
**CREDIBLE, VALUE-BASED AND AUTHENTIC
LEADERSHIP: THEORY, ACTION AND REFLECTION
PRAXIS INTEGRATION**

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the Study: The study examines the relationship between ethical, credibility, authenticity and value-based leadership: theory, reflection and action praxis integration. This article critically assesses Bishop Dr. David Oginde's assertion that these three elements form a "formidable triangle" essential for effective leadership. The study employed a theoretical analysis approach, comparing contemporary leadership theories with biblical leadership principles exemplified in Galatians, particularly focusing on Paul's leadership framework.

Methodology: The methodology involved a comprehensive review and analysis of leadership literature, integrating perspectives from modern leadership theories with biblical examples. The study examined works from prominent leadership scholars such as Ilies et al. (2005), Johnson (2020), and others, while also analysing Paul's leadership approach in Galatians through the lens of modern leadership theories.

Findings: The findings demonstrate that credible, authentic, and value-based leadership are indeed interconnected and essential for effective leadership. The analysis reveals strong parallels between Paul's leadership approach in Galatians and modern leadership theories, particularly in areas of ethical decision-making, moral courage, and maintaining leadership credibility. The study establishes that these principles transcend temporal and cultural boundaries, remaining relevant across different leadership contexts.

Conclusion: The study concludes that credibility, authenticity, and integrity form an essential foundation for effective leadership, validating Oginde's assertion. This integration of theoretical perspectives with practical applications provides valuable insights for contemporary leaders navigating complex organizational challenges. The study contributes to leadership literature by demonstrating how historical leadership principles align with and inform modern leadership theory and practice.

Keywords: *Credibility, Authenticity, Leadership, Value-based leadership, Biblical leadership.*

INTRODUCTION

Bishop Dr. David Oginde's assertion that "Credibility, Authenticity and Integrity form a formidable triangle of life and practice that alone can catapult any leader to the highest and exclusive realms of leadership" indicates the critical role of these values in leadership success. This statement implies that the foundation of exceptional leadership is rooted in the integration of these three values, creating a synergy that fosters trust, follower engagement, and ethical decision-making. The modern leadership discourse aligns with this by emphasizing the importance of authenticity, credibility and integrity in fostering resilient teams and inspiring positive organizational change.

In the contemporary business landscape, characterized by rapid change and complex challenges, the demand for effective leadership has never been greater. Leaders are expected not only to guide their organizations to success but also to do so with integrity, authenticity, and credibility. As Kirkman and Stoverink (2021, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) argue, authentic leadership is essential for building resilient teams capable of navigating the complexities of today's dynamic environments. This perspective aligns closely with Kamau and Oginde (2022) assertion, highlighting the interconnectedness of credibility, authenticity, and integrity in fostering effective leadership.

This article critically examined the extent to which Kamau and Oginde (2022) statement holds true, while also comparing the perspectives on leadership in Galatians, particularly Paul's leadership and ethical frameworks, with modern credible and authentic leadership theories. By integrating theoretical perspectives from the work of Ilies et al. (2005) and Johnson (2020) with practical applications of leadership, this paper will further explore how the interplay of credibility, authenticity, and integrity forms the cornerstone of effective leadership in both historical and contemporary contexts.

CREDIBILITY IN LEADERSHIP

Credibility is a fundamental pillar in leadership that refers to a leader's ability to inspire trust and confidence among their followers through reliability, ethical practices, and a strong moral compass. Kamau and Oginde (2022, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) asserts that credible leaders achieve influence by aligning their words and actions with ethical values, which fosters trustworthiness. This alignment is crucial in building a foundation of trust between leaders and followers, enabling effective communication and collaboration within organizations. Ilies et al. (2005, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) emphasize that leadership credibility stems from a leader's

ability to align their personal values with their leadership style, ensuring that followers see them as trustworthy and dependable. This perspective underscores the importance of consistency between a leader's espoused values and their actions, a key component in building and maintaining credibility over time.

Leaders develop credibility by prioritizing the needs of their followers, acting with integrity, and creating an engaging organizational environment that promotes growth. Kamau and Oginde (2022, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) argue that credibility is the foundation of leadership, emphasizing that leaders must be believed to be heard. This notion highlights the reciprocal nature of credibility, where leaders earn the trust and respect of their followers through consistent, ethical behaviour. The effectiveness of credible leadership is reflected in servant leadership traits, where leaders place the well-being of their followers above their own, guiding and motivating them to succeed. Ang'ana (2022, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) discusses the importance of servant leadership in fostering credibility, noting that leaders who prioritize the growth and well-being of their followers often experience increased trust and loyalty from their team members.

In the context of biblical leadership, the Apostle Paul demonstrates credible leadership in Galatians by consistently challenging practices that diverge from his ethical principles. A prime example is when he confronts Peter for his lack of integrity regarding his treatment of Gentiles (Galatians 2:11–14, as cited by Chimakati, 2024). This commitment to ethical consistency, even in the face of established authority, is a hallmark of credibility in leadership. Paul's actions reflect the modern understanding of credible leadership, where leaders are expected to uphold their principles consistently, regardless of the potential personal or social costs.

VALUE-BASED LEADERSHIP

Value-based leadership is an approach that emphasizes the alignment of a leader's personal values with their leadership style and organizational goals. This leadership philosophy is rooted in the belief that leaders who act in accordance with their core values can create more ethical, effective, and sustainable organizations. According to Kouzes and Posner (2023, as cited by Chimakati, 2024), value-based leaders are those who clearly articulate their personal values and consistently demonstrate these values through their actions and decisions. This consistency between words and deeds is crucial in building trust and credibility with followers. Value-based leadership aligns closely with the concept of authentic leadership, as both emphasize the importance of self-awareness and ethical behaviour in leadership practice.

The implementation of value-based leadership can have significant positive impacts on organizational culture and performance. Johnson (2020, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) argues that leaders who consistently demonstrate their values through their actions create a strong ethical foundation for their organizations. This ethical foundation can lead to increased employee engagement, improved decision-making processes, and enhanced organizational reputation. Furthermore, value-based leadership can contribute to the development of a more resilient organizational culture. As Kirkman and Stoverink (2021, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) note, leaders who clearly communicate and embody organizational values can help build resilient teams capable of navigating complex challenges in dynamic environments.

However, value-based leadership is not without its challenges. Leaders must navigate potential conflicts between personal values, organizational goals, and diverse stakeholder interests. Thakadipuram (2024, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) highlights the importance of spiritual intelligence in leadership, suggesting that value-based leaders must develop the capacity to integrate diverse perspectives and values in their decision-making processes. Additionally, as Jahn et al. (2020, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) point out, the perceived credibility of a leader's values and motives can significantly impact organizational legitimacy. Therefore, value-based leaders must not only articulate and embody their values but also effectively communicate the rationale behind their value-driven decisions to maintain credibility and trust with their followers and stakeholders.

AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Authentic leadership, according to Ilies et al. (2005, as cited by Chimakati, 2024), is characterized by a leader's self-awareness, transparency, and alignment with their values and beliefs. Authentic leaders foster positive relationships with their followers by being genuine, which creates trust and engagement. This perspective emphasizes the importance of leaders knowing themselves deeply and acting in accordance with their true selves, rather than presenting a facade or adopting a leadership style that doesn't align with their core values. The essence of authentic leadership lies in its relational transparency and the leader's ability to maintain integrity while navigating complex organizational dynamics. Walumbwa et al. (2008, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) identified four key components of authentic leadership: self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency. These components work together to create a leadership style that is both effective and ethically grounded.

Johnson (2020, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) extends this argument by noting that authentic leadership enhances organizational culture, as leaders inspire followers to align their behaviours with shared values. This cultural impact of authentic leadership can lead to increased employee engagement, improved job satisfaction, and enhanced organizational performance. The ripple effect of authentic leadership throughout an organization can create a more positive and productive work environment. However, authentic leadership does not come without challenges. Avolio and Gardner (2005, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) highlight that transparency must be balanced with discretion, as excessive openness can create organizational vulnerabilities, especially in high-pressure environments. Leaders must navigate the fine line between being open and honest with their followers while also maintaining appropriate boundaries and protecting sensitive information.

Further, the relational aspects of authenticity may lead to conflicts between personal ethics and organizational goals, requiring leaders to employ wise judgment in their decision-making. Gardner et al. (2011, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) discuss this potential conflict, noting that authentic leaders must sometimes navigate complex ethical dilemmas where personal values may not align perfectly with organizational needs or stakeholder expectations. In the context of biblical leadership, Paul's teachings in Galatians similarly highlight the importance of authentic leadership. Paul's actions are guided by his moral perspective, and he consistently upholds the truth of the Gospel, even when it requires confronting established leaders like Peter. This reflects the core principles of authentic leadership, where leaders must remain true to their values while fostering cohesion among their followers. Paul's leadership style in Galatians demonstrates the timeless nature of authentic leadership principles, showing how they can be applied across different contexts and time periods.

INTEGRITY IN LEADERSHIP: THE ETHICAL FOUNDATION

Integrity is the third crucial element in leadership, forming the backbone of credibility and authenticity. Leaders who demonstrate integrity ensure that their actions align with their ethical values, creating a foundation of trust. Hollis (2018, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) outlines that authentic leaders have values that include keeping their word, speaking the truth, and maintaining loyalty to their organization and team. This approach fosters a culture of integrity and engagement among the workforce, creating an environment where ethical behaviour is both expected and rewarded. According to Northouse (2021, as cited by Chimakati, 2024), integrity in leadership fosters open communication and respect, which are essential for building

positive relationships with followers. When leaders consistently demonstrate integrity, they create an atmosphere of trust where followers feel safe to express their ideas, concerns, and feedback. This open communication can lead to increased innovation, better problem-solving, and a more engaged workforce.

Integrity ensures that leaders act ethically, even in difficult circumstances, reinforcing their credibility. Johnson (2020, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) emphasizes that ethical leadership is built on credibility, with leaders gaining trust through adherence to ethical principles, fairness, honesty, and moral courage. This perspective highlights the interconnected nature of integrity, credibility, and ethical leadership, showing how these elements work together to create effective and trustworthy leadership. In the context of biblical leadership, Paul emphasizes the importance of integrity in Galatians by criticizing Peter's hypocrisy, which he views as damaging to the moral foundation of the Christian community. Paul's insistence on consistency between beliefs and actions mirrors the modern understanding of leadership integrity, where leaders must maintain ethical standards in their interactions with followers and stakeholders (Galatians 2:11–14, as cited by Chimakati, 2024). This historical example demonstrates that the principles of integrity in leadership have remained consistent over time, emphasizing the timeless nature of this leadership quality.

PRAXIS IN LEADERSHIP: INTEGRATING THEORY AND PRACTICE

The concept of praxis involves the integration of theory and practice, where leaders not only reflect on ethical values but also act upon them in a responsible and morally sound manner. Aristotle's notion of praxis emphasizes the importance of human-moral action in leadership, where deliberation and wise judgment shape decision-making processes (Connor, 2004, as cited by Chimakati, 2024). In the context of leadership, praxis reflects a leader's ability to balance theory with practical application, ensuring that their actions are grounded in ethical principles. Freire (1972, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) expands on this by describing praxis as a combination of reflection and action that transforms the world, a notion that is applicable to leaders who aim to foster positive organizational change. This perspective emphasizes the transformative potential of leadership when theory and practice are effectively integrated. Leaders who embody praxis ensure that their leadership style not only aligns with theoretical values of authenticity, integrity, and credibility but also translates these values into tangible actions that benefit their followers and organizations.

The contemporary understanding of leadership praxis has evolved to encompass multiple dimensions of organizational effectiveness and ethical leadership development. Scholars have identified several key components that contribute to effective praxis integration in modern leadership contexts. Avolio and Gardner (2005, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) emphasize that authentic leadership development requires a deep understanding of the interplay between theoretical knowledge and practical experience, facilitated through consistent reflection and intentional action. This view is further supported by recent research from Johnson (2020, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) highlighting how effective leaders navigate complex ethical challenges through the systematic application of theoretical principles in practical contexts.

The integration of praxis in contemporary leadership has been significantly influenced by the evolving nature of organizational challenges and stakeholder expectations. Northouse (2021, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) argues that effective leadership praxis must adapt to address emerging concerns such as digital transformation, global connectivity, and sustainable development. This adaptation requires leaders to develop what Kirkman and Stoverink (2021, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) term "dynamic praxis capabilities" - the ability to continuously align theoretical understanding with practical demands while maintaining ethical integrity. Chen and Sriphon (2022, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) further elaborate that successful praxis integration in modern leadership contexts depends on leaders' capacity to build trust and foster authentic relationships across diverse stakeholder groups. This perspective is reinforced by Thakadipuram's (2024, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) research on spiritual intelligence in leadership, which emphasizes the importance of integrating ethical awareness with practical decision-making in increasingly complex organizational environments. The evolution of praxis in leadership thus reflects a growing recognition of the need for leaders to balance multiple competing demands while maintaining their commitment to ethical principles and organizational effectiveness.

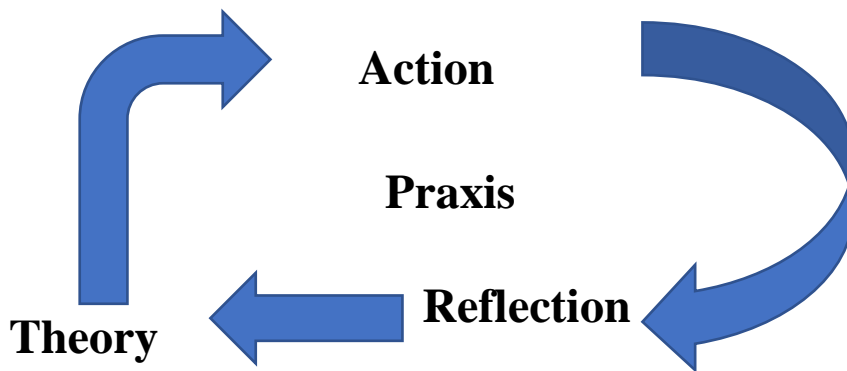


Figure 1: The Cycle of Praxis

Figure 1 illustrates the cyclical process of praxis, which integrates theory, reflection, and action. Praxis is a continuous and dynamic process that connects thought and practice, ensuring that actions are informed by reflection and theory, and that theory is validated and refined through practical action. Here's a breakdown of the components in the figure:

Theory: This represents the conceptual understanding or the knowledge framework guiding an individual or organization's decisions and actions. Theory provides the foundational principles that shape reflection and action.

Reflection: After understanding the theory, leaders or practitioners engage in reflection. This is the phase where they critically think about the theory in the context of their specific environment, challenges, and goals. Reflection helps in considering the implications of applying theory in practice.

Action: Based on the insights gained from theory and reflection, actions are taken to implement the concepts in real-world scenarios. Praxis emphasizes that actions should be deliberate, morally sound, and informed by both theoretical and reflective insights.

This cycle is ongoing, meaning after action is taken, reflection occurs again, leading to adjustments in theory or approach, followed by more action, thus creating an ever-evolving learning and improvement loop. This process is crucial for leaders aiming to integrate credible, authentic, and ethical leadership into their practice.

LEADERSHIP IN GALATIANS: A COMPARISON

Paul's leadership in Galatians embodies the principles of credibility, authenticity, and integrity, offering a valuable historical perspective on effective leadership. His willingness to confront

Peter for his inconsistencies exemplifies integrity, while his steadfast commitment to the Gospel demonstrates authentic leadership (Galatians 2:11-14, as cited by Chimakati, 2024). This confrontation aligns with modern leadership theories that emphasize the importance of ethical consistency and moral courage. As Johnson (2020, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) argues, ethical leadership is built on credibility, with leaders gaining trust through adherence to ethical principles, fairness, honesty, and moral courage. Paul's actions in Galatians demonstrate these qualities, particularly in his willingness to challenge established authority figures when their actions contradict core ethical principles. This aligns with Walumbwa et al.'s (2008, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) concept of authentic leadership, which emphasizes the importance of an internalized moral perspective and balanced processing in leadership decisions.

Paul's focus on the unity of the Christian community mirrors the value-driven leadership emphasized in modern leadership theories, where credibility is achieved through alignment with ethical values and transparency in action. His efforts to reconcile differing perspectives within the early Christian church, particularly regarding the inclusion of Gentiles, reflect the challenges faced by contemporary leaders in managing diverse stakeholder interests. Kirkman and Stoverink (2021, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) highlight the importance of building resilient teams in dynamic environments, a skill Paul demonstrates in his efforts to maintain cohesion within the early church despite significant theological and cultural differences. This approach aligns with Chen and Sriphon's (2022, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) findings on the importance of trust and social exchange relationships in authentic leadership, as Paul works to build trust across diverse groups within the early Christian community.

Paul's apostolic authority, which he asserts is divinely appointed rather than derived from human sources, underscores the importance of credibility in leadership (Galatians 1:1, as cited by Chimakati, 2024). This claim to divine authority parallels modern concepts of leadership credibility, where leaders must establish their legitimacy and trustworthiness to effectively guide their followers. Gass and Seiter (2020, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) discuss the importance of credibility in public diplomacy, a concept that can be applied to Paul's efforts to establish his leadership among diverse communities. Paul's approach to establishing his credibility aligns with Jahn et al.'s (2020, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) findings on how individuals judge organizational legitimacy, emphasizing the importance of attributed motives and perceived credibility in leadership effectiveness. In the context of spiritual leadership, Thakadipuram (2024, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) notes that combating evil offers profound

lessons for leaders, emphasizing the importance of empathy, education, and integrity in creating a culture of trust and collaboration. Paul's leadership in Galatians exemplifies these qualities, particularly in his efforts to combat what he perceives as theological errors threatening the early church.

Moreover, Paul's mission to the Gentiles, which he defends before the other apostles, highlights the importance of leadership credibility derived from divine authority and moral consistency (Galatians 2:1-10, as cited by Chimakati, 2024). His willingness to stand firm in his convictions, even when faced with opposition from established leaders, demonstrates the courage and integrity required in authentic leadership. This aligns with Ilies et al.'s (2005, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) concept of authentic leadership, which emphasizes the importance of self-awareness and relational transparency in leadership. Paul's consistent advocacy for the inclusion of Gentiles in the Christian faith, despite opposition, reflects the kind of principled leadership that Avolio et al. (2020, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) describe in their review of authentic leadership literature. Furthermore, Paul's approach to leadership in this context mirrors what Ang'ana (2022, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) describes as leadership credibility, emphasizing the holistic nature of credible leadership that encompasses integrity, expertise, and the ability to inspire trust.

Paul's interactions in Galatians offer a valuable comparison to modern leadership theories, illustrating that the foundations of credible leadership, authenticity and integrity are timeless principles that transcend contexts. The challenges Paul faced in maintaining unity within the early Christian community while upholding his principles mirror the complexities modern leaders face in balancing organizational goals with ethical considerations. Kapotwe and Bamata (2023, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) discuss how Christian business leaders navigate complex ethical dilemmas during crises, a scenario not unlike Paul's efforts to guide the early church through theological controversies. Paul's leadership style, as depicted in Galatians, aligns with what Kelly (2023, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) describes as the roots of authentic leadership, emphasizing the importance of self-awareness, balanced processing, and moral perspective in effective leadership. Moreover, Paul's approach to leadership challenges in Galatians reflects the kind of ethical decision-making and moral courage that Northouse (2021, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) identifies as crucial components of effective leadership in complex environments. In this way, Paul's leadership in Galatians serves as a timeless example

of how credibility, authenticity, and integrity can be integrated to navigate complex leadership challenges, offering valuable insights for contemporary leaders across various sectors.

CONCLUSION

Credibility, authenticity, and integrity form a formidable triangle that defines effective leadership, supporting Kamau and Oginde (2022) assertion. This article demonstrates that credible leadership, rooted in trust and ethical values, authentic leadership, grounded in self-awareness and transparency, and integrity, which aligns actions with moral principles, are essential for fostering trust and resilience within organizations. Furthermore, the comparison with Paul's leadership in Galatians shows how these principles have remained integral to leadership effectiveness throughout history. By embodying these values, leaders create positive organizational environments where followers can thrive and achieve their full potential. As Kirkman and Stoverink (2021, as cited by Chimakati, 2024) argue, authentic leadership is crucial for building resilient teams capable of navigating complex challenges in today's dynamic environments. This perspective aligns closely with the "formidable triangle" proposed by Kamau and Oginde (2022) who emphasized the interconnected nature of credibility, authenticity, and integrity in fostering effective leadership.

The integration of theory and praxis ensures that leaders not only understand the importance of credibility, authenticity, and integrity but also apply these values in their leadership practices. This practical application of leadership theory, as exemplified by Paul in Galatians and supported by modern leadership scholars, demonstrates the enduring relevance of these principles across diverse contexts and time periods. Ultimately, leadership that is grounded in credibility, authenticity, and integrity leads to the development of resilient teams capable of navigating complex challenges. These leaders inspire trust, foster open communication, and create organizational cultures that value ethical behavior and personal growth. As organizations continue to face increasingly complex and dynamic environments, the importance of leadership rooted in these timeless principles will only grow, reinforcing the validity of Kamau and Oginde (2022) assertion about the "formidable triangle" of effective leadership.

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