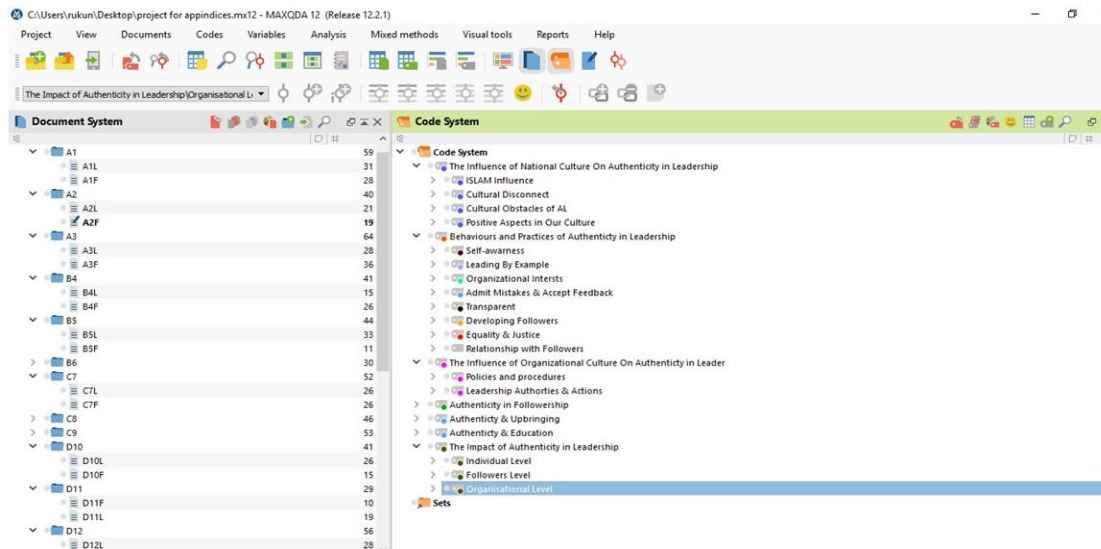
## 3. Searching for Themes

- In this stage, the codes were sorted into potential categories and themes and the next picture shows example of these categories and initial themes



#### 4. Reviewing Themes

- All the categories and initial themes were reviewed and this resulted the six themes and their subthemes as the next picture shows



- After that each theme were produced, they were then checked in relation to the coded extracts as an example of one theme shows below

Code	Coded segments	Coded segments	Author	Creation date	Parent code	% Coded segments	% Coded segments	Doc
Transparent	0	0	Trial 1		Behaviours of Authenticity in Leadership	...	...	
Clarifying vision & goals	0	0	Trial 1		Transparent	...	...	
Organizational Interests	0	0	Trial 1		Behaviours of Authenticity in Leadership	...	...	
الأبعاد يتفقون في القائد الذي لا يخلو أحده خفية وخاصة	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
الأمانة أن القائد يقوم بأفعاله ويقوم بهدأ أنها لعضلة العمل والعن	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
الأمانة في القائد تعني احترام بمصالح فريقه و العمل وليس مصاحته	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
الإقناع بالعضلة الفردية دون عضلة المجموعة بسبب نفس الأمانة	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
المعامل بمقدري والعضلة العمل من معارسات القائد الأناج	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
التي مع النفس أنك تعمل ليس لعضلة الشخص فقط	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
السعي إلى العضلة الشخصية بطريق في الأمانة	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
السعي للعضلة الشخصية في أسباب عدم وجود الأمانة	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
الصدق مع النفس أن رسالته وإقناعه تكون جزء من الشركة	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
القائد الأصيل لا يخلو أحده خفية	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
القائد الأصيل لا يخلو أحده خفية	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
القائد الأصيل ليس لديه حساسيات لأشخاص وأقرب خفية	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
القائد الأصيل فاعلم بتحقيق الأهداف التي وضعها ويهتم بالنتائج	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
القائد الأصيل والصدق قد يترك عمله بسبب نزاهة الشركة	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
القائد الأصيل يجب يسعى لإيجاد عضلة الشخصية ومصاحته لابعاده	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
القائد الأصيل يشعر أبعاده أن عضلة الشخصية التي يعملون بها	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
القائد الأصيل يضع أهدافاً مناسبة وغير مارة للشركة والمجتمع	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
القائد الأصيل يعمل لعضلة العمل ولا يخلو أحده شخصية	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
القائد الأصيل يقبل بين حياته الخاصة والعمل وهذا من الصادقية	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
القائد الغير أسمى قد يظلم ولا يصدق من أجل تحقيق أهدافه والعضلة	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
القائد الغير أصيل يهتم بمصاحته الشخصية فقط دون مصالح ابعاده	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
القائد الغير أصيل يهتم بمصاحته الشخصية قبل أي شئ لأن	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
القائد الأناج الذي يعمل لعضلة عضلة	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
أنت ممكن ترك العقوبة على الزناج وتغفها عليه لأنها حاجة لازمة	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
تغلب العضلة الشخصية على عضلة العمل بسبب رئيسي لقلب القى	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
حب العمل من أسباب وجود الأمانة في القائد	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
في نقاشه الوطنية هناك مشكلة الإقناع القائد بمصاحته الشخصية فقط	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	

## 5. Defining Themes

- In this stage each theme was defined and refined by analysing the data within the themes The following shows how each theme reviewed in accordance to all code

Code	Coded segme...	Coded segme...	Author	Creation date	Parent code	% Coded seg...	% Coded seg...	Doc
Transparent	0	0	Trial 1		Behaviours of Authenticity in Leadership	...	...	
Clarifying vision & goals	0	0	Trial 1		Transparent	...	...	
Organizational Interests	0	0	Trial 1		Behaviours of Authenticity in Leadership	...	...	
الأرباح يقوم بأعماله وهو مصنف أنها لمصاحبة العمل وخاصة	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
الأرباح في القالب بعدى اجتماع مصاحبة فريقه و تعمل وليس مصاحبة	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
الإشهاد بالمصاحبة الفردية دون مصاحبة المجموعة سبب لتفهم الأرباح	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
التعامل بصدق والمصاحبة العمل من ممارسات القالب الناجح	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
التدقيق مع النفس أنك تعمل ليس لمصاحبتك الشخصية فقط	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
السعي إلى المصاحبة الشخصية بصدق في الأرباح	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
السعي للمصاحبة الشخصية في أسباب عدم وجود الأرباح	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
الصدق مع النفس أن رسالتك وأدراكك تكون جزء من الشركة	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
القالب الأصل لا يحمل أجندة خفية	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
القالب الأصل لا يحمل أجندة خفية	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
القالب الأصل ليس لديه حسابات لأشخاص وأموال خفية	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
القالب الأصل فخرهم بتحقيق الأهداف التي وضعها ويهتم بالنتائج	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
القالب الأصل والصدق قد يترك عمله بسبب نزاهة الشركة	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
القالب الأصل يجب يسعى لإيجاد مصاحبة الشخصية ومصاحبة أرباحه	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
القالب الأصل يشعر بأرباحه أن ملاك المصاحبة التي يعملون بها	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
القالب الأصل مع أهداف مادية وغير مادية للشركة والصدق	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
القالب الأصل يعمل لمصاحبة العمل ولا يحمل أجندة شخصية	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
القالب الأصل يعمل بين حياته الخاصة والعمل وهذا من المصداقية	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
القالب الغير أصلي قد يترك بظلم والصدق في أجل تحقيق أهدافه والمصاحبة	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
القالب الغير أصلي يقوم بمصاحبة الشخصية فقط دون مصاحبة أرباحه	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
القالب الغير أصلي يقوم بمصاحبة الشخصية قبل أي شئ لأخر	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
القالب الناجح الذي يعمل لمصاحبة منطقته	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
أنت ممكن تترك العقوبة على الزمان وتحققها عليه لأنها حاجة لازمة	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
تغلب المصاحبة الشخصية على مصاحبة العمل سبب رئيسي لغير القالب	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
حب العمل من أسباب وجود الأرباح في القالب	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	
في ثقافتنا الطبية هناك مشكلة استخدام القالب بمصاحبة الشخصية فقط	1	0	Trial 1		Organizational Interests	...	...	

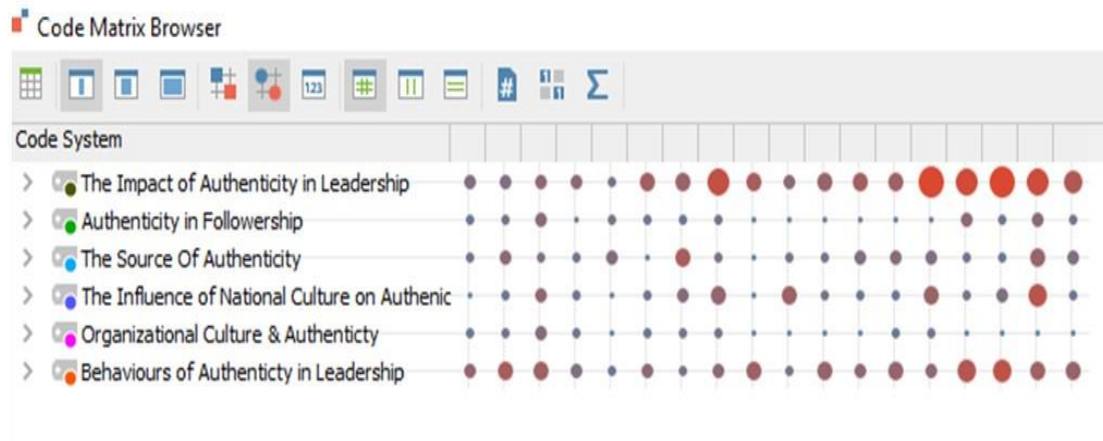
## 6. Producing the Report

- This stage involved describing the significant elements of the data in terms of the six themes as the next picture shows how each theme and subtheme were described

The screenshot displays the MAXQDA 12 interface with the following components:

- Document System:** A tree view showing documents (A1, A1L, A1F, A2, A2L, A2F, A3, B4, B5, B6, C7, C8, C9, D10, D11) and their associated codes.
- Retrieved Segments:** A list of segments with their corresponding codes and descriptions. Examples include:
  - Segment A1: "إنه يأتيه كثير من الناس التي حوليه ويعارضوه organizations شكله القائد دائما في ويقولوا له.. ما يقول كلمة إلا يقول واو ايش المثال الرهيب هذا التي جيته وايش هذا الرؤية الثاقبة، لابد إنه يكون صادق مع نفسه ويتقبل النقد وينقد نفسه قبلها لأنه في مجتمعنا العربي بالتحديد فيه هذه الفئة المناهضة والتي تسميها.."
  - Segment A1: "بينه وبين الحقيقة، وهذه painted glass التي هي البطانة هذه التي نغمم يعني تسوي خطيرة جدا إنه إذا ما انتبه لها وكان يعني عنده حصافة إنه ينتبه ويجنبهم يعني يودوه في داهية في النهاية."
  - Segment A1: "Cultural Disconnect هذا موضوع شائك جدا ومعقد، للأسف نحن عندنا زي ما يقولوا"
  - Segment A1: "الذي توارثه الكذب مثلا، الكذب عندنا تساهلنا بطريقة eastern culture بجي عندنا مثلا بعد، كذا، هذا، أنت ممكن تكذب في البعد بعد، ممكن، الـ الكذب بالـ أم، بسبب، سوء"
- Code System:** A tree view showing the hierarchy of codes. The main code is "National Culture & Authenticity", which branches into "Other", "Cultural Disconnect", "Cultural Obstacles of AL", "Islam Influence", "Behaviours of Authenticity in Leadership", and "The Impact of Authenticity in Leadership".

- The following figure shows how all the themes were stated by all participants and the size of circle represent the frequency of how much this theme were mentioned by a participant








## Appendix C Poster Participation

The researcher participated in BAM conference in 2015 about this research

### Exploring Authenticity in Leadership at the context of Saudi Arabia



**Introduction**

Globalisation has made the study of leadership deeply connected to culture. The actions of leaders and responses of followers reflect the cultural values, attitudes and behaviours of each (Dickson *et al.* 2012). Moreover, culture not only influences how leaders emerge, develop and are chosen, but it also affects the success of organisations (Shahin and Wright, 2004). The purpose of this research is to study authenticity in leadership from the perspective of Saudi leaders.

**Authenticity in Leadership**

The concept of authenticity is about being real and true to oneself (Boyraz, 2014). Authenticity is predominantly embedded in human psychology and is particularly related to ethics and the self (Clegg *et al.* 2007). Authentic leadership (AL) is one of the most recently developed theories in the field of leadership studies and over the last decade there has been a dramatic increase in articles and discussions on this subject (Gardner *et al.* 2011). The concept of AL is built on previous leadership theories such as transformational leadership and charismatic leadership, which are generally perceived as positive approaches to leadership. Although authentic leadership is still in the initial stages of development, various studies have been conducted to explore how this new concept works. Additionally, the current literature of authentic leadership pays attention not only to leaders but also to followers. Authentic leadership emerges not only from the individual leader but from the interaction between leaders and their followers and the influence they have on each other (Tapara, 2011).

**Methodology**

- The methodological position of the current research is broadly defined as exploratory qualitative research.
- The data of this study will be collected by conducting semi-structured face-to-face in-depth interviews.
- About 40 participants will be selected from two groups in the private sector in Saudi Arabia:
  1. leaders and executives
  2. followers

**Potential Contributions**

This research has two areas of contribution:

1. **Theoretical contribution:** This study will contribute to the current body of knowledge as it is the first study to examine authentic leadership in Saudi culture. It also aims to construct a theoretical framework of authentic leadership from the perspective of Saudi culture
2. **Practical contribution:** The theoretical framework that emerges from this research can be adapted to develop a practical authentic leadership model. This could be used in training and development programmes for executives in Saudi Arabia. Likewise, an article or book could be written about this model for the general public.

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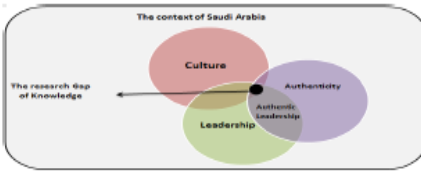
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**The Problem of the Study**

Li *et al.* (2014) point out that authentic leadership has been extensively examined in the context of western cultures but not so much in others, and Gardner *et al.* (2011) have argued that we still know very little about authentic leadership and how it works in Eastern cultures.

As the concept of authentic leadership has originated in western cultures, and as authenticity is usually viewed from the western cultural point of view, this study will not examine or test AL in non-western cultures. Instead it seeks to understand the meaning of authenticity by studying how leaders and followers in Saudi culture perceive the concept of authenticity.



**Research Questions**

**Main Question:** How do Saudi leaders and followers perceive authenticity in leadership?

**Sub-questions:**

1. Is Authentic Leadership Theory culturally contingent with Saudi culture?
2. How do Saudi leaders and followers define authentic leadership?
3. What is the relationship between the cultural dimensions of Saudi Arabia and authenticity in leadership?
4. What are the leadership behaviours that are associated with the Saudi perception of authenticity?

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## Appendix D Ethical Approval

- The following is the approval of the Ethics Committee of University of Southampton for the data collection of this research

